

NCAA Men's 1st and 2nd

Rounds: Nashville

Friday, March 16, 2018

Nashville, Tennessee



Ron Hunter

Isaiah Williams

D'Marcus Simonds

Jordan Session

Georgia State Panthers

Cincinnati - 68, Georgia State - 53

THE MODERATOR: Georgia State Panthers are with us now. Isaiah Williams, D'Marcus Simonds, Jordan Session, represent the student body. Head coach Ron Hunter is here as well. We're going to ask him to make a statement on the game and then we'll go to questions for all four gentlemen from Georgia State. Ron, please.

RON HUNTER: I'm really proud of our young men. I thought we got wore down under about the four, five minute mark. Their offensive rebounding kind of got us.

But I thought these kids represented our institution and the city of Atlanta extremely well. This is a group that most of us will be back. I thought Zeke coming off the bench was really big in the second half. We were able to get the lead. But their size, their size was just really a factor.

I was really pleased defensively. We had a goal that we wanted them to shoot 25 to 30 threes. We wanted under 40 percent shooting. We were able to get that done. The only box we didn't check was the rebounding part. That's an Achilles heel all year.

I can't tell you how proud I am of these guys here. As we continue to build the program and continue to make runs in this NCAA tournament, these kids are unbelievable. And I just love them to death.

Q. D'Marcus, you were hot early on. What did they do differently later in the game to try to combat that?

D'MARCUS SIMONDS: If you're watching the game, you could see they went to the zone. They took away my penetration. So I started facilitating the ball a little bit more and, yeah, just really took away my penetration.

Q. Coach, what did you think you guys did that frustrated Cincinnati the most?

RON HUNTER: Well, we have pride in our defense. I challenged our guys. This is the second best defense in the country, what are we? I thought defensively, we were really good. I thought we really confused them. I'll be honest with you, I wish we had played Thursday. The less preparation, our matchup is something different. It's like playing Georgia Tech in football. If you don't see it that often and we switched some things up and every other possession, we would change some different things to kind of confuse them a little bit.

Part of our defense is to have the confusion between the point guard and head coach. We thought they were trying to figure out what we were doing. Our guys feed off that. They know when a team doesn't know quite how to attack our matchup. We never really call it a zone. It's not really a zone. We call it a matchup. We wanted to prove defensively and we wanted to hold them under 40 percent shooting, which we did for most teams all year. I was really proud of that.

Again, Cincinnati is a great team, one of the top ten teams in the country. I just told our kids, if they're one of the top ten teams in the country, what we did defensively, just think how good we can really be if we keep growing.

Q. Coach, you mentioned rebounding. Cincinnati had 20 offensive boards in the game. How can you describe how detrimental that was, especially in the second half when you were trying to make that run?

RON HUNTER: The Maneater? That's cool, man. I never heard of that before. They said the Maneater, guys. They man-ate us on the glass. That's about the best I can say. Maneater, they man-ate us on the glass, buddy.

We knew that was going to be a problem. That's what they do. They're a good basketball team and they got a shot to get to the Final Four. The difference in the game for us was just the rebounding.

Q. Coach, the Xavier group we're talking about, D'Marcus and how he can probably play for anybody in their conference. Can you talk about

his game today and what he's done for the team all season.

RON HUNTER: He's done this all year for us. He's a tremendous player. As I said to many people before, he's only scratching the surface. I think he's one of the best guards in the country. I know he's the best player in the state of Georgia. So he's tremendous and he's only going to get better. He's only going to get better. We're very fortunate, we had a first round draft pick in R.J. One day soon, this kid is going to be a first round draft pick. No doubt about it. To be able to say that, coming from Georgia State, last three years, it's a great accomplishment. But this kid can really play.

He's got great teammates and he'll tell you that. He's got great teammates around him that can make shots. So I'm proud of him, because his development as a person is what I'm proud of. He's turning into a great young man, and I'm more proud of that than I am the basketball part.

Q. Coach, this is a question for everybody, really. I know the loss is kind of fresh right now, but looking forward to the future, Kane Williams, a freshman, where do you see him going in the future and what has he brought to the team this year?

ISAIAH WILLIAMS: Kane is going to be a great player for this program.

JORDAN SESSION: Kane is going to be a special player for Georgia State. As you can see, he handles the ball well. He's a great defender. He controls the tempo so well. He's a great teammate. He cheers for every bucket that anyone scores. He doesn't care who scores. He just wants to go out and play the game the right way. So he's going to be very special for Georgia State in the next couple of years.

D'MARCUS SIMONDS: Yeah, Kane's pretty good. Yeah, he's pretty good. He'll be good next year. He'll be good the year after that.

RON HUNTER: I'll answer this. Kane's a good player, but I'd rather you ask about my seniors sitting up here. These guys have done a great job. They've led this program and they've done nothing -- Jordan is the only player in school history that has played in the NCAA twice. And more importantly in six weeks are going to graduate.

As I said in the press conference before, this is what Division I basketball is about, not all the crazy stuff we read about. This is what it's about. It's about these guys coming in here, playing hard, getting to the NCAA tournament, graduating, and becoming great part of our society. And we get lost in all this other mess that

we talk about what college basketball is. We need to spend more time about what happens about these type of young kids. That's what college basketball is all about.

Q. D'Marcus, do you think Cincinnati and you guys were feeding off each other's energy?

D'MARCUS SIMONDS: Yeah, definitely. They play really hard and we knew they were going to play hard. We watched the film on them and they played hard all year. They knew we were going to come in, we were going to play hard. You could just feel the energy everywhere. The atmosphere was crazy. We made some runs, they made some runs, and at the end just the rebounding was too much. We just ran out of gas.

Q. Coach, can you talk about Jarron Cumberland's game and why it was hard for your team to slow him down today?

RON HUNTER: You can't take everything away. So, again, we knew that -- we don't particularly worry about a particular player, but we have goals that we wanted them to shoot as many threes as we possibly can. We wanted that because we wanted long rebounds. So he just made really, really good plays.

We slowed him down early, but he has a great basketball IQ and really made some great plays for them. Again, we can't neutralize all of them. One great thing about Cincinnati is that you can't key in on one player. So you've got to kind of take some things away. We wanted to take the paint away, take some of the bigs away, wanted to make the point guard more of a jump shooter. He made really good plays. He's a good player. That's why they're in this position.

Q. Ron, under eight time out, you're down four, you have to think we've got the game we want here. Then the game goes away pretty quickly. What happened there? Did they started making and you didn't?

RON HUNTER: It's funny, because I said this to my staff coming out. We got to the eight-minute mark and I looked at our guys and we looked fatigued. We were tired.

We were tired not because we weren't in shape. The physicality of Cincinnati finally wore on us a little bit. And that was something I was concerned about going into the game. But we were able to handle it.

But the under eight timeout, I looked at D'Marcus and just the physicality, Malik and some of the guys, Sesh, it just wore on us. It wore on us because now all of a sudden we were missing those jump shots. We're a jump shooting team. We couldn't come down and hit the jump shots. We had great looks. If we'd hit a

couple of those looks that we had, it could have been a different outcome. The physicality kind of got to our legs. That's kind of what I saw at about the seven-minute mark.

Q. For the seniors, Jordan and Isaiah, can you describe a moment -- I know it's emotional right now, but a moment through this experience that will stick with you, that is kind of a bright spot in this enjoyable experience?

JORDAN SESSION: During the course of the game, like you said, it got really physical, and we got down, I think, ten maybe with about seven minutes or so.

And I just, I looked at everyone's face, and we didn't fold. We didn't shake. We didn't seem like we were going to lose the game at any point. We were all smiling and clapping, ready to play, ready for the next possession. And we all kind of picked each other up.

And in that moment, I realized we were all a brotherhood. This is a great group of guys. We're a great team. We're a great team. We have a great player in D'Marcus, a great coach, great staff, and it's just moments like that, I realize I really made a family here at Georgia State. It was a great moment for me personally.

ISAIAH WILLIAMS: On what Jordan said, at the end of the game, we're down 15 and it was pretty emotional for all of us, and we all huddled up and we realized how close we really were, how close of a family we are.

Q. Jordan and Isaiah, you guys had a great career here at Georgia State. How will you remember your time here?

ISAIAH WILLIAMS: All the --

RON HUNTER: I can't get this guy to shut up most of the time too. You have to ask him questions when I get him in a timeout. I'm trying to get him to shut up. Now you get him up here and now he can't speak. You good, man. Sesh, you got it.

JORDAN SESSION: What was the question?

Q. How will you remember your time at Georgia State?

JORDAN SESSION: I remember my time at Georgia State is an exciting one. We won a lot in the last couple years so I'll remember that. I'll remember we ran the state of Georgia. I remember we win, I think we went to the conference tournament every year, of course, but we've been to the NCAA tournament twice for myself personally. A lot of these guys, the first time, but they'll be back next year. So that's exciting for me.

I think my favorite thing about Georgia State is the fact that we win every year, consistently. So that's been big for me personally.

Q. Final question for D'Marcus, what did you learn basketball-wise and just personally life-wise from Jordan and Isaiah at your time at Georgia State?

D'MARCUS SIMONDS: I mean, you know, basketball-wise, Sesh and Isaiah taught me to just always keep that confidence in myself at all times. Points in the season, I get down in myself. I struggled a bit, but they always kept me up.

Life-wise, they're my brothers. So they always got some life advice for me. So I really appreciate that.

Q. And for Coach, despite only having three assists as a team, you all hung in there for the most part until, like, the eight, seven-minute mark. How were you all able to do that? What happened after that?

RON HUNTER: I mean, our kids were ready to play. They were ready to play, and, again, I just said toward the end, we just -- the physicality kind of got us. I love how we came out in the second half.

I thought we were extremely aggressive in the second half and kind of made a run. We just got to the seven-minute mark and just their physicality wore us out.

THE MODERATOR: Gentlemen, thank you very much. Congratulations on your season. Best of luck in the future.