

Maui Jim Maui Invitational

Tuesday, November 24, 2015

Dave Rice

Patrick McCaw

Derrick Jones, Jr.

UNLV Runnin' Rebels

UNLV - 93 CHAMINADE - 73

THE MODERATOR: We now welcome UNLV to the media room. Coach Rice, Derrick Jones, Jr. and Patrick McCaw. Coach, an opening statement?

COACH RICE: First of all, Chaminade was really good in the first half.

Our team was really down after last night. I think that's probably human nature. It's one of the things that's tough about that quick bounce-back after you have a tough loss. But we come to Maui for a variety of reasons. Obviously, we come because it's a very prestigious tournament, there is always a star-studded field. This is one of the best fields in a long time. But you come here as a group, as a team, trying to find out your identity, trying to see who in your program has toughness, who can bounce back?

We talked about it last night. What is our response to success? We've had that starting 3-0 and then what's your response to adversity? Last night was an adverse situation. There is no doubt these two guys on the stage, Patrick McCaw and Derrick Jones found it for us in the second half.

We regrouped at halftime, had great team leadership. Our guys challenged each other, and we went from down 4 to up 20 at the end of the game. Quick turnaround again tomorrow.

Tremendous respect for Coach Crean, Indiana and their program. We'll be challenged, no doubt. But was very proud of our team. It was one of those that we had to fight today, and it was way more about ourselves than anything else. But we found a way to play hard in the second half. We found a way to play together to share the ball to play inside out, and we only turned the ball over ten times for the game, which was a huge thing.

I thought Patrick McCaw and Derrick Jones made huge plays down the stretch, and we did a good job guarding them.



Q. Derrick, what was said in the locker room at halftime when you guys were down? What were you thinking personally because you were a lot more aggressive in the second half?

DERRICK JONES, JR.: The coaches just told us we've got to be more aggressive and lock down on defense a lot more and get a lot more rebounds. So we all went out and we all played aggressive and got the win.

Q. Pat, Dave talked about it a little bit, the frustration of last night seems like it bled over into the first half here. Is that accurate? Do you think it was a little bit of a hangover? Just what are your thoughts on what you guys were able to do then in the second half?

PATRICK McCAW: Yeah, for sure it was. It was a tough loss. We wish we would have come out with a win against UCLA. But we came in, we got together as a team once we got back to the hotel.

We just said get ready for Chaminade. We have to fight through adversity and bounce back. We took a tough loss. Coach Rice ensured that we'd come prepared for Chaminade. I know we came out a little slow. We had to fight through the aches and pains. But in the second half, Coach was just preaching we've got to bring energy and effort in the second half and play running rebel basketball, and that's what we did.

Q. Pat, there seemed to be a couple of times mainly in that big run in the second half you decided to kind of take over on offense, whether it was threes, driving. Do you kind of change your mentality throughout a game? You can't be the point guard. You're kind of 1 through 3. Are there times you decide, okay, these next few possessions, I'm going?

PATRICK McCAW: No, I just try to find myself playing the flow of the game. Coach Rice wants me to be aggressive and assert myself on the floor. The opportunities come for me, I'm just ready to take them. But, no, I just try to play in the flow of the game. I don't try to be too aggressive or take too many shots. I just play the game.

Q. Derrick, could you sense the team was down a little bit after last night and not quite ready to play

in the first half?

DERRICK JONES, JR.: I mean, yeah. I mean, we were down, but we had to come back and battle through adversity and come back and get this win today. So we were watching film last night and we came back and we played hard and we got the win.

Q. What was Coach Rice's attitude like at halftime? Was he ticked off at you guys? Were the coaches trying to light a fire under you? What was going on?

DERRICK JONES, JR.: The coaches know what we can do and they know what we're capable of. They just wanted us to go out and play a lot harder. They knew we weren't playing at our full potential, so they just wanted us to go out and play a lot harder. So if they came in the locker room and they were fired up, they had a reason to be. They just came in and got us fired up too.

Q. That dunk you had where you got a running start in the second half, what did you see and what did you think of that play maybe compared to the one you had that kind of made the rounds on TV last week?

DERRICK JONES, JR.: I don't know. I mean, I just caught the ball. They overplayed me, so I just crossed over, went down the lane and did what I do.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Coach Rice.

Q. Just to follow up on that, what was your, I guess, attitude towards the team at the half? Obviously you weren't happy with the team energy, the lack of defense, and a lot of things you saw in the first half?

COACH RICE: Yeah, I think it would be easy going into the locker room and making it all about getting a pound of flesh. But confidence is a shaky thing. When you've got a group that came in, prepared hard and played extremely hard last night and had things not quite go our way down the stretch and lost a game, there is a fine line between going in and blasting them and giving them confidence.

So at halftime, no doubt that we got after them, I got after them pretty good. It was more about planning an attack. Giving them confidence that we can go do this together, when we have to go do this together. We've played hard for four games of the UCLA game, and we didn't play as hard as we need to play in the first half. We didn't play nearly as well together. It's time. Everything we've got to have an opportunity to achieve this year is still there.

I thought the guys really responded. I thought Ben Carter and Jerome were really fantastic. I thought one

of the keys today in the second half was Jerome looking for other guys. Even though he only got three assists in the game, he only took five shots because he was making a conscious effort to be a point guard and get other people involved. I thought that was a big difference in the game, particularly in the second half.

Q. How concerned are you with the free throw issue only five games into the season? Other than just putting up more shots in practice, what can be done to maybe make it more consistent?

COACH RICE: I think the biggest challenge for me right now, the challenge all season long is that we've got a very deep, talented team, and only five guys can start and only five guys can play at a time. We've got to continue to bind the team. That is the biggest challenge of the season so we can have a successful season.

I think the biggest challenge for me right now is finding that balance. Our guys are playing with a tremendous amount of pressure. My job as a coach is to make the game fun. Basketball's supposed to be fun. When you play in Las Vegas, it's a privilege to put that UNLV uniform on. There is great tradition. But I don't want our guys to have the weight of the world on their shoulders. That's my job, that's the coaches' job. They came to UNLV to play.

Our fans were fantastic. Our fans were so good through in those runs. They were great last night against UCLA. They were great today. Hundreds of UNLV fans are here. But my job is to take the pressure off these kids. The pressure is to play hard and the pressure is to play together. But our guys are playing with such an expectation level on them and I think it's taking some of the fun out of the game. Because we have good players and we're going to have a good team, but we've got to find that balance, and that's my job to do that.

Q. Can you talk about tomorrow's match-up with Indiana? I'm not sure how much you've seen of the Hoosiers, but they've got two dynamic guards in Ferrell and Blackmon, and if you can talk about that match-up and the importance of this game?

COACH RICE: We've watched those guys. Yogi Ferrell, I watched in AAU with Indiana Elite, and Blackmon I watched at Indiana last year. They're fantastic. Troy Williams on their interior attack, it's similar to the UCLA game.

It's great balance. It's interior players. It's perimeter guys that can shoot the ball, handle the ball. Yogi Ferrell is a tremendously difficult match-up for anybody. I've watched Indiana a lot the last many years. I have a lot of respect for Tom and how hard his teams work.

We watched them a little bit yesterday and our coaches watched them today. It will be a battle. We've got to keep the ball in front of us. We've got to contest shooters and limit our turnovers. The formula's the same for us all season long: Plan an attack, get to the free-throw line, make our free throws on the defensive end. Contest shots, rebound the ball. It's the formula for everyone across the country.

Q. Back to the expectations and pressure. Where does that come from then? In terms of the NCAA and tournament conference titles, that hasn't been there. What is the pressure?

COACH RICE: I think these kids are just great kids and they want to do well. They want to please our coaching staff, our families and they want to please the fans. It's not a bad thing. It's not a bad thing. It's just a matter of making sure it's fun and we play hard, and understanding that good things will happen for us. The only pressure there is is to play hard and play together. If we do that, we'll have a successful season. We've got great kids and I thought we played very, very well in the second half.

Q. Can you just expand a little bit on what Ben Carter has been able to do? It seems like both games he's been a consistent guy at both ends for you.

COACH RICE: Ben's our glue guy. Makes big plays. He's a leader on and off the court. He's a terrific rebounder. He's got a high basketball IQ. We can run anything with him in the game. He plays multiple positions. He's a coach's son. So that's something that's positive for him. He's a guy that's got the respect of his teammates because of how hard he works and how much he has committed a team.

But he was certainly a difference maker in today's game, and he's been good for us all season long.