

# Maui Jim Maui Invitational

Wednesday, November 25, 2015

## Tom Crean

## Nick Zeisloft

## James Blackmon, Jr.

Indiana Hoosiers

UNLV - 72 INDIANA - 69

THE MODERATOR: We now welcome Indiana to the media room, Coach Crean, James Blackmon, Jr., and Nick Zeisloft. Start with an opening statement from coach.

COACH CREAN: It was a hard-fought game. We knew it would be. I'm sure a Vegas-Indiana game brought back a lot of memories for a lot of people. It was really in the scheme of history, it was an honor to play the Runnin' Rebels. It really was.

I've got great respect for their coach, tremendous respect for him. Don't know him great, but I was following him as an assistant with what he was doing at BYU with Dave Rose before he became the head coach at Vegas. I would say that there are -- I'm not alone. I like to be in the fan club, but I'm not a single member when it comes to the coaching fraternity. People have a tremendous level of respect for Dave and what he's doing.

That game shows a lot of ways what they're capable of, because they were right there on Monday night. And then they got the second half going, and they really moved the ball. And they're getting better. When you look at some of their percentages from even some of the guys that have transferred in, that year off has made them a lot better.

We knew we were going to be in a battle, and what we've got to learn in this young season is we had it happen here and we had it happen in the wake game, and we did a pretty decent job with it yesterday, but momentum is always up for grabs. That means when you get it, you've got to hold it. When you don't have it, you've got to find something to get it back. We had a couple moments today where we did get it back, but we also had some moments where the game was up for grabs and we didn't do a great job.

We got ourselves in a hole at the beginning with our turnovers, and you're not going to beat any type of team, let alone one as talented as UNLV, when you're



giving them 22 points. It's unacceptable with the guys that have the ball in their hands for us to be giving the ball that way, and we've got to get that fixed. We really do, or we've got to fix the lineup.

We're a growing team right now in a lot of ways. The most important thing that we could grow into is understanding where our responsibilities lie as individuals and improvement, and as a team for how we can be collectively better.

This is a great tournament to learn about that in. A great tournament. No question disappointed with a loss today, but we've got to turn this into some positives. It's all going to come down to how people view where their improvement level is. I'll be very clear where our improvement level has got to be. But you've got to have enough players that understand that they have to take a real, real stake in that to make themselves better.

**Q. James, I guess we'll start with you. How do you rate your performance overall as a team going 1-2 in this event?**

JAMES BLACKMON, JR.: There are just things that we need to improve on. That's how I look at it. Like Coach said, we're going to go look at the film, and guys like us just want to get better from it. So I just feel like we could have done a lot better to change the outcome of how the game went.

**Q. Nick, talk a little bit about obviously you were really hot shooting the three-pointer. What were you trying to get at the end? I know the shot was blocked, but was that the shot you were looking for?**

NICK ZEISLOFT: Yeah, that was the set that we have. There are several different options on that play, and it just came to me. I wish I might have shot faked or something better, but that play's over. There are other plays and another game that we have to worry about to get better.

COACH CREAN: We wouldn't change that play. That was excellent. They made an athletic play. But he did a good job taking the shot. I know it wasn't my turn, but I wanted to clarify that.

**Q. James, defensively, what did UNLV do early to**

**turn you guys over?**

JAMES BLACKMON, JR.: Really it was just us. I feel like they didn't do too much of anything. I feel like it was us that made turnovers that we could have prevented. But their pressure was good. We knew that they would come out and pressure us and it was going to be a dog fight from the beginning. So I feel like we should have just prevented that more.

**Q. Nick, during the three days you guys played here, the TV commentators really hit on Indiana's defense and questioned it a lot. Where do you think it is, and where do you think it needs to get to?**

NICK ZEISLOFT: Well, it definitely needs to improve in all aspects, whether it was zone or man, on ball defense, help-side defense, it's a process and we definitely have to get better at it.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Coach Crean.

**Q. Can you talk about the free-throw shooting? I think it's like 67% so far this year.**

COACH CREAN: That's not good. That's not good. You're exactly right.

**Q. What do you have to do to improve it?**

COACH CREAN: We've just got to make free throws. That would be the most important thing. I wouldn't change a lot about the free-throw shooters that are up there, so we've just got to make free throws.

**Q. Just to follow up on the question to Nick. The TV commentator really questioned the way IU played defense these three games. What did you see when you look out there?**

COACH CREAN: Well, you're way ahead of me on the TV commentators. I've actually been preparing for games so I haven't seen or listened to any of the broadcast, so I'll make sure I do that. We have a lot of room for improvement defensively. No doubt about it.

We're playing with three freshmen on the front line. We don't have the front line that we were projected to have. We don't have the front line that we thought we were going to have. So we've got to get that down. They've got to deal with the different coverages that are there and all that different type of stuff. There is no question we can get better at every aspect of the game.

**Q. I guess, forgive a blunt question, but are you worried about this team's confidence level after a week like this? Or do you think with the experience level and what they've been through, particularly last year, you talked about overcoming low expectations last year, that they have the mental whatever they need to get past a week like**

**this?**

COACH CREAN: Well, we're six games in. Okay. It's the end of November. They've got a lot of improving to do, and I think the confidence will come from the improvement.

So in answer to your question, I'm not worried about that at all. I think the bottom line is the level of improvement that everyone has to make, that's where your confidence comes from. It's the bottom line. Bill Parcells said confidence comes from demonstrated ability. Well, we've got some young guys that haven't had a chance to put those experiences together yet. Well, these three days certainly provided some of that. We also have players that have demonstrated ability.

So the bottom line with any team at any point in the season, whether it's late in the year, middle of the year, early in the year, no matter what sport it is, is what is their desire to improve? It's so much more than what you just do as a program with your practices, with your preparations, with your film. There's got to be just a real mental desire that turns into a strength and turns into a mental toughness level about how important it is to get better.

This is a test. The eight teams walking out of here, no matter what, in three days are getting tested. All right? Even if the champion tonight blows through it, whoever the champion is, they're still getting tested because you're playing three games in three days against very high level competition.

So these are the types of things you learn from. They bank them. They put them together. And it all goes back to how much you want to continue to improve your individual aspects, take responsibility for what you have to get better at, and work that much more diligently to make your teammates better.

**Q. Twenty turnovers, ten came right off the bat. But was there a common theme in what players were doing to cause them?**

COACH CREAN: Home runs. Trying to make plays that weren't there. We knew we were going to deal with speed and pressure, and we weren't as -- we just have to keep the game simple. The hardest thing for good players to learn -- and when you play like this, you don't play like a good player. The hardest thing to learn is you look really good when you keep it simple. When you're not really good or you don't have a lot of talent is when you have to try to manufacture a lot of things at times that aren't there.

For us, we can't have it -- Troy can't throw a no-look pass. He can't do that. That's not what we're doing. I'm not just using Troy -- I'm using Troy as an example, but we're making too many turnovers. We made too

many mental mistakes, okay, that ended up looking physically wrong because of the way we passed the ball because we weren't as aware as we needed to be. And their pressure sped us up some, but our lack of fundamental passing at times with stuff that's just common sense things.

I mean, the way we throw pocket passes, the way we look, the way we see. The way we're not trying to throw no-looks and things like that, we just can't do that. We've got to continue to get better there.

**Q. You mentioned keeping it simple. At some point do you slow it down a little bit to keep it from speeding up too much?**

COACH CREAN: I don't think it's that. I'm going to look at the film. I think about that, but I don't think it's that. I think it's when we're playing fast and that ball is moving, we're pretty good.

Look at Nick Zeisloft's numbers. When it's moving and you're driving with your head down, okay, and you can't see the cutters or you can't see the open guy, that's not good. Now those both happened out of speed. But some of our best offense is out of speed. Right? But at the same time, we've got to continue to play through the post. We've got not just one or two guys we can throw it into there that can get fouled and make plays.

The free throw shooting was an aberration right now. It's got to get better. It's got to get better. We have guys that are high-level, career free-throw shooters missing free throws during the game. We're not even talking necessarily about the end-of-the-game-type free throws that we had the other day.

But, no, I don't think it's that. We've got to get fouled. So getting fouled is running. Getting fouled is offensive rebounding. Getting fouled is driving through the paint. I tell you the numbers that are phenomenal are the numbers of what we do when we go through the paint or post, or when we don't turn the ball over. Now those numbers are great.

So what do we have to do? We have to figure out a way to get to more of that and less turnovers and less not playing through the paint.

**Q. Just sort of bringing it all together, can you trace some of these issues, the turnovers? Are they a more central source or are they separate problems that aren't related to one another in your mind and you have to deal with them piecemeal?**

COACH CREAN: I think what we'll do is put all the turnovers, we'll put everything after these six games now on film, and really get a feel for some trends. Your ball screen game, your postgame, transition game, all

the turnovers, those type of things. I would say, again, like I said a little bit ago, all right, getting a team that's got some guys that can score and shoot to understand, all right. And some of you have seen us in practice, so you know what I'm talking about here with the fundamental drills of driving the ball with your head up, changing direction, getting the ball out, making the quick pass, making the on-time, on-target pass.

But we've got some accuracy issues we're getting better at. But making the game simple. Continuing to break away from how I beat my man to how I get the help to respond to me so I can get it to my teammate. That to me is -- because there were times even in this game, and I can think of a couple of them, where we made tremendous plays in the press offense and things like that because we stayed committed to the spacing. That's what we've got to continue to get better at.

So I'd much rather have a team -- this goes back to Mike's question -- I'd much rather have a team that you have to slow down some than one that you can't get to play at a high level of speed. Our turnovers, they're coming all over, right? They're coming all over. They're not just coming because we're playing fast. They're coming in the half court too. So we'll get better with it. We'll get better.

I'll be anxious. I know everybody will be looking forward to the time here and certainly we have Thanksgiving. But I'll be looking forward to our next practice.

Thank you to everybody. Thank you for what you've done. This tournament has been awesome. It's my fourth trip here as a coach. Everything has been first class from the time you arrive. Your atmosphere out there for the games, it's always phenomenal. It keeps getting better and better all the time. The atmosphere here is unreal. I wish we could bottle it up. The atmosphere is tremendous. We really appreciate being here. Indiana really appreciates being here.

THE MODERATOR: Happy to have you. Thank you.