

Maui Jim Maui Invitational

Wednesday, November 23, 2016

Greg Gard Ethan Happ Vitto Brown

Wisconsin Badgers

North Carolina - 71, Wisconsin - 56

THE MODERATOR: Coach Gard is joined by Ethan Happ and Vitto Brown. We'll start with an opening statement from Coach.

COACH GARD: First of all, obviously our guys played extremely hard and credited them for that. And I'm proud of how they kept battling. When things weren't going well, they kept fighting back. And it's frustrating when the ball doesn't go in.

But also credit to North Carolina. Obviously Roy's got a heck of a team. They did the things they needed to do. Hit shots, when they needed to hit shots, and were able to get enough separation. And obviously with our struggles offensively not be able to keep them within arm's reach as we had planned to do.

But great experience here. As I told our radio guys just a little bit ago, there's no doubt we're leaving the island a better team than when we showed up last Friday. And obviously we've got work to do. But that's why you do these type of events at this type of level because it exposes things and shows areas we've got to get better at that will help prepare us for what's coming down the road.

But proud of the guys and the fight they showed. We'll get better and looking forward to getting back on the court with them when we get back to Madison.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the players.

Q. Ethan, how difficult was it to deal with their length inside?

ETHAN HAPP: Offensively I got to a lot of spots that I would love to get to again. There's a lot of times where, if I could get back there and I just slow down, I finish it over them.

Rebounding, I mean I was doing the same thing I was doing against Georgetown. It's just they were a little longer and I could get a finger on it, but I couldn't come down with a lot of them.



And some of that is luck, but their size definitely affected that as well.

Q. Can you guys both talk about just that transition game with Joel Berry kind of running the point for them and how tough that transition game was?

ETHAN HAPP: I mean, he's a really good player, obviously, but myself as a frontrunner, with the bigs, we need to stop them in transition when they set a ball screen and stop them from getting to the rim. And lots of times I'm sure Coach will find on film where I didn't do that.

VITTO BROWN: I thought we actually did a decent job of guard in transition. I don't think they got too many transition layups. But in terms of the half court, I know they had a lot of success with that ball screen and us just not identifying who we've got and not switching properly.

So they're definitely good when they were going downhill to the rim.

Q. Were you guys pretty happy with your defensive performance early in that game to kind of keep you guys around when he started 1-of-12 from the field?

VITTO BROWN: We were still down 8-0, and I think we pretty much played them even the rest of the half. Clearly our defense wasn't the greatest. And like you said our offense was bad, too.

After that eight points, I think we were able to slow them down and have them play more our pace. But like you said, the ball just wasn't going in on the offensive end. It made it seem like we were playing bad defense, even though it was pretty much the same point spread for the rest of the half.

Q. Vitto, Coach Gard said there's no doubt that you guys are a better team now than when you arrived. Do you feel better about this team now than three days ago?

VITTO BROWN: Definitely. Just being tested in all the different ways we have. We were able to go against a very athletic team in Tennessee, a team that goes hard and aggressive in Georgetown, and a team like this, who was a little bit of both. I think we'll definitely have

a lot to learn from this when we go back and watch the film.

And this is no better test. It's the best test we could have gotten this early in the season. So I think that seeing how they attack the rim so hard, I think we'll definitely probably do a lot of defensive drills in practice and definitely be ready for the next team who does it.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Coach.

Q. Brad Underwood, after the third place game today, said he thought North Carolina is the best team in the country. Where would you kind of think about them?

COACH GARD: Well, having played them before several times -- Coach Williams can probably answer this better, but this may be his best defensive team that we've played against. I thought they were very solid. They handled actions, different things we tried to throw at them, different screening combinations, try to isolate different guys, try to lift their bigs out of the paint and attack it that way.

I thought they handled it as well as they've handled it in the number of years we've played them. So I don't know about best team in the country. I think it's early. I think a lot of things will change.

They're obviously very good. But I think for us to be able to keep them out of transition and take away -- they were able to find other ways to beat us. We were able to, for the most part, keep them off the glass.

It's 7-4 in offensive rebounds. We kept them out of transition. You take away the two major things they do and the team still finds a way to beat you, obviously it's a sign of a very good team.

And obviously Coach Williams has a terrific team. And that's well-documented. But as you start to break it down and dissect it, I thought defensively, watching them in film this year, maybe you don't get quite a taste of it because of who they played so far. But now seeing them up close and watching, comparing them to years past, I think a more complete team, specifically defensively.

Q. You said earlier in the week that these games can help you in March if you take what happened and apply it to then. In what areas would you say this team needs to catch up and won't be stress points for you going forward after tonight?

COACH GARD: Well, everything. It will be defensively stopping the ball. Offensively finishing around the rim. Shot selection. Turnovers. I mean, you name it, we've got to continue to get better in every area. I don't think

there's an area tonight that I would say is really, really good.

Transition we were pretty good. Shot selection is was okay. But we have to continue to get better in every area. If we aren't, then we don't have to worry about March, if we don't continue to get better. And we won't stop working in any one area, say this area is fine and we can leave it alone. We'll continue to try to improve everywhere we can.

Q. You said you think you're a better team than when you arrived --

COACH GARD: I think we're better defensively. I think we're starting to figure out some things and starting to callus a little bit. Teams always have to go through some sort of adversity and have some negative things happen. And I think that toughens us.

It's definitely, I thought, callused last year's group and other teams we've had. That's the only way you grow is if you really get tested. And to be in this, to play this type of competition early, it exposes areas that we have to get better. And it also shows us some things that we're trending in the right direction.

So we'll learn a lot from it. We already have. And we haven't even watched the film yet and they haven't seen any of the, other than a little bit from Tennessee, on the first night.

But we use it, apply it and hopefully we continue to trend in the right direction as we move forward.

Q. About the third game or so this season where Nigel has kind of struggled to put the ball in the basket. Do you say anything to a senior when he's struggling? Is there something you can do to jump-start him or do you think he'll eventually break --

COACH GARD: Shot selection. That's really the only time. Otherwise you're just, hey, continue to try to support him. It's typically shot selection. If that's awry a little bit, then we talk about it or try to orchestrate some things to get him the ball different areas. But I thought for the most part shot selection was okay.

The 3s he had were primarily wide open except for maybe the first one. So do we continue to shoot 3s or we've got to get better in that area or should we continue to work the post.

When he works the post he's pretty effective. But we've got to get better in there, too. He had the ball pretty tight at times and we've got to be able to finish around the rim a little bit better and become more efficient. I don't think you tell somebody to stop

shooting or you -- you grade shot selection, as I've always said. I don't worry about quantity, I'm more looking at the quality.

And that's what we'll look at and break those down shot by shot. If there's things that off the track of what's best for this team then we'll point those out and I also point out the good ones, too, even if they don't go in that was a good shot. We'll take that one again.

So that's how we go through it with everybody, not just Nigel.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach.