

Maui Jim Maui Invitational

Monday, November 20, 2017

Steve Wojciechowski

Markus Howard

Andrew Rowsey

Marquette Golden Eagles

Marquette - 94, VCU - 83

THE MODERATOR: We welcome Marquette to the press room. We have Markus Howard and Andrew Rowsey. Let's start with questions for the players.

Q. You guys are kind of known for your three-point shooting. But in what ways specifically were you looking to exploit and have some success on the perimeter?

ANDREW ROWSEY: Well, the main thing for us, we knew VCU, they like to pressure you, and pressure you full court. So for us, handling the pressure and finding the best shot once we get out. We knew once we broke the press we could get 3 on 2s going, and stuff like that so we could get our open shots, so that was key.

MARKUS HOWARD: I think just playing off each other's strength. That is a big point of emphasis that Coach Wojo emphasized to us when we played. So just playing to our strengths and shooting. We were finding open shots and we were able to execute that.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks, Markus.

Q. Markus, you had four points in the first half and 18 in the second. What changed for you in the second?

MARKUS HOWARD: I think just not really getting discouraged and letting the game come to me. I mean, I missed a couple shots and I can't really even think about it. I have to move on to the next play. My coaches really helped me in that aspect, learning and drawing from that. Just knowing there are a lot of games to be played, so not really getting caught up on it. Knowing in the second half it's like a start-over, hit your restart button. So I was looking at it that way.

Q. Coach Wojo has guys that had a lot of success in this tournament and playing career and coaching career in the past. What do you say to your guys about this tournament, this setting and how to be successful here?

ANDREW ROWSEY: Well, he told me he hasn't lost a



game here before, so don't let it happen this time. But, no, seriously, you know, Coach Wojo is the ultimate competitor. He brings that to our team. When we come here, we don't want to let him down. Yeah, I'll say this when he comes in here. But we fight for one another. We fight for Coach. The way we compete, we want to bring it every game, so that's what we set out to do.

Q. With the way you guys shoot it, you were able to get some long rebounds and capitalize on second-chance points. Is that something you worked on?

MARKUS HOWARD: Definitely. Great credit to our bigs -- Theo, Sam, Matt, Jamal, and Sacar, really working hard down there and getting rebounds, and Greg as well. Just working the offense today, we've been working on that a lot in practice. It happens a lot down in the post. So that's definitely something we've been working on, and today we really put it to work, great.

Q. You guys, they were close to you pretty much all game. What was the key to pulling away from them?

ANDREW ROWSEY: Well, for us, it was just to remain poised. We know they like to pressure us for 40 minutes of the game. It was just handling it, and doing your best shots, finding the open shot, finding the open guy and getting shots where we needed them. I feel like we executed that as well as we could today and that let us come out with the win.

Q. Where'd you get the leis?

ANDREW ROWSEY: I got them at the hotel that we're staying at. I've been wearing it the whole time.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, why don't you start with an opening statement about this morning's win.

STEVE WOJCIECHOWSKI: We beat an outstanding basketball team. They put incredible pressure on you for 40 minutes. I thought early in the game their full-court press really knocked us back. Obviously, we were able to force some turnovers. When you give them turnovers, it sets their defense, and that hurt us.

But, you know, one of the things that happens with a team like that when you don't turn it over, they can speed you up. I thought we took some really quick, ill-

advised shots in the first half. The second half, I thought we had much greater poise on the offensive end. I think Markus and Sam's play and the poise that those two kids showed on the offensive end was huge. I thought we got a great lift from our bench. Four kids who came off the bench when it was tied 51-all, gave us some separation with their energy and effort, and just making plays. That says a lot for those young kids, and I'm proud of them for that.

One of the silent stories of the game for us was our offensive rebounding. We won the game because of our offensive rebound, and that's something that we've tried to emphasize with this group. When we do offensive rebounds, a lot of times just because we don't have great size inside, it's not necessarily going to be a putback, but we want to try to get threes when we get offensive boards, and we were able to do that today.

We beat a hell of a basketball team. A really high-level game this early in the season, and we have utmost respect for VCU, and Mike obviously will continue the tradition at a very high level there.

Q. In the first half you had Andrew Rowsey with 15 points and in the second half it was Markus with 18. What can you say about your back court and how they were playing off each other?

STEVE WOJCIECHOWSKI: Well, both those kids are very dynamic scorers. Obviously they're recognized for their ability to shoot. But in my mind they're much more than shooters. At any point they can go on a one-man run. What we need them to do is understand that sometimes it's better to let the game come to you. But those kids put a lot of pressure on the defense. We want them to be attacking. We want them to create offense, obviously for themselves, but they're going to create a lot of offense for other guys as well. I love my back court, and they're going to be a big part of the type of success we hope to have this year.

Q. Coach, in what ways do you think your size and length helped you when it came to those second-chance points and rebounds?

STEVE WOJCIECHOWSKI: You know, we're really not much bigger than VCU. A lot of rebounding is just a relentless pursuit, and I thought our guys showed great pursuit on the offensive end of trying to get those second shots. Like I said earlier, without that part of the game swinging in our favor, we don't win the game. We have every player on the team for us had an offensive rebound, and those offensive rebounds produced, I think, over 20 second-chance points.

Q. You guys had some early turnovers early on and 17 total. What do you have to do to cut down on those?

STEVE WOJCIECHOWSKI: I mean, credit is due to VCU. That's what they do. They have great quickness, and they're relentless in their pressure. You know, it's one thing to practice press versus scout team or your, quote/unquote, second team. It's a completely different thing to execute versus a team that does it every day, like VCU. So once we settled in, I thought we did fine after we got a few of those careless turnovers. We had five turnovers before the first media time out. So if you look at 12 turnovers for the rest of the 36 minutes, that's not too bad.

Q. Coach, what's it like for you being back in this gym given the success you've had here in the past? What did you share with your team about playing here?

STEVE WOJCIECHOWSKI: Well, I have a really special feeling in my heart for Maui. Obviously this is my fifth time here, one as a player, three as an assistant coach. This is the first time I'm honored to bring the team here as a head coach. But even before that, when I was a young kid and this tournament used to come on TV, I can remember thinking college basketball is finally back. This was always, for me, the tournament that signified that college basketball, which was something I loved from a very early age, was back. To be here and to be a part of it is just a huge honor.

I want our guys to honor that honor with how hard they play, how together they play and with the way we compete.

Q. Not too look too much into the future, but the next game you play the winner, possibly Wichita State. They're pretty good on fundamentals. What's it going to take to beat a team like that?

STEVE WOJCIECHOWSKI: Well, again, anything can happen in the tournament. So we'll evaluate and watch this game. There's a lot of outstanding teams. I can only speak on Wichita State because our focus was totally on VCU. But Greg has built an elite level program, I think at this time of the season, because of their experience, they're as good as any team in the United States. So if it happens that we are to play them, it will be an incredible test for our young team. But that's why you come to tournaments like this, to be able to challenge yourself against the best. They're very experienced, and we have one senior and nine freshmen and sophomores. So if it does come to pass, then as a competitor, that's what you want. I mean, that's what you want. So I would hope that's the mindset our young men.