

Atlantic 10 Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Saturday March 12, 2016

Phil Martelli

Papa Ndao

Isaiah Miles

DeAndre' Bembry

Saint Joseph's

Saint Joseph's - 82, Dayton - 79

PHIL MARTELLI: My assistant here just told me walking over, he said, you know, we didn't play that great, but we wanted to go to the championship. He's wise beyond his years.

Pop was big, and he cares a great deal. You could feel him over this last stretch of time. He is a senior in a lot of ways. He's a senior on this team. As the senior elder statesman, I could feel it, the sands of time going through the hourglass with him, and delighted for his performance. I thought we did a very reasonable job defensively, and a really unusually poor job with the ball. We'll have to be better with the ball tomorrow, and that's the beauty with this team, in that tomorrow we have a chance to play better, and we will need to play better tomorrow.

But for Pop and Isaiah and DeAndre' to have a chance to win a second Atlantic 10 championship is really special, but we have work to do tonight.

Q. Coach, you told me the other day that Pop was the most serious guy on the team. Do you think this is a smile-worthy performance from him?

PHIL MARTELLI: Nope, you won't get a smile from Pop. He's got stuff going on in his head that really I'm not intellectually able to grasp.

But he knows. He knows that I know, and that's all I think that he really needs.

Q. Papa, just being a senior and being in this moment, what does it mean to you to have such a big performance in one of your last games?

PAPA NDAO: It's kind of special, but in a way it's just another day. I feel like until we win a championship, I feel like every game is just a game, just to get there. It's just a push to get what we want basically. We just want to -- just got to keep that going, I guess.



Q. DeAndre', what happens without those Papa shots going in?

DEANDRE' BEMBRY: We'll have to look for somebody else to make a big shot. Every shot that he took today was a big shot. It was right after Dayton hit a three or Dayton got a steal or something like that, and that's just the confidence we have in him and that's the confidence he has in himself. I'm just happy for Pop. We know that he has that in him, and like I said, he hit shot after shot for us tonight.

Q. DeAndre' and Isaiah, it seemed a little bit chippy out there and you guys took the brunt of it. Did you feel the same way?

ISAIAH MILES: Yeah, but that's the mentality and the physicality you want to get playing in a tournament, the game to go to the championship, so you expect to play chippy, and we knew it wasn't going to be easy, so I'm glad we were up for the challenge.

Q. Phil, you said when DeAndre' won the award, we came up short in our goal for the regular season, but now you have a chance to win this championship. How does that feel, especially the way the regular season ended?

PHIL MARTELLI: Well, I'll trade you 100 times out of 100 for the feeling now as opposed to last Saturday at 6:30. But I'm going to be honest with you; there was no time from 6:30 last Saturday that I was in a panic. I was concerned about getting my team right and giving them a chance to play meaningful games the middle of March on. So I wasn't really looking at it like to worry about, are they going to play beyond that.

Q. But how does this feel now to get --

PHIL MARTELLI: Well, it's just -- here's what matters: These guys are playing and creating memories. They're going to create a memory when they go back to the hotel because they're going to eat dinner and then they're going to the 9/11 memorial. I went over there this morning at 8:00. This is about more than basketball. It's more than books. It's about life experiences. So these guys have a life experience. The crowd has been great. The St. Joe's support has been tremendous. Just that small thing, Papa Ndao sitting in front of all of you, that hasn't happened before in his career.

I'm delighted for the players. I'm a little bit miffed because we didn't finish. Yesterday we finished. Today we kind of like skipped along to the finish line. We're going to have to be tougher tomorrow.

Q. Do any of those four shots in particular from Papa stick out to you, or is it just the collective response to all of those?

PHIL MARTELLI: I'll be honest with you; the shots in the first half stuck out more because those are shots that I just assume he's going to make. We had a conversation after the Duquesne game. He was 1 for 7 at Duquesne, seven clean looks. But we took the seven shots, and his feet one time are split, the other time he's -- he said to me I was arrogant because I thought the ball was going in.

He shoots the ball every day, and he's shot the ball every day for over 15, 18 months now. I mean, you have to understand this. Like last October, I was standing in front of a doctor and the doctor wasn't talking about when he would be back to play. The doctor was talking about if he could get out of bed and function.

So this was like serious stuff. He's an unusual dude in that he takes everything like he's got it. He'll fix it. He was scared. He was scared that day because he saw the look on my face as the doctor was explaining to me, and then you understand the enormity of coaching because you are a parent. You are responsible. And this kid is from Senegal, so you have even more responsibility.

So to have him have this opportunity, now, he can frustrate you, because you do think every shot is going in, and he does, and if you tell him to make an adjustment, he's got the answer. So good for him.

Q. What's it say to you about the chemistry and the cohesiveness of the team when DeAndre's shot is not falling but you've got guys like Papa and Aaron step up.

PHIL MARTELLI: Yeah, keep going. Keep going. The two point guards for the first time all year, like one didn't have it going, and we were just trying to put tape on it until the end.

You know, the things that they'll do to win. We're not a great foul shooting team. We're 22 for 25 today. Yesterday we played great zone, today we played lousy zone. That's what I like about it. I have to come up with a plan tonight that will allow them to play better tomorrow, and it will start with -- to be honest with you, it'll start with DeAndre'.

He can play better than that, and we will need him to

play better than that.

Q. What did Cooke do? Looked like he was a pretty good match-up.

PHIL MARTELLI: Yeah, he and Cooke are fierce competitors. We told Dre' that last night in the scouting report, that it was fierce in Philadelphia, and this was even more aggressive. That's a really, really, really, really good team. That's a really good team. And that young guy, he's good for this league, Archie Miller. He's really good for this league. There's a lot of young guys out there that have the title coach, and they have all the answers. You don't even have to ask them a question and they have all the answers. Not him. He's respectful, and he's very, very good for the profession. So it's an honor to compete against him and to have two notches on our belt against them. That's really great. I'm not sure that "go Dayton Flyers" will be any louder when we go there next year, but we'll live in this moment.