

**March 19, 2014**



An interview with:



THE MODERATOR: We'll go ahead and get started with questions for the student-athletes.

**Q. Devon, you play a lot like Branden Dawson does of Michigan State. You're the defender, you're the guy that shuts people down. Would you just talk about when you look at Michigan State knowing your role, how you see it for tomorrow night.**

DEVON SADDLER: My role is just to be a leader on the floor. Just to get these guys ready to play tomorrow and just get them talking and communicating and just bring my energy on defense first.

**Q. For the other three, you watched Michigan State on film. You see what Branden Dawson brings, that's kind of how Devon has been talked about on your team. Talk about his influence on not just scoring, but other things he does to inspire you guys.**

DAVON USHER: He's a great leader, on and off the court, defense and offense, and he motivates us to put in the same work that he does and he demands high expectations from us the same way as we demand high expectations from him. So, he's been a great leader.

JARVIS THREATT: Piggyback off of what he said, he demands you to play hard, hustle, whether we're not bringing energy in practice or

something. He brings the dog out of everybody. So that's nice to have.

CARL BAPTISTE: I would say the same thing they said. Another thing is competitiveness in practice. He makes everyone bring it. The same thing they said, on and off the court he's a leader. He makes all of us better.

**Q. Davon, everybody knows what people are saying about Michigan State. When you see that team pop up against you guys in the bracket, is that exciting or is that like an "oh God"?**

DAVON USHER: It's never an "oh God" situation with us, because we prepare ourselves to play anyone. And we knew coming into the field of 64 that we were going to face a good team. Everyone in this tournament is good. Michigan State of course, is the Big-10 champions. We don't really worry about the name on the other team's jersey, we just play against them. Those guys lace up their sneakers just like we do and we're going to put in all we got to have the outcome of winning.

**Q. Jarvis or any of you, when you watch Michigan State, what stands out about them? What makes them difficult to defend and difficult to play?**

JARVIS THREATT: Their rebounding. They're a team that crashes the offensive glass. The offensive sets, they run plenty of sets but when the ball goes up in the air you got two or three guys going after the offensive rebound each possession.

They're a team that really doesn't make too many mistakes, so they capitalize on every opportunity they have and we got to limit our turnovers and basically keep them over the glass. That's what sticks out to me.

**Q. One of the things that they talk about, matchups with them. That they're difficult to find a matchup to exploit. When you**

**look at them, is there a matchup that I'm not saying an individual player, but a way you can exploit them or are they pretty matchup proof?**

JARVIS THREATT: We have a pretty dynamic team also, so as far as matching up, I have trust in any one of my guys to go up against any one of their players. It's not a matchup that stands out to me that we're going to say, hey, we're going to pick on this guy or anything. I have faith in any one of my guys to go get a basket or get a stop on any play.

**Q. We had a chance to talk with your coach a couple days ago and he was quite a colorful funny guy. I was wondering what his personality is like when you guys are at practice, if that changes or if he keeps it light or what he's like with you guys.**

DAVON USHER: Coach's personality doesn't change. He's always that happy guy, real laid back and calm. He's a player's coach. We can relate to him, he can relate to us at sometimes. But when it's time to be serious, he's a very serious person and he trusts us to do the right thing and we trust him to do the right thing.

DEVON SADDLER: Coach's personality, it doesn't change. But when it's in film and when it's game time situations, he's always locked in. He's a player's coach. He asks us what we need to do in certain situations because sometimes the coaches don't see what's going on on the court. So we get feedback from him and he also gets feedback from us.

JARVIS THREATT: It's pretty much the same thing. The trust that he has in us this year is just unbelievable. He trusts us to make game time decisions, or whether it's on a certain play call, or change the defense up a little bit whether to press or not press. He trusts us.

As far as him in practice, he's a laid back guy, he'll joke around with us, he'll have fun on the court, he might quote a rap lyric every now and then, but when it's time to be serious and locked down, he's one of the best at it.

CARL BAPTISTE: They said it perfect, we're a really mature group, so he's very comfortable with us. There's a lot of trust and they said it best. When it's in the game, out of the game, in practice, he takes our advice, we take his advice, it's a really good dynamic.

**Q. Devon, I guess last summer it was, you were invited to Chris Paul's camp and you played with Keith Appling. What was your**

**relationship with Appling? What did you learn, maybe, about his game?**

DEVON SADDLER: I learned during the summer that when I was at the Chris Paul camp, that Keith Appling is a very feisty player. He's going to play every play. He never take as play off. On offense he's going to push the ball every chance he gets. He's just a great player and he's a very smart player, as well. He's a veteran, he always knows what's going on on the court and on defense, he's going to give it his all, every time.

**Q. Davon, two questions -- two part question, what were your first impressions of Jarvis when you first got here in the summer and you started playing? And the second part of that is, why were you guys able to be so forgiving when he came back after his suspension late in the year?**

DAVON USHER: When I first came here and started playing open gym with Jarvis. I knew that he was a very crafty player who was smart and had a high basketball IQ and he was a winner.

I knew that we were going to be close because I'm a winner as well, and all of us just piggyback off each other's game and tell each other what we need to do to help the team be better. And we accepted him very well when he came back because he's our point guard.

Even though Devon did an excellent job playing the point guard when Jarvis was out, we wanted Devon to play off the ball more, so he can get his scoring and create for others more, as well. And Jarvis just came back, put everything back in place where we needed it to be at the right time.

**Q. You've heard all week about how important rebounding is going to be tomorrow and obviously, you're the main rebounder. How does that make you approach tomorrow's game and what's going to be the key for you guys in that regard? How much important help are you going to have to get from these guys and in that aspect of the game?**

CARL BAPTISTE: We're going to need all five on the glass. That's definitely going to be my main focus tomorrow. I'm going to find Adreian Payne every play and make sure I stop him from getting to the glass, because him and Dawson are monsters when it comes to that.

**Q. Two part question -- talking to Tom**

izzo the other day, he mentioned your experience and the fact that you've gone into big places. When they were healthy you were down a guy and only lost by four. When you get that kind of respect, now that you're on a neutral court, do you feel like this is your chance to really prove something because most of the nation is picking Michigan State not to just win tomorrow, but win the tournament.

CARL BAPTISTE: We're not scared of anybody. We're ready to play. We have had a lot of success this season and we're looking at this as just another challenge and we're excited to get on the floor with them.

JARVIS THREATT: I would say our non-conference schedule has prepared us for games like this. Really we're just -- we don't -- we weren't the better team all year or I would say we don't have to be the better team all year, we just have to be able to bring it for one game. And it's on a neutral floor and we're confident, it's the NCAA tournament, anything can happen, so we're confident group, we're experienced, and we don't really back down from whoever it is that we're playing.

DEVON SADDLER: In our non-conference games we haven't been the better team, but we just played hard and we just take it play by play and we break down into four minute segments and just try to hold teams under six. And we just try it talk. We know we're going to play harder teams and bigger and more physical teams from better conferences, but we just play hard.

DAVON USHER: Coming into this game we know that what they're capable of doing and we know what we're capable of doing. Our non-conference schedule gave us some confidence coming into games like this and we wanted to play games like this. We knew we were going to face a good team in Michigan State and the tournament is built for situations like this. You never know what can happen. That's why every year it's always an upset and things don't go the way people plan them to go. You never know. We just have to be on our good game that night and see what happens.

**Q. Devon, when you got the Delaware, the school had had six straight losing seasons, four of them had been 20 loss seasons. Here you are at the NCAA tournament. Have you had any time to take a look around and marvel**

**at the big picture at where you are now in that regard or is this just a basketball game for you right now? Is this just business as usual for you right now?**

DEVON SADDLER: I haven't really took the time out to see where I really got to the big picture, but it's just a regular basketball game. This is a business trip. We have been taking business trips all year and it's no different. I'm not into the fame, I just want to win the game and that's why I'm here. After this season, maybe I'll look back and look at my legacy.

**Q. For Carl and Davon, you two transferred to Delaware, talk about your journey and what you maybe envisioned when coming to Delaware and how it played off. I would assume you guys came to Delaware for a chance to play in the NCAA tournament and now here you are.**

DAVON USHER: I knew that Delaware had a chance to go to the NCAA tournament last year and this year even if I wasn't a part of the team. Because of the great players they already had here. I just wanted to come in and be a part of something special. And when I came in and seen that those guys embraced me and embraced my leadership qualities, everything just panned out the way we wanted it to.

CARL BAPTISTE: When I was going through the process of transferring I was doing my research and I already had a relationship with the Delaware coaches from high school, but I looked at what Davon was doing, what past guys like Jamelle Hagins was doing and I definitely saw this as something that could happen and a lot of the reason I came here is because I wanted to come and help them make it happen.

**Q. Carl, a lot has been made about the association with St. Joe's, how similar are those programs? How much is this program built on what St. Joe's does?**

CARL BAPTISTE: Since Monte came from there obviously there are some similarities, but there's a number of differences as well. Because, I mean, there is a lot of that I can't even speak of, but personality-wise, I would say they're similar. They're both player coaches, but Monte does a really good job at adapting to the team he has, and I just think he's done a great job with the program so far, coming from four losing seasons to

where we are now.

**Q. For Carl, not to keep beating you up on this rebounding question, but you being the soul post guy, and Michigan State being so strong there, how does Payne and Dawson compare to some of the competition you've seen? I know you played some good teams this year.**

CARL BAPTISTE: Well, reminds me a lot of probably Ohio State. They had a good offensive rebounding team. And Villanova. Every game there's going to be something that you need to focus particularly on to win, and this game just happens to be keeping them off the offensive glass.

THE MODERATOR: All right. We'll excuse the student-athletes and take questions for coach.

**Q. You talked the other day about beating Michigan State and Baptiste just said the key to that game for you to win is the offensive glass. You got to keep them off of it. Is that his analysis or yours?**

COACH MONTE ROSS: Well, I hope that's his analysis along with mine, because he's going to be the one that's going to be in there keeping them off the glass.

They're well known for crashing the glass and when you think about Michigan State, you think about shoulder pads and helmets and all that stuff when Coach Izzo gets pissed at them. So, that's going to be a task for us. That's going to be one of the things that we have to do, because they are so hungry getting to the glass. We're going to have to keep them off. So I think that's a universal analysis in Delaware nation.

**Q. Coach Izzo talks about wanting to run the moment he gets off the bus, does that play into your hands?**

COACH MONTE ROSS: I would much rather do that than play in the half court set. And I think their running much more than they have in the past. I think that probably about 40 or 45 percent of their offense comes in transition. I don't know if that's going to be said of a Michigan State team in the past. But it sure is now.

**Q. Now that you've had a couple days to sleep on it and look at them a little bit more, are you seeing any chinks or possibilities against Michigan State?**

COACH MONTE ROSS: You use that term "sleep on it" loosely, I hope. I've not slept at all.

There aren't many chinks in their armor. Once they have gotten healthy, which they are right now, there are a lot of teams I would say are limping into the tournament, and you can name them. But Michigan State has gotten healthy at the right time, at the right time of year. And when they are healthy, they resemble much more so that No. 1 or No. 2 team in the country than they do -- when I was watching the Wisconsin game, I think, they had 22 beside their name. That must have been a typo for them to be called the 22nd best team in the country. But, in watching them, they just keep getting better and better. So, I think I'm just going to do myself a service and just stop watching them.

**Q. NCAA tournaments are always about matchups is what makes them difficult is that there is no matchup anywhere that is an obvious weakness that most teams, even good teams usually have?**

COACH MONTE ROSS: Well, the biggest matchup that we're going to try to capitalize on, and I told my guys this, is Coach Izzo's lack of tournament experience. I don't think he's really been in a lot of pressure cooker situations, so we're going to try to lean on that. At least that's what I told my team.

And then, the other thing is, in their Big-10 championship game they had to play against Michigan, which is obviously a rival and a very tough opponent, but in our championship game we had to play against William and Mary, so we had to play against two guys. So, we're very prepared for this situation that's coming up.

But in an all seriousness, what else can you say about a team like them? Here's the thing about seeding and all that. People get all worked up -- oh they should be a number two, a number three. It really doesn't matter to them what they are, because like you said, matchups are the key to it. Who it really hurts is a 13 seeded Delaware team who I think is pretty good. But we have to play a team like Michigan State, who is much closer to a one than it is, you know, instead of us having the opportunity to do whatever, we're going up against one of the best teams in the country.

And but, you know what? When you're in this type of situation, when you're in a tournament



situation like this, it's one game. It's one game. If we were playing them, and I told our team, there are a lot teams that we played during the year that we had to play them seven games series, they have no shot at beating us.

If we had to play Michigan State in a seven game series, be very, very difficult for us to win. But in a one game situation, I think that's the beauty of March Madness.

**Q. Tell us about your relationship with the Vice President, please, and how it's grown?**

COACH MONTE ROSS: Scott Douglas?

(Laughter.) Well, here's a funny story, and we were getting ready for our championship game against William and Mary, and I get a call on my cell phone, we were at breakfast the day of the game and I look down and I never answer my phone on game day. And I look down and it was a 202 number, so I just pressed ignore.

But I will listen to my messages. And I listened to my messages and I had a message have Vice President Biden, that he was calling to wish us luck. Bad move to ignore the Vice President. Really bad move.

So, I tried to call the number back, as you can guess, I didn't get through. But he did call me right back and it was, I thought he was just going to say good luck, but we talked for five or ten minutes and he was in Chile. He was at a big heads of state dinner in Chile and he said, look, I wanted to call you after the game to congratulate you because I'm sure you guys are going to win, but I'll be in a big dinner and I won't be able to get away. So, he did call the next afternoon. When I was in my office I saw that same 202 number and you can guess, I picked it up right away.

**Q. Follow-up, have you known him for awhile? I read that you've been to his house, but is this one of those things where is he jumping on the band wagon now?**

COACH MONTE ROSS: No no no, he's not jumping on the band wagon. He is Delaware through and through. He is so supportive of everything at Delaware and especially athletics. He was around a lot last year when our women's team was making a run with Elena Delle Donne, and, no, he bleeds blue and gold. He's Delaware through and through. And it's great for our University, in my opinion, to have somebody like that to support you and to be out in the forefront and tweeting about you and the whole nine yards.

So, I'm just pleased to be a part of that relationship.

**Q. Davon Usher was talking about how you stay calm and how you have a light atmosphere in the locker room. How hard is it to do that when you're facing a team like Michigan State?**

COACH MONTE ROSS: We will have to do what we do. For us to come now and start to change what we do, one, the players see through it right away. If you start, if I start to go in there and be different than what I've been all year, they will see -- and then it provides, in my opinion, a certain angst among them that we don't want to have. We want them to be the same way. It's worked for us 25 times this year, so we're going to do the same thing. We played high level opponents, just like Michigan State, not as good as Michigan State, but high level opponents. Villanova who is a two seed, Ohio State who is I think a six seed. So we played some high level opponents and we want to make sure these guys go out, they're loose, and we want to do the things that have gotten us to this point. We don't want to change it mid course or midstream here.

**Q. Is it a potential advantage for you guys that you're playing your first game in 10 days and they have just played three games in three days, not that long ago?**

COACH MONTE ROSS: I don't know. We played well at times when we have had breaks, but we have also played well at times when we are back to back games. And I just think it's a matter of how fast each team settles in. As good as Michigan State is, and they're going to be nervous to start the game, just because it's the NCAA tournament and it's just natural.

I think for us, our guys, we're going to be nervous. Who settles in the quickest, who settles in first, who makes their first shot and sees that ball go in the rim is going to be a big deal. So I don't think that plays a big part in it. People will say, okay, well, maybe they're tired and that sort of thing, at this time of the year, I don't buy it. I think that the excitement of the NCAA tournament allows you to overcome any fatigue or anything like that.

**Q. How important is it for you guys to get off to a good start more so maybe than some of your other games, just because of the**

**ability of the team that you're playing?**

COACH MONTE ROSS: Yeah, they have such fire power that we have gotten behind a lot this year, and been able to come back. But Michigan State does have a lot of fire power and when you come back it means that the other team, it means you're scoring and the other team is going through some droughts. They don't go through a whole lot of droughts, just because they have so many answers to a lot of questions. And so it's going to be important for us, yes, to get off to a good start.

**Q. Are you able to play with your team the fact that everyone's picking Michigan State, not just to win this game, but the tournament, so there's more pressure on them rather than on your guys.**

COACH MONTE ROSS: Well, you know what? I don't know. I really don't know. I think that through NCAA rules we were allowed to or our players were allowed to participate in the Warren Buffett Billion Dollar Bracket. Shoot, I think some of them picked Michigan State, some of our players, so I don't know. I just think that our guys are focused, they're lose, they're ready to go. I don't think they get too much involved in what the media is saying and that sort of thing. I always tell them that we have to play for each other. We have to play for who is in this locker room. And we can't worry about what the other people say.

Because the whole world is -- I just told the guys, I said shoot, if we are able to do and play the way that I expect us to play, I'll probably get a call from Warren Buffett, because he'll be the happiest person in the world, because we'll break up everybody's bracket so there will be no billion dollar pay out. So, we'll see how it goes.

THE MODERATOR: All right thank you, coach.

COACH MONTE ROSS: All right. Thank you.

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