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An interview with:



THE MODERATOR: We'll go ahead and get started with an opening statement from coach and then take questions for the student-athletes.

COACH MICK CRONIN: First of all I want to congratulate Harvard. They have an excellent team. They have had a great year. In my mind, today's game was anything but an upset. They got a great team. Tough draw for us. In my opinion they're one of the best teams we played all year. We knew that all week. They did not catch us by surprise by any stretch of the imagination.

That being said, defensively we were far from our best in the first half. That was the difference in the game. Had us playing from behind all night. And it allowed them to do some things offensively because we were trying to come from behind all night. Didn't defend the 3-point line and didn't communicate the way we needed to.

So, I knew we were going to have to have a great defensive effort to win. Second half we did. We had an excellent defensive effort in the second half. But we weren't able to get the ball in the basket, in particular around the rim. We really struggled around the rim in the second half. And that was the difference in the game.

THE MODERATOR: Take questions for the student-athletes.

Q. Obviously congratulations on the regular season. Just dealing with Siyani Chambers, he went 2-10 and doesn't look like he affected much, if you look at the stat sheet, but just the way he handled the ball, sort of free throws down the stretch, grabbed a couple of rebounds, talk about his impact on the game.

JUSTIN JACKSON: He was just being a point guard. He was controlling his team and controlling the momentum of the game and he was just being the point guard for Harvard and he did his job.

Q. Sean, why do you think you only got four shots in the second half?

SEAN KILPATRICK: They played pretty good defense and we were missing opportunities, that was really it.

Q. Down the stretch, Sean, you were coming off a screen trying to fight through it and lost the handle and Siyani kind of scooped it up. What happened on the play?

SEAN KILPATRICK: It was a lot of touching there, but that's no excuse for losing that ball. Even if I got tripped up a little bit, it was no reason for it.

Q. One of the big things we were talking about with Harvard was without Smith they weren't necessarily going to be as big or as physical. But you were down there, you know Kyle was very aggressive, just sort of describe the battles in the paint for things.

JUSTIN JACKSON: They did a good job, I just, like coach was saying, I missed a lot of opportunities around the rim. I usually don't do that going one handed flipping the ball. I can't really comment on that, just bad on my part and I was not finishing around the rim, that's something I need to improve on and keep working on.

THE MODERATOR: All right. We'll excuse you to the locker room and take questions for coach.

Q. Same question I asked Sean, you got four shots in the second half. Why?

COACH MICK CRONIN: Harvard's defense. Every time we tried to free him they doubled him. Any time he came off a pick on the ball they doubled him. Any time he came off of a pick off the ball they left the guy setting the screen and doubled him even off the ball.

And then, at times, we did get him the ball and he tried to advance it to the basket, and they put four guys on him. We just weren't able to make enough shots to loosen him up. We never loosened him up to where they couldn't do that. UCONN employed the same game plan against us, it was effective. I knew it was coming again today.

And at the end of the day we missed a lot of layups. Missed a lot of layup ups. But that was their game plan. He would have had -- for him to get more shots he would have just had to take bad shots over people. They just, they were going to help at all costs.

Q. How much of that was a factor, the fact that you didn't have a consistent number two guy this year?

COACH MICK CRONIN: Well, I would disagree, because we have been in the Top-10 half the year in the top 15, we tied with the National Champs and won our conference and what I would say is when we did, when Justin gave us inside scoring, that was the difference in our team this year versus last year.

So, when we did have Justin on the interior, or even games that Titus gave us scoring around the rim, it stops you from being able to just chase the perimeter guys all over the place. In particular SK. When we struggle to score inside the way we did today, when a team decides, any team decides hey we're going to play them this way, we have got to score inside. Because the only other option would be SK running around taking bad shot after bad shot, because they're just not going to leave him open.

So, what I would say is when we got inside scoring, then teams had to adjust and then he would be open a lot more. We didn't do a good enough job of making them pay. We had a lot of opportunities too: Where they over helped per their game plan, and we just couldn't get the ball in the basket around the rim. Even down three and we had a point blank lay up that rolled off the rim with a minute to play. That really -- you make that,

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you don't even have to foul, you make that, you go get a defensive stop -- we were getting all kind of defensive stops. I don't know when their last field goal was, the missed layups really killed us.

And that was all year I would say our Achilles Heel. You can go back to our losses against New Mexico and Xavier, teams that decided we're going to take away the perimeter at all costs and dare them to score inside on us.

When we couldn't do it, we struggled. When we could do it, like against Memphis both times, we looked great. Our offense was highly effective, our shooting percentage was high, but that would be the common denominator for us.

Q. Harvard didn't sneak up on you by any means, but as a coach looking at what Tommy's done with that program and obviously, having played them just now, did you kind of say, man this, is a pretty --

COACH MICK CRONIN: Oh they're a high major team. I haven't seen them until this year. Actually, I hadn't seen them play until Sunday night. So, it's hard for me to assess what he's done. Obviously, he's done a great job. It's their fourth or third straight tournament.

Q. Third.

COACH MICK CRONIN: But, they got real players. They got high major players. They can play against anybody. I said this yesterday in here. If it wasn't for two slip ups for whatever reason, it's a long year, their two losses to Yale and FAU, their only other two losses, they dominated Colorado for 35 minutes and the altitude got them and they lose by five to UCONN without Wesley Saunders who their best players.

So, you're talking about a team that would have been 30-0. They're a very good team. Very good team. We had our chances. It's a different game if we score the ball inside and if we come out playing defense the way we did in the second half. But, it was a Top-25 game today. Sometimes, that's the cards that the committee deals you, it is what it is.

Q. A week ago in Memphis you had mentioned that the UCONN game was practice for coming back. And the idea that you felt like you executed well down the stretch and just didn't make a lay up or and when it was, you were down one, two minutes left did you feel

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confident that your team could execute down the stretch?

COACH MICK CRONIN: At that point, I thought we were in business. But, we had a couple of empty trips again. And I would have to look back at it, but I know Titus missed a point blank layup going down the stretch there. That really hurt, that was with a minute left. So, I would have to look at our last three or four possessions, but we had way too many empty trips.

I thought we were going to have to get the -- the way they defend around the rim, they do a great job with their body. We worked really hard on trying to make sure we finished with strength. But, like Justin alluded to it, we had way too many one hand shots. Way too many one hand shots. We just were sloppy, didn't get the ball in the basket. That's the name of the game. You got to get the ball in the basket. We didn't get it in the basket. Put too much pressure on our defense, which came through for us in the second half, but that being said, way too much pressure on our defense. Got to score when you're three, four feet and in with the basketball. Got to make the other team pay.

THE MODERATOR: All right. Thank you.

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