

Big Ten Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Friday March 15, 2019

Tom Izzo

Michigan State Spartans

Michigan State - 77, Ohio State - 70

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Michigan State head coach Tom Izzo. Coach, congratulations on your 600th win. Coach, an opening statement.

COACH IZZO: They asked me what that means. And I said, it means good things; you're getting old, and you're 600 shy of Mike Krzyzewski and Jim Boeheim. It keeps you humble and it makes you realize you haven't accomplished that much yet. I give Ohio State a lot of credit. These are tough games when you come in and that second game for them and the first game for us, I think it's a big advantage for that team. I thought that all along. Maybe I've thought that because I think we played in every -- we've had a bye just about every time we've been in this tournament -- and Ohio State, with a young team, played awfully hard. I did not think we had the energy and the focus and the passion that was needed, which falls on me. And I was disappointed with that throughout the game. We got some situations that, Cassius has been a little laid up since the Michigan game. So everybody's wondering why I took him out. It was some bad play but more because of what he's gone through. He hasn't practiced, Sunday, Monday or Tuesday. And Kyle Ahrens gave me everything he could. But he just kind of laid it on the line at the end and finally he was in trouble. And then Foster Loyer came in and made some big, big plays. And to his credit, they were big, big, big, big plays. But Cassius Winston's credit, one of the things you observe as a coach and you kind of try to find out the pulse of your team, he was his big, big, biggest cheerleader. And at one time even told me to leave him in. That shows a little bit of the quality of kid that Cassius is. And it was probably the right thing, too, because they were able to rest some guys. But our three main guys, Kenny and Cash and X really struggled early. But we found a way. And the name of this game is to find a way. We turned it over eight or nine times first half, only two the second half. I think that really proves my point that why should you need a halftime to refocus. But sometimes until Nike puts phones on our belts so I can text my guys, I guess I'm going to have to live with that.

Q. Congrats on 600. State finals are going, state high school finals are going on in your building.



And the way Foster lit it up kind of reminded me of last year. Talk about that. Do you have any flashbacks out there seeing Foster and his performance tonight?

COACH IZZO: It wasn't the state finals; I've watched Foster for three years do that. He averaged 40 in the state tournament. So that was good. But I'll put an advertisement in for Mooch and I. I'm wearing this gold and black sport coat because, if you're from Iron Mountain you're wearing one, too. The Mountaineers are playing in the finals tomorrow. You talk about something exciting, Steve and I, our hometown team, not even did he and I make it down that far to the finals back in the day. So my gold and black is in honor of them and Foster, maybe it's March time for him. Maybe that's what he figured. Because I think he averaged 40 a game in both of those games. He looked so smooth and comfortable tonight and definitely saved us in the first half.

Q. Over the time you've been coaching here, any commonality in how your team has performed in this tournament translating to the Big Dance?

COACH IZZO: No, that's the nice thing about me. I'm kind of universal. I've been here to the Big Dance as a 1 seed and got beat the first game. And I've been to the Big Dance as a 7 seed and gone to a Final Four. So I'm kind of flexible. We've won this thing and -- as a No. 1 seed. We've lost the opening game. I haven't. I think it's always harder on the highest seeds. But it's good. The tournament is good because it gives you a chance to talk about one-and-done. The uniqueness of our jobs, different than the NBA, a lot like the NFL, but the other three sports, it's always best of whatever. And when it's best of whatever, you've always got a safety net. When it's one-and-done, that's why I called the timeout at the end. You've got to explain to the guys, you know, you can do this, but every time you do it now you're going to be going home. And freshmen don't understand that. Even sometimes upperclassmen don't. Even if they've been through it -- I've been through it so many times that I at least understand it. Now, I can't do anything about it all the time but I at least understand it. I think it's important that you're playing better in this, but they informed me in '99, went to a Final Four, Northwestern wasn't very good then unlike now and we blew them out by two. And, I mean, we went on to win the Big Ten Championship and to get to a Final Four. So, I don't

know, I'm not a big -- I don't believe in why does what happened 10 years ago have anything to do -- when I see the stats that so-and-so hasn't beaten so-and-so since 1911. Half those guys are dead so what does it matter? I don't think they're doing anything to solve it. It's the day-to-day stuff. And our guys need to learn some things today and yet they grew up in the second half. They did some better things. We had some freshmen, we had two freshmen that scored 20-some points, and we weren't led by Cassius Winston or by Nick Ward or by Kenny Goins. And I've got a feeling if I look back on the year, those guys led us 99 percent of the time. So I feel good about the future.

Q. You guys play so well without Nick, and I know you want to get them back on the floor. What challenges do you have to get him on the floor and not disrupt the flow you've had the last couple of weeks?

COACH IZZO: That's a good question. It is hard. Because I think we really need Nick. I think Nick did a phenomenal job considering he hasn't touched much. He hasn't practiced two times since -- in three and a half weeks. And I think that's a big deal. And I thought he played pretty much within himself. Got enough minutes where we got him some time. But what did he go? Did he go 3-for-4? Couple of rebounds, eight points, 15 minutes. That's a great start. I think we'll be able to build on that. But when people -- early in the year people said, you might be better than you were last year with two lottery picks. Those people are insane. And these same people that are -- you're better -- we played better. We played good. I mean I can see why the eye test sees that. But we needed a lot more flexibility, and there's going to be fouls, there's going to be problems. Getting Nick Ward back, I think is very critical to us marching forward.

Q. Bench points big today, 24 bench points. And you said if we're going to win this thing we'll need bodies to step up. They stepped up today.

COACH IZZO: I thought they did. One of the things we came with is we had to get some bench points. I didn't think we would get that many out of Foster. We thought we had to not turn the ball over, and we had eight in the first half. We thought we had to rebound better and I think we were down in that. We made progress in all those areas. Our bench did a better job. I think we can still get more out of Gabe and more out of Nick. Our rebounding improved a little bit the second half. Our turnovers improved a lot. And part of Cassius earlier was he just wasn't moving real good. And I'll tell you something, he's done a heck of a job with Ohio State. They've got a young team. And even though their guy wasn't hurt, he was out for three games. And he's, -- Wesson is a hell of a player but I think some of those freshmen are improving. And

they're definitely going to be a tournament team that I think brings something to the table with Wesson in there that can help. As I still think, as I promote our league, I still think Indiana is a tournament team. And that's speaking from experience in getting beat and how they play.

Yesterday was a struggle for them. But in general this league has been unbelievable this year.

Q. If you were going to achieve 600 wins, what advice would you give to young coaches going into the game to achieve that kind of success?

COACH IZZO: (Chuckling). Find an AD and a president that's willing to stick with you when you start out 4 and 5 in your third year and everybody in the world wanted to fire you, that would be one thing I would do. But you know what I'd do, I'd get a good staff. I'd get good players. Better players make you a better coach. When you got good players -- I ran into Denzel coming off, and I just think all the things he did for me. I had to remind Gabe in the locker room, because I wasn't real happy with Gabe today on some things. But Denzel had three points his freshman year, I think four, that's what he averaged. Ends up a lottery pick. There's a process. That's what I'd tell young guys. There's a process. Stick to the process. Don't try to -- you have a lot of guys trying to shortcut it right now. And some of them are going to pay for it. And so don't let the pressure get to you. Just stick with the process. Stick with what you believe in, and hopefully get hired by the right people. I think this "Hired To Be Fired" thing we're in right now is a little crazy. If you're going to build culture, you can't change a program until you build your culture. And culture is not something you build in two years, three years or four years, if you want to build it the right way. So I'd tell those guys to follow Mike Krzyzewski and Jim Boeheim and you'll get to 1,200 wins instead of 600. That's what I'd tell them.



BIG
MEN'S BASKETBALL
TOURNAMENT
CHICAGO 2019
PRESENTED BY SoFi

2019 BIG TEN MEN'S BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT

Game 7 • Friday, March 15, 2019

United Center • Chicago, Ill.

#1 MICHIGAN STATE 77 (26-6), #8 OHIO STATE 70 (19-14)

MSU will play #4 WISCONSIN/#13 NEBRASKA at Noon CT Sat. on CBS



BIG
MEN'S BASKETBALL
TOURNAMENT
CHICAGO 2019
PRESENTED BY SoFi

MICHIGAN STATE PLAYER QUOTES

Michigan State junior G Cassius Winston

On Foster Loyer...

"You saw me -- you know I was going crazy for him. Like I said, I know what that feels like."

Michigan State freshman G Foster Loyer

On his teammates' energy on the bench...

"My teammates are my brothers and you know we have one another's back and we are happy for each other's success."

On whether his performance and confidence trending upward is sustainable...

"I'm going to keep looking for my shot, and I am going to keep being confident in what I do, and whatever the team needs me to do is what I am going to do. So it might not always be making that shot, but it might getting my teammates the ball. And so whatever my teammates need me to do and whatever my coaches ask me to do, that is what I am going to do."

Michigan State senior G Matt McQuaid

On what's ahead for the Spartans...

"We are just going to control what we can control and you know that's tomorrow's game. So that's all we're focused on right now."

On Nick Ward's return...

"It was great. I miss Big Nick. You know, he played great. He even hit a couple jump shots, hit some good free throws. He looked good today."

Big Ten Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Friday March 15, 2019

Chris Holtmann

Ohio State Buckeyes

Michigan State - 77, Ohio State - 70

COACH HOLTMANN: Give Michigan State credit. I think they're a terrific, terrific team. Really solid in every way. And I think they have a chance to have a really special, special postseason. So give them credit, first and foremost.

Proud of the way our guys battled, fought, kept fighting, kept battling all the way until the end. But just didn't have enough today.

Q. You are widely respected as a tactician. I'm curious how frustrating can it be when you game plan but you probably didn't game plan for Foster Loyer?

COACH HOLTMANN: He's a good player. We saw him in high school. And, sure, when you have, you know, Winston, it's hard to spend too much time talking about his back-up. But we did talk about him. But he played really well. Give him credit. I thought his 3s gave them real life, when he was 3-of-3 and then the one in the zone in the second half when it was a one- or two-possession game. I thought his 3s really gave them life.

Q. Just your overall thought as you leave here today just on what these two games meant for your team to kind of stabilize things after the way the regular season ended. Are you coming away from here a little bit better about your team than coming in?

COACH HOLTMANN: Yeah, positive about our group. I thought our group really competed. I thought our guys really competed both days, really competed. Beat, obviously, a really good Indiana team and then competed here today. We had some foul trouble issues that really did affect our team with Keyshawn and Kaleb. But really positive about this group and obviously we've had some really, really good moments this year, but as you mentioned finished with a tough couple game stretch there before we came here. But proud of this group and feel really good about where we're headed.

Q. Is it enough? Are you guys in your mind in the NCAA Tournament?

COACH HOLTMANN: I believe so, sure. But I think our



body of work from opening night, which a coach says, body of work, opening night, well, our opening-night win was pretty good. But, yeah, I certainly feel confident in our body of work. And the league we played in is top to bottom the best in the country. I really believe that. I think the metrics would show that. Coaches say that all the time: that's the best league in the country. But I think our metrics would show an objective look at that, that it is the best.



BIG
MEN'S BASKETBALL
TOURNAMENT
CHICAGO 2019
PRESENTED BY SoFi

2019 BIG TEN MEN'S BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT

Game 7 • Friday, March 15, 2019

United Center • Chicago, Ill.

#1 MICHIGAN STATE 77 (26-6), #8 OHIO STATE 70 (19-14)

MSU will play #4 WISCONSIN/#13 NEBRASKA at Noon CT Sat. on CBS



BIG
MEN'S BASKETBALL
TOURNAMENT
CHICAGO 2019
PRESENTED BY SoFi

OHIO STATE PLAYER QUOTES

Ohio State junior F Andre Wesson

On having Kaleb back and getting into an offensive rhythm...

"Yeah, it's good having Kaleb back, who is a big part of our offense. Our offense is definitely playing with more impact."

On offensive spacing and operating more efficiently with Kaleb...

"A lot of our offensive plays involve him and when you have a key player like that out, you have to find somebody else to go to. It is hard to make that transition."

Ohio State sophomore F Kaleb Wesson

On the physicality of Michigan State and fouling out...

"It's tough getting into a rhythm. You think everything is going well and then the game stops. It's hard to get back into a rhythm again. You have to sit out for a couple minutes and then try to get right back in the game. Having to get back into the rhythm of the game is hard."

On MSU's physicality compared to other teams they have played...

"They are very physical. They have good, big men who know how to use their feet and upper body pretty well."