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Indiana State – 60
Missouri State – 56

An Interview with:

**COACH LANSING
AARON CARTER
MYLES WALKER
DWAYNE LATHAN
JAKE ODUM
CARL RICHARD**

THE MODERATOR: The State Farm Missouri Valley Conference tournament champions Indiana State Sycamores are with us. We'll have head coach start off with a statement, then questions for the five student-athletes.

COACH LANSING: I just want to thank these players. I've said it all along, the quality of young men on this team is the best I've ever been around. I'm very fortunate to have an opportunity to coach at Indiana State. I can't thank Ron Prettyman and Dr. Bradley for giving me the opportunity. Certainly think we're making the most of it so far.

But these players deserve everything. I wanted it so bad for them, because they've been tremendous to me since I was hired, since the change. I'm awfully excited for them and for our community. It's another unbelievable group of people that have just been so supportive of me, my family and these players.

They've gotten on board with it, and I'm just awfully excited to have a chance to keep playing and for our fans to keep following us and for these guys to go to the NCAA Tournament.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the student-athletes.

Q. Aaron, Missouri State was saying that you guys defensively seemed really in tune with what they were trying to do offensively. Is that just due to preparation or having seen them for a third time this year?

AARON CARTER: Yeah, it's preparation. Our assistant coach Lou Gudino did a great job scouting these guys. And we had a game plan how we were going to guard them and what they were going to do and stuff. So we were ready for them, and did a good job guarding them in the second half especially.

Q. Jake, at the start of the game when they jumped out of the gate with a 9-0 run. What was said during that timeout that kind of settled you guys down?

JAKE ODUM: Coach said keep being confident. We started off slow every game this tournament. We were down at halftime every game. And we had a little sense of urgency in the second half. Our guys battled through and we ended up hitting shots. We battled hard for 40 minutes and became the tough are team today.

Q. You had a tough assignment with Creekmore, and did a good job on him. Can you talk about the battle you had with him for 40 minutes, basically?

MYLES WALKER: Creekmore is a really good player. There is no doubt about that. I just knew this game was going come down to defense. Anybody on the team can score. There is no problem with that. I could care less about scoring. I can score if I want to. Coach Lou and Coach Lansing told me not to score, so I'm not going to do that.

But I think my role on this team is to play defense, get blocked shots, get rebounds, head screens, do what he needs to tell me to do, and just be a good team player.

Q. Aaron, can you talk about the key against Kyle Weems?

AARON CARTER: Just be on his body and pressure him, and not let him be comfortable out on the perimeter and get a shot off easily. We pressured his shots really well, and I think he was getting frustrated a little bit and started forcing shots. But we did a good job on crowding him and not giving him space.

Q. Aaron, you had about eight or nine straight points in a key stretch of the game. What does this mean for you?

AARON CARTER: Yeah, that's what I'm told. I didn't realize I had that many straight points. This was huge for me. I've been in this tournament for four years and we've never even made it to Saturday before. To win it feels so great.

We've got a great group of guys here and we play really well together and really hard. That's how we got it done.

Q. Jake, talk me through Missouri State's last possession and what you saw on the corner with Jermaine Mallett?

JAKE ODUM: We just wanted to stick them defensively. It was one stop. We do a drill in practice that you've got to get stops to get out, and that's what we were keying on. Just don't let them get any open looks and that's what we did. Carl had a good help side there and forced Mallett to dribble off his knee and it went out of bounds. That was big time.

Q. Jake, being a Terre Haute native, what does that mean to you personally helping your team get into the big dance?

JAKE ODUM: It's great. I feel great. I'm glad I chose Indiana State. I was around ten years ago when they won it, and it's a dream come true to be here today and going dancing.

Q. Jake, being a hometown guy, what's it mean to your community? You probably thought this could be accomplished when you got to Indiana State, but did you think it could be accomplished your first year there?

JAKE ODUM: Yeah, you play the game to be here. That was our goal from day one. We didn't want to fall short. We grew a lot this season, and we toughened up, and we were able to play for 40 minutes tonight. It's a great thing for the community. It gets us going. We had great fan support today. I know they're really excited for us,

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and I hope they can come out to our next game wherever that is at.

Q. Dwayne, I don't want you to feel left out. Missouri State had come from behind and pulled their wins in the tournament before today and took a pretty good run on you guys near the end. What kind of resolve did you guys have to fight them off?

DWAYNE LATHAN: We knew they were going to make a run and we were going to make one too. So when they didn't make a run, we just had to stay calm and just keep playing defense. Stick to our scouting report and what we were trying to do. When we stopped the run, just try to make one back at them.

Q. Carl, could you talk about the ability of this team to put teams away in the second half and where that resiliency comes from this team?

CARL RICHARD: Early on in the season we had a problem in the second half. We were coming out flat. And Coach tried to instill in us toughness that's needed to grind out games. I mean, we started games flat this tournament, but we were able to come out in the second half and really lock teams down. We talked about everything that the team is doing in the first half that's giving us problems during halftime, and we just tried to come out and implement it.

Q. Aaron, this is the first time the program's gone to the NCAA Tournament in a decade. Not to look ahead, but you're a senior, when you watch teams from other parts of the country, who knows where you'll be seeded, but you're going to play a pretty good team. Are you excited and what are your thoughts about the next step?

AARON CARTER: You can't help but be excited about that. Get a chance to play against a good team. Whoever it is, it doesn't matter. We're just going to prepare for them like any other game and do the best we can and play tough.

Q. Aaron, I think you were one of two recruits on the team four years ago when the coaching change previous to this one was made. A last place program at that time. I've asked you this before, but now that you're sitting here with an NCAA Tournament bid on

the line, can you put into words the progress that this program has made in your time here?

AARON CARTER: I think we've made progress every year I've been here. I came in under Waltman, and I'm glad that Coach Lansing and those guys got to come back and talked me into staying when I was getting recruited in high school.

It's been great to play for four years here. This is just the icing on the cake. This is great.

Q. Northern Iowa's run last year in the NCAA Tournament really represented the Valley well. Any thoughts on your chances this year?

AARON CARTER: If they can do it, I think we can do it. That's the attitude you have to have. You have to believe you can play with whoever you're going to be matched up against, and I think we can.

Q. Jake, you guys are going to play in the NCAA Tournament against a pretty good team. You just mentioned Northern Iowa's run. Have you had time to even think about that?

JAKE ODUM: I mean, we know we're going to play a tough team, but we're all humans, you know what I mean. It's five guys on the floor against five guys on the floor. We're looking forward to it. We're not done yet. We want to keep dancing. We want to go into the tournament. But it's one game at a time, and we're looking forward to it.

Q. Dwayne, you're the leading scorer on the team. Is it a sign of how your teammates can help out and anyone can step up at any time?

DWAYNE LATHAN: Yeah, this is how it's going during the whole conference time. We have a good team, great team, and we have good players on the team. So we're not the type of team that one player has to score 20 every night. Just everybody does their part and gives their team anything. Just gives their team everything every night. Sometimes I might be high scorer or sometimes Jake might be all the way down the line to our bench players.

We're just a great team, and everybody does their part.

Q. Obviously, the defensive effort made a big difference. But what held the team together when you didn't make a field goal,

what do you think held the team together over that stretch?

COACH LANSING: When you play a good team and veteran team as they are, it's not going to be easy. We had a stretch of offense for a while in the second half, and we knew it was going to be difficult. But we just tried to say in all our timeouts that our depth is going to wear on them. We kept saying their tank is getting empty and ours is staying full because of guys coming in and out of there fresh.

I thought we really grew up in the second half of the Wichita State game, and we did it again a day -- and these are back-to-back to back very good opponents that our guys were able to just be so determined that they made the plays down the stretch to win the game.

Q. Talk about what this means to you personally? First-year head coach and now you're going to the NCAA Tournament?

COACH LANSING: Well, it means a lot. I'm the type of guy that I just wanted it so bad for these kids. I've been fortunate enough to be in a couple of these and win a couple of Big Ten tournaments when I was at Iowa. There's never been a more deserving group of guys. There's never been a more deserving community, athletic administration, school, on down.

I'm just glad I get the opportunity to be a part of it and share it with all of them.

Q. Going into the half, the second half, what were some defensive adjustments you guys made coming out for the second half?

COACH LANSING: We really felt like and we kind of talked differently after halftime at Wichita, but we felt like we were doing a tremendous job against our half court offense, but they were getting stuff in transition. We had some turnovers, we just initiated their fast break and gave them baskets. Then they got 20 offensive rebounds.

So it's not like we stopped them in the second half. But we felt like we take away transition baskets, not give them second chance points and we'd win.

Q. Coach, after a couple of big wins like this back-to-back, how much confidence does it give you moving forward into the NCAA Tournament?

COACH LANSING: Well, you know, we'll obviously play a very good team, probably a ranked team. But I couldn't be more excited about it. These guys are an unselfish group. They're a hard-working group. I would imagine that we'd be a very difficult team to play in the first round.

Q. Can you talk about your use of Jake Kelly today, both what he meant defensively for you and also the integral role he played in the end and what it means to you knowing all the travails he's been through?

COACH LANSING: I've said it before, there hasn't been any kid that's gone through more than what Jake Kelly has been. I remember when he first came to Indiana State, he said he wanted to play in the NCAA Tournament. For him to get this opportunity, and he had it right in his hands too at the free-throw line to seal the game and take us into it.

I'm really, really pleased for him and his entire family. Obviously, things haven't gone exactly the way he liked it. But he's going to have a bright future in basketball and he's going to enjoy this with his teammates.

Q. In general terms, what was the key to your defensive success today?

COACH MARTIN: Lou Gudino had all three scouts. He's my right-hand and left-hand. He had us prepared for every game. When we were watching tape all night just agree with him. If I've got some input maybe he'll let me make an adjustment here and there.

But it starts with him. His preparation was terrific in all three games. And our guys have just grown up and gotten better with what exactly our plan is and sticking to it. We still make mistakes. I lose my mind a little bit, and we kind of reel it back in. I want them to be perfect, and it's impossible to be perfect.

But you give a lot of credit to Lou, and the way the guys buy into it and stick with it throughout the game.

Q. Can you talk a little bit about the journey from DeMoines Roosevelt to Sycamoreville, to Iowa City, back to Indiana State, to the big dance? It's been an interesting road for you.

COACH LANSING: It really has. I just think when you go through some tough times -- it's a tough business, and things happen. I've tried to just continue to be myself and work awfully hard

and be around good people. You know, that type of stuff happens, good things will happen.

I've just kind of considered the same way with my staff and the players I'm going to be around. If you surround yourself with good people, good things are going to happen. Everything happens for a reason, and I couldn't be more proud than to be with Indiana State, and be with our athletic department. I'm glad to share it with everybody.

Q. Is this the biggest thing to hit the community since the last time Indiana State went to the NCAA?

COACH LANSING: I don't know. It is for us. I don't even read papers. So it's all about basketball with me. I'm pretty singular in my focus and what I'm trying to do and support the other programs at Indiana State. We wanted to be the community's team. The community has rallied around us. We've got some local guys that have helped and the rest of our guys are really good people, so that helps.

I don't know if it's the biggest thing, but it's certainly the biggest thing right now until we win the next one.

Q. If you could put it into words, can you describe the immense pressure of those final couple of minutes?

COACH LANSING: You know, once you're in it, it's just the way it is. You strive. I talked a lot to the guys at the end of the year, you want to play in important games. And with that, you have to play in pressure and remain calm. Still go Sticks to your game plan. You just want that clock. If you've got the lead, you want the clock to move faster. If you're behind, you want to make a play to switch that around a little bit; but I love that, that type of game.

I know this number 13 here that sits by me, he likes the pressure a little bit too. So with the guys I got, I put complete trust in them and hopefully we'll make enough plays to win.

Q. You play three teams that will be in the NCAA Tournament for sure, Notre Dame, Purdue and Morehead State. Where does Missouri State stack up against those other three teams that you've played?

COACH LANSING: Well, for one, I think Missouri State and Wichita State are both terrific

and very deserving teams. Whether people think they're in or not, I think that's crazy. Those teams are NCAA Tournament teams. Missouri State's really good. They're very good, and I feel bad for Cuonzo because he's such a tremendous friend and tremendous person. His team has his personality.

So with his toughness, they're going to be tough whoever they play. They're going to play in the postseason regardless. They're as good as anybody.

I'm not kidding you. Very good Purdue team. Very good Notre Dame team, but Missouri State played either one of those teams, they'd give them a heck of a battle.

Q. Who do you think about first when this moment came?

COACH LANSING: Just the guys. There's no question about it. I pace around a lot, and I especially hated Friday when you have the long day, and you have 8:30 there. I just want it so bad for them. I think a lot about some of the tough they've been through and how much they've meant to me and how they've been to coach, and how they've accepted me as the new head coach when it happened.

So I just really all my thoughts were basically I want it so bad for these guys. They deserve it. Like I said, there's never been a more deserving group of guys and that they get to enjoy this means the world to me.

Q. You've had a come back in the second half all weekend. What do you keep telling your team during halftime?

COACH LANSING: Well, we're playing good teams. Sometimes that happens. Our starts were terrible. And I just think we're a little up tight. Maybe I was uptight. Maybe I didn't give them the right things to do to start the game.

But I trusted that we'd come back and we'd be just fine. Then it was just being more determined and valuing each possession.

I thought our defense was going to be good enough to win. I thought even if shots weren't going, we'd be able to guard well enough to beat these teams and we certainly did that. It was based around our defense and our preparation. I think we're a good offensive team with a lot of good players, so I don't really worry about offense a whole lot. We just kind of focus on defense and making it tough for the opponent.

Q. Is it easy for this team to not get rattled by their slow starts when they've had to do it three times in the same tournament? Do you think that helped today?

COACH LANSING: Yeah, we talked about that in the huddle. It's not easy for me. I get rattled. We talked about it in the huddle. We were down the other night. We were down to Evansville. We were down to Wichita. So we're just fine.

I told them after the first media timeout, it's a good omen. We're down again. Then at halftime we were down a smaller differential than we've been in the other two games, so you certainly don't want to get off to starts like that. But proud of our guys, they hung in there.

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