

March 7, 2013



DRAKE – 81
BRADLEY – 66

AN INTERVIEW WITH:

**COACH MARK PHELPS
JOEY KING
GARY RICKS, JR.**

THE MODERATOR: Before we get started with the Drake Bulldogs, just a couple of notes. Drake's win moves the Bulldogs into tomorrow's quarterfinal game against top seeded Creighton. Drake is now 15-16 on the year as they advance to the quarterfinals for the second year in a row. Drake is 58-80 all time against Bradley, 17-33 in MVC tourney play, 5-5 versus Bradley in the tournament, and 2-1 versus BU this season.

Coach Phelps is now 77-85 in his fifth year at Drake, 3-4 in the MVC tourney, and 2-1 against BU in the tourney.

Congratulations to Drake as we move into the first session this evening. Our protocol, as most of you are well aware of, we will open with a statement from Coach Phelps and then take questions for Coach followed by questions for the student-athletes.

As you all well know, please raise your hand.

Coach, opening statement.

COACH PHELPS: Really proud of our players for hanging tough. We knew we'd have to deal with some adversity throughout the game. If I'm not mistaken, I think Bradley cut the lead to three in the second half. I could be mistaken. I know it was at least five. I thought it was at three at one time.

We had contributions from all nine men. We played nine guys double-digit minutes. We felt like throughout the year we had a team that had some depth, and it was really nice to see that in action tonight. When you have guys like Seth

VanDeest and Ben Simons and Jordan Clarke, Richard Carter, you know, not reach double figures and you bring guys off the bench like Joey and like Gary Ricks and like Jeremy Jeffers, I just thought it was a total team effort.

We needed it all. Certainly, I thought we played well in the offensive end. A key to this game for us, for our basketball team, is to limit turnovers, and we were successful doing that. I think that's in large part why we were able to get the win.

THE MODERATOR: With that being stated, we'll open the questions for the student-athletes, Joey King and Gary Ricks, Jr. Folks, questions.

Q. Did you guys just have a sense that the ball seemed to go into the hoop tonight? It seemed like you guys were making a lot of shots.

JOEY KING: Over the last few weeks, we've put a lot of work into our game, and we're playing with a lot of confidence right now. We've won four out of five. So after a hiccup with Southern Illinois, we just really wanted to get back on the right track and play well.

Q. Gary, they recruited you as a three-point shooter. You had a lot of struggles earlier in the year. What allowed you to come out here today and shoot so well?

GARY RICKS, JR.: Just my coaches and my teammates. Every time I stepped out, they told me to shoot the ball. I just let it go today, and it dropped. I got confidence letting more go. It was just confidence and my teammates and coaches building confidence in me.

THE MODERATOR: For the benefit of our folks taking notes, that was Gary Ricks, Jr.

Q. This is for Joey and Gary. How do you feel like you guys are setting up to play the rest of this tournament? I know it's a quick turnaround. Do you still feel fresh after something like that?



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THE MODERATOR: Joey, take that first, please.

JOEY KING: It was a very physical game, but we have a great staff that will get us healthy and prepare to play tomorrow. I think there's no question that we'll come out tomorrow with a lot of competitive fire and just be ready to go. I don't think there's too much to worry about for us.

THE MODERATOR: Gary, your thoughts.

GARY RICKS, JR.: I think, when your backs are against the wall, kind of fatigue goes out the window. I feel like tomorrow we should be good. It might be a little slow at first, but once we get our legs going, we should be fine.

We're really excited to play Creighton. We split with them earlier in the year, so we feel confident we have a good chance.

Q. Joey, can you describe the play with Pickett on the technical foul. What exactly happened from your standpoint?

JOEY KING: Seth got fouled. I jumped up for the rebound. There's just a little shove. Nothing really to talk about. It was just a little bit of a shove, got looked at, and it was a technical.

Q. Joey, first time here for the tournament. Can you describe the atmosphere and the environment and also how good it feels to come out on top.

JOEY KING: It felt really good. It's been a great experience so far. Love the atmosphere, playing in a big arena. It's definitely -- it's something new.

Definitely a great experience, and I'm looking forward to tomorrow and all the games here going forward.

Q. Joey, you missed your first two three-pointers and started taking the ball inside. Just talk about the adjustment you made and what you got going in there.

JOEY KING: I'm always confident shooting the ball. Missed a couple, wanted to really get into a rhythm. So I just wanted to take the ball inside. My teammates did a great job finding me, and I was able to have some success down in the post.

THE MODERATOR: Anyone else for the student-athletes? Gentlemen, you may retire to your locker room and prepare for tomorrow. Congratulations.

Followup questions for Coach Phelps, please.

Q. Hi, Coach. Do you feel like this was one of your better shooting nights? Are you, I guess, pleased? Have you [inaudible].

COACH PHELPS: Again, we felt like the strength of our team would be depth. It really showed itself clearly tonight, where we had guys making contributions from every position, guys coming off the bench knocking down shots.

Again, if you would have told me that Jordan Clarke would have gone for 4 and Ben 9 and Seth for 6, and we would have scored 81 points in a win tonight, I would have asked you how. It was contagious.

The guys are excited to be here. They feel good about the way they're playing. I do think we're playing our best basketball right at the right time. Everyone that goes in the game has the confidence of their teammates and the coaching staff, and it's fun. It was fun tonight.

Q. Mark, same question I asked Gary. Obviously, he had some struggles earlier in the year from three. What did you see tonight on him? He obviously showed perseverance to come out and have a big game at just the right moment.

COACH PHELPS: When you're a good shooter and you're not making shots, you're still a good shooter, and you need to continue to hear that you're a good shooter, believe that you're a good shooter, and act like a good shooter. All year long he's acted like he's a good shooter. They haven't always fallen, but he's a great shooter.

It's just they fell tonight. Everyone has confidence in him. No one is telling Gary to lay off a three. If you're open, smoke it, and that's what he did tonight. The ones that he missed looked really good. Yeah, he's a good shooter. He just hasn't made shots, and he made them at the right time tonight.

Q. Mark, talk about the challenge of playing Creighton, especially on the short turnaround.

COACH PHELPS: They're a terrific team. They're an NCAA Tournament team. They've got a great player. They're the total package. No one would pick Creighton in a game if you asked them, across the country in any league.

Yeah, the turnaround's short. I thought we got our feet wet tonight. I'm looking at the minutes, and some of our guys did not have to play heavy minutes. We had double-digit minutes through nine guys. Jordan played 18.

We'll be ready to go tomorrow. I think we got our feet wet. The guys have confidence. Certainly, the last time we played Creighton, we played a very good game at home, and we were able to get the win. So it will be a challenge, whether we had a little rest or a lot of rest, they're a terrific team, and we're going to have to be very good.

Q. Mark, could you describe Bradley's comeback in the second half and how you were able to -- you seemed like you were able to hit a big shot whenever you needed, whenever they got close. Can you kind of describe that, how that transpired.

COACH PHELPS: In both games against Bradley and then again tonight, if we took care of the ball, we felt like we were going to get a decent shot. I think that was the key tonight. With single-digit turnovers, that was the key. I thought we had good ball movement. We took care of the ball.

So, yeah, guys stepped up and made shots when they needed to. One that crystallized in my mind is Joey's shot there on the left baseline, a two-pointer. Again, I felt like we were down -- or we were up three, and then that put us back up five. Guys just stepped up and made shots. We took care of the ball. Again, that was the key for us. That's the key for this basketball team, and hopefully we can continue to do that moving forward.

Q. Mark, a lot of times with the winner of this game going against the Number 1 seed the next day, you'll see that team that wins tonight jump out to an early lead. They've already had their feet wet, already comfortable in St. Louis.

Is there anything you look at, going into tomorrow, hoping you get out to that lead and hoping you sustain it?

COACH PHELPS: That's actually what happened last year. We had a pretty decent lead on Creighton in the second round game, quarterfinal game, after winning on Thursday night. The difference is we have a few more bodies this year. Last year we played basically six guys. We

can play nine, and Kori Babineaux is the tenth guy that's available as well.

Hopefully, we can sustain effort and intensity and urgency throughout 40 minutes. What's important is that we get great rest and great hydration tonight heading into tomorrow's game.

Q. Mark, you only turned over eight times against this team. How did you accomplish that?

COACH PHELPS: We've really been focusing on it. It's been a heavy emphasis. We've been working on it every way imaginable, from film to drill work to very difficult situations in practice to handle pressure. Trying to put them in more difficult situations in practice versus traps, and you see in a game.

It's been a continual assault on taking care of the basketball, being more sure, being stronger with the ball, and it's -- nothing's ever a straight climb. We've had some dips, but I think we're more aware, and we're more focused on taking care of the basketball. We're working on it.

THE MODERATOR: Last call for Coach Phelps. Coach, congratulations. See you tomorrow.

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