

March 10, 2013



CREIGHTON – 68
WICHITA STATE – 65

AN INTERVIEW WITH:

COACH GREG McDERMOTT
GREGORY ECHENIQUE
DOUG McDERMOTT
GRANT GIBBS
JAHENNS MANIGAT
ETHAN WRAGGE

THE MODERATOR: We welcome the MVC Tournament champion Creighton Bluejays to the podium. Sending a search party for Grant Gibbs, who will join us shortly. Coach Greg McDermott, along with Gregory Echenique, Doug McDermott, Grant will be along shortly, Jahenns Manigat, and Ethan Wragge.

We'll begin with a statement from Coach McDermott about our proceedings this afternoon, have questions for the student-athletes and then move to questions for Coach McDermott.

COACH McDERMOTT: First of all, I'd like to congratulate Coach Marshall and his team on a great season and a great game. It's just an unbelievable rivalry that we have with Wichita State, and certainly I don't think there's a lot of love lost between us, but I think there's a lot of respect between us. I think that's really important.

We had a chance to really open it up the second half, and they would not allow it to happen. So I think they're a team that can make a lot of noise here in about a week and a half when the NCAA Tournament starts. I know I would not want to draw them in the first round.

Also, I'd like to thank the Valley staff. This is my eighth tournament, and they just do an unbelievable job. As coaches, you want to come here and just get your team ready and not have to worry about anything else. Doug Elgin and Mike and Jack and the entire staff just do an unbelievable job running a first-class tournament

where the players are put first. It's been a pleasure to be part of it this weekend.

Couldn't be more proud of my team. We've talked, got this little bracelet on that there's a young man that is a teammate of one of the young guys we signed out of Pierre, South Dakota. Zach Hanson is the recruit's name, but his teammate's name is Conrad Adam. Conrad was diagnosed with cancer last summer, had to have his leg amputated, still fighting the battle. Conrad and I have kind of become text messaging friends over the course of the last seven or eight months.

On this Conrad's Clan bracelet, it says, "No one fights alone." I've been to Pierre, South Dakota, to a high school game and watched how that whole community has rallied around this young man, and I've shared the story with my team. It's really provided an inspiration for us because that's really what we're about. At times I think people thought we were a one-man team, and I think that idea has been put to rest today.

These guys have fought for each other. During a time in January and February when the chips were down, it would have been easy to cave. It would have been easy to give in to the negativity that floats around on the social media when a team that was nearly a Top Ten team all of a sudden isn't functioning at a high level. It takes a lot of maturity and a lot of character in your locker room to avoid that. These guys have stuck together. They've stayed the course, which has been our message.

I couldn't be more proud of them. It's been an unbelievable ride this season, and we had a couple goals, and two of them we fulfilled. We've got one more to go. Hopefully, we can do our job in the NCAA Tournament, represent the Valley in a first-class way.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the student-athletes. Hands up.

Q. This one's for Doug. I just want to ask. You got off to a slow start in the first half. What changed in the second half?

DOUG McDERMOTT: I thought I was



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much more patient the second half. Kind of took some quick shots there in the first half and got a couple stupid fouls. It kind of just threw me off my rhythm a little bit.

I tried to regather myself at halftime, and my teammates did a good job of finding me in the right moments, and they kind of just fed off me there. Jahenns, obviously, stepped up big there down the stretch.

Q. Jahenns, could you talk about what's going through your mind on that last possession and take us through that drive.

JAHENNS MANIGAT: I was just thinking, get the ball to Grant and get out of his way. I looked at him and did a good job denying him. As I looked at the clock, there was about seven seconds left. I just kind of put my head down and hoped for the best.

The Lord answered my prayers, and now we're back-to-back champs.

Q. Doug, can you talk about the defense on that last play.

DOUG McDERMOTT: Yeah, it was a quick little turnaround there. Jahenns scored the bucket, and we had to get back and get a stop. We knew Armstead was probably going to get that shot. I had been guarding him earlier. We were switching ball screens with him all game. I stuck with that, switched onto him, and tried to get a hand in his face without fouling him, and luckily he missed.

Q. Grant, you hit a couple of threes in last year's tournament championship game and did so again today. Is that more of a coincidence or just rising to the occasion?

GRANT GIBBS: Little of both, hopefully. I like this arena. Had that confidence playing well in the championship game last year and was able to knock down a few open ones. We had multiple guys that came in kind of in their moment and hit big shots for us when we needed him.

Q. I don't know if any of you guys saw the Valpo game yesterday because they won it on the last-second shot like that. That guy, when he puts up that shot, I'd like to hear all your reactions as you're watching that ball go up.

THE MODERATOR: Doug, why don't we start with you and work our way this way.

DOUG McDERMOTT: That was a crazy shot. Especially in a conference tournament. We're all watching that, getting jacked up for today's game. It came down to kind of a final play in our game too.

There's so many close games this year. It just feels great to get one against a rival of the day. We're looking forward to the NCAA Tournament.

GREGORY ECHENIQUE: The last play, I thought Doug played real good defense. I was hoping it wasn't going to go in. Just the fact he didn't really go for the fake, and he was able to challenge it. It was a really, really tough shot. I followed the ball.

I knew either way we didn't have enough time to rebound it because the shot clock went off. I don't even think it was like a second, but I was just kind of froze up there.

Like I said, Doug did a good job. It came out our way.

THE MODERATOR: Jahenns?

JAHENNS MANIGAT: I'd agree with Greg there. Doug did a tremendous job keeping a hand on the shooting shoulder and forcing a tough shot. Honestly, it felt like the ball was in the air for about 13 seconds there. I'm probably going to get chewed out on film because I didn't box out on the weak side.

I just saw the ball go up and saw it hit the rim. When it came off, it was kind of pandemonium, and everybody rushed the court. It's an unbelievable feeling.

THE MODERATOR: Ethan?

ETHAN WRAGGE: I was sitting on the bench. I didn't have quite the view these guys have. I was thinking one thing, that shot better not go in. It was a good feeling. Doug played that good "D," and the clock hit zeros.

THE MODERATOR: Grant?

GRANT GIBBS: We did our job. Doug switched out on him and did everything he could do. It goes up in the air, and you hope it doesn't go in. He made some huge shots in the second half, all game really.

You just hope it goes off, and it did.

Q. For Ethan, the beginning of the game on both sides was pretty ugly offensively. When you're sitting on the bench, what are you thinking? When you get in there, obviously, good things happen for you.

ETHAN WRAGGE: Just start out the

game, they were really not letting Doug and Gregory get anything going. If they're going to take away our inside, I was thinking, I'm going to get a chance to go in here and get some shots up and hopefully get something to go in.

Q. I guess to any of the guys who want to take this one. Coach brought up the negativity that kind of swirled when you guys were going through some tough times. To be sitting up there as champions, what's that mean to you guys?

THE MODERATOR: Grant, why don't we start on this side.

GRANT GIBBS: As much as you try to ignore that stuff, that's kind of the world we live in now. It's pretty impossible when your team's struggling, you wake up to 100 tweets every day, people talking.

We did our best to ignore stuff like that, and that's what you have to do. We've gotten this far by sticking together, believing in each other, and that's what got us through that rut and eventually back up to this podium.

ETHAN WRAGGE: Building on what Grant said, we had a tough February there. We had tough games, and we didn't start pointing fingers at anyone or blaming anyone. We just found a way to fight through it and try to block out what the outside world was saying and just kind of focus on ourselves. We've had a pretty good march with it.

JAHENNS MANIGAT: I think what's most important is that we never lost confidence in ourselves. We know the guys that we have in the locker room. I feel like to your left and to your right those guys are going to fight for you, and you're going to be ready to fight for them.

We have an unbelievable group of guys in the locker room, and we all pulled through at the right time.

THE MODERATOR: Gregory?

GREGORY ECHENIQUE: I think it says a lot about how special of a group of guys we have. I think, when things aren't going your way, it is easy to start pointing fingers and quit, and I think, like Coach said, we never did that. I think it speaks a lot about who we are as a team, as a family, and I'm just glad we were able to accomplish this and prove a lot of people wrong.

Now, hopefully, move in and do a lot more good or special things in the tournament.

THE MODERATOR: Finally, Doug.

DOUG McDERMOTT: I thought we did a great job of blocking out everyone when times were tough. We're a really close group. About eight of us live right across the hall from each other. We're always around each other, and we're just one big family.

We knew that we could get to a moment like this, and that's what makes it that much more special. We've got a really mature group of guys and probably some of the best leadership I've ever been around with Grant, Gregory, and the guys standing up here right now. It's been a great ride, but we're still working for a lot more.

THE MODERATOR: Gentlemen, thank you for your time and attention. You are free to return to your locker room, where they will be available for further media attention.

Questions for Coach McDermott.

Q. What did you see, Mac, and how Wichita kind of tried to make things tougher this time around for Doug?

COACH McDERMOTT: We ran some plays early, and they jumped it with a guard from a long ways away. So the reality of it is you try to figure out what their plan is, and then you try to adjust accordingly.

The way they guarded Doug was the reason Jahenns was able to shoot eight threes, and all of them wide open. The way they guarded Doug and Gregory is the reason Ethan gets nine looks at the three.

So you have to pick your poison with us, and the way Doug played against them last time, I'd have done the same thing. I'd have made us hit jump shots. Fortunately, today we were able to hit enough to win.

Q. Coach, the shooters played great tonight, but could you tell me what Gregory meant to the win today.

COACH McDERMOTT: As I told the team in the locker room, we've been criticized because of our defense, but anybody that watched the three games this weekend saw a pretty doggone good defensive team.

Indiana State shoots 26 percent against us yesterday, and Wichita shoots 34 today. Your defense starts on the top with your point guard, and I thought Austin, even though Armstead got on a great run there, we're trying to make him work. As much as we have Austin out there, I thought the

job he did on Odum yesterday and continued to work on Malcolm today, it starts on the top, and it ends on the back with Gregory.

He was such a difference maker. He impacted the game in so many ways because he made multiple plays. He showed on the ball screen. He'd get back. He'd give some help. He'd block out. He'd go get the rebound. I couldn't be more proud of the way he played.

When your seniors are playing, when it's getting down to the end, you want them to play with a sense of urgency. Without question, Gregory was really hooked up and ready to play this weekend.

Q. Austin and Grant combined for 14 assists and two turnovers. How important, not just today, but really all year, replacing in for Antoine Young?

COACH McDERMOTT: They both did a great job. As I told Austin after the game, he's not out there, but he probably should be. I judge a point guard on how their team does. That's how Austin will be defined at the end of his career, where were you able to take your team.

We had eight turnovers at halftime, and against their full-court pressure, we just had one turnover the second half. If you want to point to one reason we won the game, we took care of the basketball against a great defensive team, and we found a way. We found a way to hang in on the backboards, which is very hard to do against Wichita State.

Q. Greg, I asked the players this already. Did you see the Valpo game? What was going through your head as the kid puts up the last shot?

COACH McDERMOTT: I saw the highlight of it and saw Coach Jrue's reaction, which was classic, by the way. You practice those situations. Some coaches foul; some don't. I'm one that doesn't necessarily believe in that.

You don't have to worry about guarding the basket in a three-point game. We were switching every screen. Fortunately, my son was disciplined enough to stay down on that shot fake and challenge the shot. We executed it the way it was supposed to be executed. As a result, they missed a shot, and we did exactly what we were supposed to do in that situation.

Q. Mac, nobody's got a crystal ball to know what the future lies for you guys beyond this year. But if this indeed was Creighton's last Valley game, could it have been any better?

COACH McDERMOTT: I don't know what's going to happen, and I'm not involved in that decision. So I'm not even very comfortable commenting.

I'll just say this. The Missouri Valley Conference has been great to Creighton. It's been great to Greg McDermott. And I'd like to think that Creighton has been great for the Valley, and the teams that I brought here have added something to this league.

If it happens, it will be very bittersweet for me because I love this league, I love the people that run this league, but I also understand the dynamics of college athletics today, and whether that decision is made or there's an invitation even forthcoming, I don't know. I haven't spent much time worrying about it because I've been trying to get my team ready to play some important games.

This is a wonderful, wonderful league, and it's the leadership of the league has been outstanding. We appreciate the fact that we're a member of the Missouri Valley Conference.

Q. Coach, with your regular season accomplishments and clinching the postseason tournament title, would you at least like to be considered for a geographically friendly site like Kansas City?

COACH McDERMOTT: You would love to just because of what you saw out here today. Our fans are crazy. They're incredible and incredibly crazy because of the passion they have for our team.

The guys have said it many times these last three days. It felt like a home game. Our fans were into it. They picked the right times to energize our team, and their support -- the scene at our hotel, our sendoff, if there's another one like it in the country, it can't top it because it is incredible. It gives you goose bumps. Hair stands up on the back of your neck when you come down that escalator with all those people. It's a special, special moment in these guys' basketball career.

But the crowd was great. It was huge for us. We certainly appreciate that they were here.

Q. Coach, next year's decision aside,

what's it like hearing your son get the "one more year" chants there towards the end of the game?

COACH McDERMOTT: That's been going on for a couple of weeks now. I agree with Doug. It's somewhat surreal to imagine that that's even something that we'd have to consider. He was just a little snot-nosed kid here a few years ago, it seems like, and now he's grown up to be a very high character, mature young man who's spent a great deal of time honing his craft in the game of basketball.

Very proud of what he's accomplished on the floor, much, much more proud of how he's conducted himself off the floor with the amount of success that he's achieved and how he's continued to handle that in a humble manner.

We'll go down that road when it's time, but we've got a little bit of work to do here in the next few weeks.

Q. Mac, as you said, you played some pretty good defense down here. How encouraging is that as you look ahead 10, 11 days from now?

COACH McDERMOTT: I think the most important thing, if you come down here and you win shootouts, maybe you question yourself when you get back on the practice floor. I think what this tells us is we can win games with defense if we have to. We shot 41 percent today, which isn't great for us, and still found a way to win the game.

We preach all the time the importance of defense and rebounding. We put three games together on not a lot of gas in our tank. If you look at our minutes compared to the people we're playing. We've got some guys we have a difficult time getting off the floor, and they continue to compete on the defensive end. I think after a few days off, I think they'll be refreshed, and I think they'll be locked in and ready to practice and understand how important that end of the floor is going to be as we move forward to the NCAA Tournament.

Q. What's going through your head there? Early in the second half, your son picks up his third foul, and he's got to sit for a little bit. Take us through some thoughts maybe going through your head at the time.

COACH McDERMOTT: I'm not sure what the score was when Doug came to the bench, but I think we increased our lead with Doug on the

bench, and that's happened a couple of times during the course of the season.

Ethan Wragge is going to start for almost every other team in our league, and he's mature enough and unselfish enough to understand the role that we need him to play for our team to have the best chance to win. I don't think twice about throwing Ethan in there, and now, at least in the last month, Will Artino's contributions have been big for us.

Doug is a tremendous player. He's maybe one of those once-in-a-lifetime players that a coach is going to have the opportunity to coach, but today we proved we're much more than Doug, and we had some guys step up in a huge way, and I couldn't be more proud of him.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you. Congratulations on your championship.

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