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An interview with:



THE MODERATOR: We will begin with Notre Dame student-athletes. We'll get started with questions.

Q. Luke, you've got a football aura about you. Was it always basketball? Who were your role models as a basketball player or just in general?

LUKE HARANGODY: It was always, you know, basketball for me. It was my biggest concentration. I thought about playing football sometimes maybe in high school. But I always just stuck with basketball.

Growing up, close to Chicago, always looked up to Michael Jordan. Kind of had to with him being there.

Q. Last year's NCAA tournament experience, what happened there, how much has that been a motivating factor for you throughout the season, especially going into this tournament?

ROB KURZ: I think it was a big motivating factor for us, especially in the off-season. We thought about that, you know, every time we hit the floor in practice and playing pickup all summer long. I think we learned from that experience a lot.

We're excited to, you know, have another shot this year.

TORY JACKSON: I mean, like Rob said, it was a motivation, you know, thing for us. All summer we worked on, you know, mistakes that we made in that game that we could have got better at.

This year, I mean, that was one of our goals to get back to where we are now. You know, all the work paid off. But we still got a lot more work to do, a lot more work ahead of us.

Q. Kyle, you've had such good success with the three-point shooting this year, what do you think about them moving it back a foot next year?

KYLE MCALARNEY: I don't think it's going to affect us at all, the way we shoot the ball. You know, we have a lot of great shooters on this team. For any good shooter, you know, you're really shooting on the move a lot. You're shooting from a couple feet behind the line a lot of times.

Moving the three-point line back for good shooting teams like us, I don't think it's going to have too much of an effect.

Q. Sort of odd that Winthrop is in this quarter bracket with you again and Washington State. Was there something about them last year that once you played them, sort of an underrated quality, you could see Washington State overlooking tomorrow?

TORY JACKSON: I felt like they were experienced. Last year was kind of a first year for all of us, you know, being in this tournament. They had been here before. I felt like they had the experience. Some of the older guys on their team, you know, they knew what to expect, they knew how the game was going to be called, all that.

I think the experience came in, you know, and played a big factor. But one thing we didn't do

at the end of that game, we didn't put our head down and just give up and lay down. We fought back. We had a chance to win. But, I mean, we came up short.

So, I mean, I felt like we did a good job last year. But that was last year. I feel like a lot of things changed this year, with a year under the belt for us. I feel like we should be okay this year.

Q. You haven't lost back-to-back games all year. Any thoughts as to why? Why do you think that might continue tomorrow?

KYLE MCALARNEY: I think, as a group, we really have an understanding of, you know, when we do have a bad game or a bad showing of how to get back the next day and refocus, focus on the next opponent. Even when we have a big win, the next day we come right back and practice and our focus is there.

So, you know, like I said, as a group together we just kind of understand how to kind of refocus ourselves and use that loss as motivation. The next day we come out with a lot of energy.

Q. Luke, could you talk about playing in the Big East, obviously a really tough league, with eight bids in the tournament. How much does that help you and the others as far as being toughened up for this kind of a test?

LUKE HARANGODY: Yeah, playing in the league as good as the Big East is a huge advantage heading into this tournament for us 'cause with all the other teams in the league, so many teams, so many styles, variations of play, you get to see a lot of things each game you go into. That's great, like facing a George Mason team. You might see a team like George Mason as the same style of play as someone in the Big East, someone like that. So it's a huge advantage.

Q. Luke and Tory, did you get caught up a couple years ago in the George Mason excitement? They're George Mason, they're going to have a lot of people. You're Notre Dame. That brings out a lot of different emotions. What are you expecting out of the crowd last game of the night tomorrow?

TORY JACKSON: I feel like it's going to be an exciting game. You know, we love games like this. We love playing, period. So, uhm, just to play alongside with these guys is always exciting for me.

You know, I feel like a lot of people feel like, you know, we may be like the big team or something like that. I feel like George Mason, you know, they've been here before. I think we should be trying to go after them. So I feel like we gonna fight, we gonna give it our all. Tomorrow night is going to be a very interesting game. There's going to be a lot of fire out there, a lot of energy, a lot of emotion. Everybody's got to leave it out there on the floor.

LUKE HARANGODY: You know, both teams coming in here, George Mason making its run a couple years ago, so they should have a good following here, a good, high-energy crowd. Notre Dame, everywhere we go, we have a good following. I think it should be a great atmosphere for tomorrow night. It always is for the tournament. We're just looking forward to getting out there and be part of that.

Q. Kyle, can you talk about your emotions being here this year, kind of contrast that to last year, having to watch it?

KYLE MCALARNEY: Last year I was in a very different situation than I am this year. I'm very excited to play in the tournament. Last year I had to watch it at home. This year I get to play. I'm very excited about that.

Throughout the whole season, I've kind of dealt with this excitement by using it to help me kind of focus and play better. It's really helped me. So going into this tournament, you know, these guys have a year under their belt being here. But, you know, I think that kind of state of mind has been contagious. It really helps me and the freshmen out who's never been here to keep focused and focus on the goal.

THE MODERATOR: All right, gentlemen. Thanks very much. Appreciate it. Good luck tomorrow. We'll have Coach Brey out here soon.

We'll go ahead and begin with Notre Dame head coach Mike Brey.

Q. What kind of an effect do you think moving the three-point line back a foot is going to have in the game next year?

COACH BREY: I wasn't prepared for that. I am going on the rules committee next year, so I should start thinking about that.

I was for it. I like it. I think right now you have some guys that aren't real good three-point shooters throwing it at times, at key times, to

change a game. Maybe it will be the great equalizer in that department.

I think you could see teams playing a lot more zone than, too, being more confident in staying in zone instead of getting out of it if a team hits two three-point shots.

Q. The NCAA says one of the reasons they did it is because they say the game has gotten too penetration and three-point oriented, the midrange jumper has left the game. How much do you agree with that?

COACH BREY: A little bit. I think there's some validity to that. That's probably one thing, you have kids having a hard time getting kids to work on it in the offseason, it's maybe all or nothing. Will it improve that? I think that remains to be seen.

Also I think one of the reasons it's in there, too, is to try to help with spacing. If we can spread the floor out a little bit more. It all gets back to the point of emphasis we've had now I think for 10 years, maybe 11, cleaning up rough play. If it helps us do that, I'm very much for it. And I think we're probably going to have to explore the lane over the next couple of years. That will be the next thing discussed.

But anything we can do to clean up rough play I think is a good thing in our game.

Q. Could you talk a little bit about last year's tournament experience with this crew and how much of a motivating factor it's been, how it's changed maybe you prepare this year?

COACH BREY: Well, I think with just about any team I've been around, and certainly my teams at Delaware and even here, there's sometimes an evolution of getting accustomed to the tournament. We had not been in three years, and I had no one on that roster that was part of this thing last year. Looking to my seniors, who had great years at our young guys did, they really couldn't do in this atmosphere.

Last year, Winthrop was older and tougher and better in tournament experience.

I would hope after being in it last year we're grown up a little bit more. We've learned to win again this regular season. But I think when we walked in the building this afternoon, we weren't looking around as much as we were last year.

Q. What is your take when you talk to your players about a team like George Mason,

which obviously had that fantastic run a couple years ago?

COACH BREY: Well, you probably don't have to say much to them. They certainly watched that run. We were in the NIT while they made that magnificent run. We also know they know that there's a nucleus of young men on this George Mason team that were a part of that.

You know, I presented George Mason as a Big East game. That's who they are. That's how good they are. That's the kind of bodies they have. They're a Big East team that we're playing.

But certainly our guys, you know, they watch everything and they know what George Mason's program has done and respect it.

Q. I asked some of the players this, too. Given that they're George Mason and you're Notre Dame, what kind of crowd are you expecting?

COACH BREY: You know, I just found out, we sold 800 tickets out here. This is a pretty good Notre Dame town. I was out here a couple years ago to speak at a clinic, ran into some of our alums. I've gotten a bunch of emails since we've been seeded here.

I think we're going to have a real good crowd. But one thing about our place, one thing about Notre Dame, our people are all over the place, and they usually can find tickets when they need to.

Q. Being a former DeMatha guy, how familiar are you with some of these George Mason players?

COACH BREY: Very familiar with them. Certainly the run they had a couple years ago, you watched that and really you marvelled at it. You really did.

But Thomas and Campbell, those two guys are winners. They're men. They really believe. They're the guys that really make Mason go.

What I was surprised when I looked at their roster Sunday, I knew about those two young men. I would have thought maybe they got younger the last couple years since that run in the Final Four. They're still old, you know. So they're old. They've been around together. And Jim does a great job with them.

Q. If you could offer Tony Bennett any advice about playing Winthrop, what would you

throw his way?

COACH BREY: Well, I think my memory of last year is, they're so high-energy. Of course, we saw them up close down in The Virgin Islands. They were in the Paradise Jam with us. We didn't take care of our business and we avoided them. Maybe that was a good thing.

But I'm impressed with the energy they play with. That was evident in Spokane. I know they've lost some guys from last year's team. The one thing they do have, which was evident in The Virgin Islands when I watched a game there, and I did catch a little bit of their championship game against Asheville, they have old, good guards who can just control the tempo and can get their teammates to believe. End of clock they can do things, make big shots. I really am impressed that their guards are still veterans and men.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, coach. Good luck tomorrow.

COACH BREY: Thank you.

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