

**March 20, 2008**



Notre Dame - 68  
George Mason - 50

An interview with:



THE MODERATOR: We'll begin with Notre Dame. Coach, if you want to begin with some general thoughts on the game.

COACH BREY: I think any time you get off to a great start, it certainly helps you. We did do that. I thought our defense really for the game was the story of it. To hold them to 21 points in the first half and 50 for the game I think was the story line of the game.

One of the things we wanted to get back to was rebounding the basketball better than we did the last four games. And I thought we did that tonight. We had a lot of one-and-done situations. It let us run. It let us get some things in transition.

THE MODERATOR: We'll take questions for the student-athletes.

**Q. Talk about that five- to six-minute stretch when you went on a 17-0 run and what you did during that stretch that was so effective?**

KYLE McALARNEY: Like Coach Brey said, we wanted to come into the game and really get back to rebounding because that really helps us get out in transition. That's where we're at our best, just playing basketball and running.

Defending and rebounding was our only two keys for this game and we did a good job of that tonight.

**Q. You hit a three with 10 minutes to go. Mason called a timeout. Did you feel at that point that you had done your job, they weren't coming back at that point?**

KYLE McALARNEY: Any time they went on a run, we had guys step up and hit a big shot. Ryan gave me a great pass.

Like I said, we have different guys that step up at different times. It demoralizes a team when we come down and hit a big shot.

**Q. Ryan, you and Zach Hillesland had the assignment on the Campbell. What were the keys you worked on in practice going in in order to stop him?**

RYAN AYERS: First and foremost, Campbell is a great player. He's been their backbone for them, being a good senior.

But we just wanted to come out, bother him, good etiquette a good position on him, contest him when we had the opportunity to. At times we felt they were going to post him up a little bit so we wanted to have him presence there so we just wanted to shut him down and take good shots.

**Q. What is it about the post-season for you that always seems like you seem to have a good game, whether it's the NIT or NCAA?**

RYAN AYERS: I don't know. I felt in a groove tonight. The last couple practices I felt pretty good. My teammates have been on me, coach has been on me about being aggressive, you know, helping this team out.

You always want to play your best basketball at the end of the season. I hope to continue that.

**Q. Luke, you had talked this week**

**about having learned a lesson from the opener last year. Talk about getting that done and also the feelings about moving on here.**

LUKE HARANGODY: You know, just stuff like coming into the game, such a different atmosphere, especially in the locker room before. Everyone just relaxed. Know what to expect. I think that's why we came out so strong.

Now with this win, we're getting into new territory. We're playing a great Washington State team. Just look what they have tonight and go on from there.

**Q. I heard Coach Brey challenged you a little bit at a practice early last week. Luke, was he trying to get across that you need to play better defense? How important was that today?**

LUKE HARANGODY: Yeah, it was important, you know, because the last three or four games he's talked about us especially not playing defense, getting up into people, being on the backboard. I think that was one of the biggest keys for the game tonight. He got into us one practice. I think he really got that through to us because we came out that very next practice high energy just as we came out here tonight.

**Q. Luke, can you talk about the way you continue to attack opponents? Seemed at times tonight you were frustrated, didn't have your best shooting night, but at the end of the day you had close to your regular numbers and another win.**

LUKE HARANGODY: Yeah, you know, going at this tonight, they're a great defensive team. Like you said, I didn't have one of my best shooting nights. A lot of things weren't going down for me. I just continued to try to rebound the ball. I think that was one of my main goals going into this game because I haven't been rebounding the ball the past three or four games that well. That was one of the main objectives of the game for me and I thought I did a pretty good job of that tonight.

**Q. This was a slower paced game out of you guys. Are we going to see some more of that against Washington State?**

RYAN AYERS: Yeah, their style of play is something we've kind of seen all year. We've been in the Big East. We've been conditioned to play against any kind of style of play. So we just adjusted to that.

But we did get out in transition a few times. That's just a product of us playing great defense and rebounding the ball.

**Q. Obviously the quick start, you're up 17. Did you feel like it turned into almost an endurance test at that point? How does your mindset change trying to stay poised and maintaining?**

KYLE McALARNEY: Well, we feel like we're in great shape. One of the best conditioned teams in the country. We have a great strength coach who really conditions us well. We've been playing in the Big East all season. That kind of -- it's the most competitive and kind of toughest conference in the country, we think.

I think we've been through that kind of season all year. So we're pretty acclimated to this kind of game. The high altitude really didn't make a difference for us tonight because we were in such great shape.

**Q. Luke, you talked about the high energy in the beginning. Do you feel like you were more intense and more energized in the beginning than you were last year? If so, what was the difference?**

LUKE HARANGODY: I think last year when we came into this game against Winthrop, I think we were playing not to lose, holding back a little bit. Tonight we just went for it. You could see right away with our perimeter shooting, getting right into it, getting off to that big lead, not holding anything back. I think that kind of set the tone for the whole game.

THE MODERATOR: Gentlemen, thank you. Good job.

We'll continue with questions for Coach Brey.

**Q. Getting back to the defensive job on Campbell. Did you feel that was one of the keys going in tonight?**

COACH BREY: Very much so. Zach Hillesland is not sitting up here, but how about the night he had? You look at the rebounds, the assists. He was the guy who started out the first seven minutes of the game on him, on Campbell. Ryan came in, did a good job, too. But I thought Zach was fabulous.

With Thomas, as long as they're twos, he goes to work in there, as long as we were giving up

twos, I felt we could score enough. But certainly Zach early in the game on Campbell helped.

**Q. Can you talk about how you wanted to manage the pace maybe after that start.**

COACH BREY: It's a fine line, you know, because you want to keep attacking, then you don't want to play safe. I think what really helped us, we kept running, even though we didn't get anything, I think it exhausted them a little bit, that we continued to run the floor even though we didn't get something off of early offense. We told our guys, Still run the floor. 'Cause I thought we could wear them down. I think we did. I thought we did a good job then changing gears and getting low-post touches in the second half with a 13- to 15- to 18-point lead. Being smart about taking some time off the clock. We got rebounds, kicked it back out. We had a new clock. We were intelligent about that.

I thought we did a great job chasing down long rebounds. Any time they would make a run, we were quick to the ball on the defensive end.

**Q. You had talked earlier late in the year of the St. John's game, South Florida game, about playing ugly games like that. Having played those games, did that help you tonight?**

COACH BREY: The pace of how they play kind of lends itself to that kind of tempo. It's interesting because on Saturday, the tempo is gonna be similar because Washington State grinds you the same way.

So I'm glad that we had a game here and we had some games at the end of the season, as Kyle said, the Big East prepared us for some of those at the end of the year.

**Q. I know you talked a lot about rebounding and playing better defense. Did you mention to the guys anything about trying to get the whole kind of George Mason thing out of it, the mystique, the underdog thing, to get them to block that part of this whole thing out.**

COACH BREY: You know, we certainly respected the nucleus of guys. I talked to them. I think my tone with them after the selection show was, We really respect there's a nucleus of guys that made that run. But that was that run. This is a whole new basketball team. We're a very different basketball team that lost in the first round.

But it was very brief. We didn't spend a whole lot of time on it. Of course, if they watched any TV, they got to hear about it all week.

**Q. The pace of the game, whether that was something you wanted to do?**

COACH BREY: Play slower?

**Q. Yes.**

COACH BREY: We never want to play slow. We want to run, go for it. No way. But we can play slow if we have to. I thought we did a good job understanding the tempo and then getting low-post touches in a halfcourt offense. We didn't give up hardly anything in transition, which was really good, too.

But, you know, we like to get out and go and run the floor. That's the best thing for us. And we did that early in the game because we got stops and defensive rebounds, and I think it got us confident to play the rest of the game.

**Q. Obviously Luke and Kyle get a lot of attention on this team. Can you talk about the work of some of the other guys on the team, especially that first-half run that blew this open?**

COACH BREY: Well, you know, I think Luke Zeller gave us great minutes. Not only did he knock down a big shot, he got a couple defensive rebounds, takes a charge, had a big impact on the game. Zach Hillesland, fabulous. Ryan Ayers off the bench, we want him to be more aggressive, me and all his teammates. He was awesome in practice yesterday. He played just how he practices.

So, you know, we need that out of those guys. Tory Jackson, just -- Tory Jackson makes every tough play. He got a lot of being defensive rebounds for us, loose balls at key times. There's a toughness about him out there on the point that really helps our basketball team.

**Q. To what extent, the first round particularly, a neutral floor crowd wants to pull for the underdog, to what extent does getting out to the big lead you have remove that?**

COACH BREY: I think it certainly helps, even though -- and maybe it's hard to tell because we got off to a good start. I felt we kind of had the crowd. I know we've sold more tickets than any of the schools here. You know, I kind of felt at home

here. When we came out to the practice yesterday, we got here earlier in the week, being in town two days. So I think our guys are really confident that they had support and a lot of people would be here.

But there's no question that getting off to a good start makes the underdog - everybody, not only the team, but the fans - wonder a little bit. You know, any time they made a run, as I said, we had a number of guys make big shots to kind of hold the run off.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks, coach.

COACH BREY: Thank you.

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