

March 4, 2010



THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon. On behalf of commissioner Doug Elgin, and the entire Missouri Valley Conference staff, welcome to 2010 State Farm Missouri Valley Conference men's basketball tournament.

Today's press conferences for seeds 1 through 6 begin the tournament proceedings. Today number 5 seed Bradley will play Creighton in Friday's quarterfinal game at 2:30. Jim Les is with us along with Sam Maniscalco, Andrew Warren. We'll have coach Les open up with a statement regarding his team, then we'll go to questions for all three people on our panel. These are 15-minute sessions. Jim, please.

COACH LES: Thanks, Joe. We've had a good week of preparation. And I think for end of the year we're pretty healthy and excited for the opportunity and understand it's a great challenge to play Creighton. But we're looking forward to the opportunity tomorrow at 2:30.

Q. Andrew, you missed this tournament last year on the court. Can you just kind of discuss how difficult that was for you and maybe just take us through the travails you've had injury-wise since then, and how you've been able to recover from them?

ANDREW WARREN: Well, yeah, any time you're not playing, it's really difficult, and actually I missed this tournament the past two years, so this is almost like a fresh make, because freshman year I didn't play that much here in the tournament. So I'm really excited and looking forward to it.

I'm injury-free now. And you know, gone through a whole year of being healthy. I'm just looking forward to accepting the challenge of trying to help my team go as far as we can. I think we can go pretty far as long as we play hard and do the things that we can do. I'm excited and looking

forward to the challenge and looking forward to getting out on the floor and playing tomorrow.

Q. Just picking up on what Andrew said and the fact that he's missed the last two. What kind of difference is it having him on the court and what has that meant particularly to the offense?

SAM MANISCALCO: Well, he's a threat. And teams are going to pay close attention to him. More so than his scoring, I think he does other things on the floor that kind of go unseen. He's a leader out there for us, he's got experience. He rebounds the ball well on the defensive end too. It's not just the numbers that he puts up, it's kind of the unseen things that he does for us out there and the guys feed off that.

Q. If you could talk about the defensive effort. What do you guys have to do tomorrow different from Omaha and what happened last week?

COACH LES: Well, I think just our execution defensively, I think it was pretty clear some of the things that we tried to set out and do and some of the schemes. You know, when we executed effectively, you know, we had some success. But the consistency of doing that over the course of the 40 minutes wasn't necessarily there what it needs to be in order to be a good basketball team.

So I think these guys have had that visual at different points during the week of seeing that when we do execute and put the energy and effort and concentration into what their particular job is. You know, we're always talking about your responsibility is to do your job for this team and fulfill your role.

When we did that, I thought we did some good things. When we he didn't, a good team like

Creighton is going to take advantage of that.

So I'd say overall it's the consistency of our effort, energy, and the final component is the execution on the defensive end of the floor. In both games offensively Creighton has had their way with us and been a product of them doing some good things, and a product of a little bit of us not doing as good of things.

Q. What are the unique challenges that Creighton's system poses that you have to -- everybody has to be aware of that maybe other teams don't do?

COACH LES: I'd say the unique challenges have to do with probably the variety of different guys. You know, they get production from a lot of different places on different nights. Lawson might be the big constant for them. But everybody else it seems there's a lot of interchangeable parts and there's a lot of guys that can do a lot of different things effectively. You're talking about a rotation of 11 or 12 guys. We're big on playing tendencies and personnel.

I think sometimes with the hockey substitutions that go on sometimes. The sky report gets lost in that shuffle a little bit. So we've got to have good concentration. I think there is a little bit of an advantage of playing them so soon a week ago. And playing on that same path and, I think it helps.

They get so much production from different avenues on so many given nights.

Q. Can you describe Creighton's match-up zone? Is it different from other similar type zones that you've faced? And if so on, how is it a different scheme?

COACH LES: I don't think it is different. I think it varies from game to game based on personnel. There are some things that they may do differently versus let's say an Osiris Eldridge versus Andrew Warren. And some schemes within that match-up that they're going to do differently. But I don't think it's completely different.

Our ability to attack it hinges upon first of all having some patience. Being able to move the ball as well as move people. I think also it's just being able to read. While they're out on the floor, being able to read where the gaps and seams and openings are and trying to take advantage of those. I think the guys this week have had a good week looking at those different schemes and some of the things they like to do and have some ideas

of where it's vulnerable and we can talk, and now it's a means of putting that into play tomorrow.

Q. You mentioned playing them six days ago, and how it is still fresh in your mind. I got out of that that you felt there was some kind of an advantage which cuts to both teams. Can you expand on what kind of advantage it is while those things are fresh in your mind? And the approach and how the players might go after that?

COACH LES: Well, the advantage, I think just lies in like I said, they placed a number of different guys. So it's just a matter of being able to, you know, Drew might start off guarding one player and now he's going to see another one and maybe a third in a five or six minute segment. It's just being able to make the adjustments within the scheme and having to do things differently with the personnel match-up. So I think the advantages are hey, those guys that he had to learn six, seven days ago it's a similar match-up coming into this week. . Now having personnel matchups or tendencies to look into.

Does that explain it? Could you guys describe the difference between conference games and non-conference, just in terms of when you get out on the floor? Obviously teams are more prepared for you in conference than non-conference, and how you have to adjust.

SAM MANISCALCO: You said it yourself. Conference teams know what each other does. And I think it's got to be more precise you've got to be more precise and execute better because of that. The conference is split up in three different seasons, non-conference season being the first one, conference season being the second one, and postseason being a third one for us. And each time you have to kind of bring up your level of focus and level of concentration and level of intensity.

But I'd say the biggest thing is the execution and how precise you are with it.

ANDREW WARREN: Yeah, basically, Sam was correct in what he said. Because when you have non-conference games, you don't play these teams often. You might have a few that you play yearly maybe, but other than that, these are new teams. You're learning new personnel and usually you don't have very much time to prepare for them. So you learn some of the key guys and some of the key plays and what they like to do.

And you just kind of go out there and play hard and do what you do best as a team.

In conference, we're calling plays out, and the other team is looking at their coach and their coaches are yelling out oh, this is what that play is. So just like Sammy said, you have to execute a little better. You have to cut a little harder. You have to be more precise like coach is talking about defense. You have to play personnel, and know what. That's one thing when we're struggling in games we haven't been as efficient as we should be in the conference because teams have been ready for us and we were a little relaxed in our execution and they took advantage of that in some games. But now Sammy has to look at the awareness starting tomorrow.

Q. Coming off the last statement about knowing your opponent. In an environment like this where there is so much emotion, does it make it easier getting ready for a team that you guys have just played when it comes to playing the first couple of minutes of a game like this?

SAM MANISCALCO: Well, there is definitely a lot of excitement. This is an electrifying atmosphere here. It's really fun to play in. But I think as a player you've got to block all that out and focus on the job you have to do as a team.

Our job is to go out there and execute our game plan. We're not worried about what's going on in the crowd or who is here to see us. Things like that. Certainly you want to feed off that energy and use it to your advantage. But the main thing is to block that out and stay focused on the game plan.

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