

# **National Invitation Tournament**

## **Wednesday, March 28 2018**

### **New York, New York**

#### **Mississippi State: Ben Howland & Aric Holman**

HEAD COACH BEN HOWLAND: We really came out and got off to a horrible start. We haven't been down that big at halftime the whole year. Credit Penn State for a lot of it, and you know, I just don't know if it was anxiety, playing at the Garden, I mean, I don't know what it was. But that's not the same team that just beat Louisville at Louisville, the way we played in those first, ten, 12 minutes of game, and really got behind.

I thought that, you know, Carr showed why he is, you know, considered one of the best players in the country. He really controlled things for them. Stevens was terrific, and it's a tough way to finish your season because I felt really good about our season this year and what our players accomplished. Really proud of them. Proud of the 25 wins; that they helped this program, putting it back in the right direction.

Excited about our future. For our nucleus that returns, this is an important lesson for us. I'm very excited about these young kids. It's a team that we have high expectations for in the future and excited about the young men we have in our program.

#### **Q. Overall, your thoughts on the game tonight? I know it was disappointing, but the experience of being here at the Garden and playing at the NIT.**

ARIC HOLMAN: Obviously I agree with Coach. We came out flat tonight. I would blame that on me and some other guys for the leadership, just getting us prepared. We thought we were very prepared and I would just say, it was a great experience playing in the NIT, showing how competitive and how trustworthy, I guess, my teammates are to each other and to this program.

You know, so like Coach Howland said, it was a bad way to end it, but you know, isn't an L. This is a learning experience, and we're going to improve and get ready for next year.

#### **Q. Is there anything you can pinpoint exactly from where it goes from 9-9 and they scored like 21 straight points?**

HEAD COACH BEN HOWLAND: First of all, we were really impatient. Once we started falling behind, we got anxious and we were shooting quick, bad shots and it just like snowballed. You know, we didn't have the ball moving at all in the first half from side to side. It was the -- you know, I thought icing the screens may have bothered us a little bit.

We had turnovers. We had a lot of self-inflicted turnovers in transition. We got sped up, playing too fast. Not being in control.

#### **Q. They don't seem to be very somber about this; I think the anticipation for next year. Seems like they are ready to get back to work and get ready for next year.**

HEAD COACH BEN HOWLAND: Yeah, you know what, this experience, first of all, being in the NIT was

really good for us. You know, we got three opportunities to get wins and we got the opportunity to come here to New York. This is an experience that many of these kids have never had before.

Obviously, No. 1, being in New York City, and No. 2, playing in the Garden. I thought maybe we were a little awestruck with that. The blue line being out there, everybody wants to play behind the blue line. And it's not that line; it's the white line, and we saw that today at the shootaround.

But this will be a growing experience that will help this team as we return a lot of these kids for next year, and I think they are excited. I think they really like each other and love each other and play for one another. That's why it's so frustrating that we're finishing the season feeling this hollow about how we played. We played so much better, especially the latter half of our season, after starting 2-5 in the conference. I feel really good about these kids and where we're headed. Thank you.

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#### **Penn State Nittany Lions: Patrick Chambers, Shep Garner & Tony Carr**

HEAD COACH PATRICK CHAMBERS: Really proud of my team. We came out, we competed hard. I thought the defensive end really set the tone for us offensively. We got stops. For the most part we got rebounds, we were able to push it.

To have seven days off, that's a great challenge for any team. I'm sure it's a challenge for the other three teams that were here, how to conduct yourselves what to do, when to push, when to pull back. These guys were receptive and really responded over the last four or five days to prepare ourselves for a great SEC team.

**Q. A few weeks ago, you were here hoping you had done enough to make the NAAs. Obviously that didn't happen. How is that motivation for coming back here and what's it like to be able to go back on Thursday night and play for another championship?**

SHEP GARNER: Of course we were a little disappointed not to make the tournament but we made another goal. We saw we were in NIT and our goal was to get to New York and win it. That's what everyone wants to do. We put ourselves in a good position to do so.

**Q. Shep, early in your career, there was so many of these effort -- bouncing off the floor, trying really hard. That three that you made where Josh dives and he gives it to Tony and Tony gives to Lamar and then to you. That's a prototypical Penn State basketball play. Is it fitting to make that three that gave you that record? I know you don't care about individual stuff, but to have a moment in your career that happened on a play that sort of typifies what your career has been like, what's that sort of mean?**

SHEP GARNER: They say the record is an individual record, but I've had a lot of teammates that had a lot to do with that record: A lot of people that set screens for me to get me open, break passes to them, they put it right on the button for me and I just finish the job. That's a team record. It's a lot of people that had stuff to do with it. I tip my hat to my teammates and my coaches to put me in a position to do something special like that.

**Q. You guys are 4-2 in New York City, 3-1 at the Garden. What's it like having that success here and just playing here overall?**

TONY CARR: It's definitely great to come play at the Garden. I think this is the best gym in the world and it's even great when we have such great fan support that come out and just make the win even more special.

**Q. Shep, you had 12 three-pointers at Madison Square Garden your last two games. Is there something about this building?**

SHEP GARNER: I enjoy playing here. Playing here, it's a lot of fans, and we've been here in a tournament, so it's big games, win-or-go-home situations. I mean, I'm going to play big in the Garden.

HEAD COACH PATRICK CHAMBERS: I want to go back to the play you just talked about. That's the essence; that play embodies Penn State basketball. You know how hard we've worked over the last

seven years to even put plays like that together, dives, deflections, extra, extra, hockey assists, hockey assists. I mean, just fantastic. That possession, we're going to watch that possession as a group, as a team, for the next 24 hours, but definitely for next year.

**Q. Talk about being here a few weeks ago in the Big Ten Tournament and doing fairly well and doing what a lot of people thought was enough to get into the NCAA Tournament and now being back here for the Championship?**

HEAD COACH PATRICK CHAMBERS: I really think that prepared us for this game. You know, Mississippi State, I watched a ton of film on them. That's a good basketball team. But we've been here before. That was their first time here this year I think, right?

A lot of those kids, I remember Ben saying at the press conference that three of the kids have never been to New York. This is very new for them and I know Ben very well, so he will utilize this experience, and it's only going to help them for next season.

Again, being in the Big Ten Tournament, having it here; playing St. John's the year prior; playing Michigan the year prior to that, we wanted to get in here and play as often as we could and now you're starting to see some of the benefits from that.

**Q. I know you haven't seen the film already, but how does it feel to have all facets of the game working, inside, outside, the post? How does it feel as a coach to get the win, so dominant?**

HEAD COACH PATRICK CHAMBERS: Our identity is to set and rebound (ph). Our foundation is attitude. And you're concerned going into that game because of the layoff; are we still going to be rolling like we were at Notre Dame and at Marquette and against Temple. That was my biggest concern but these guys are ready to go.

Defensively we knew the game plan and we knew what we had to execute and they executed as well as you could. They scored 11 in the first quarter, 12 in the second quarter. We did a really good job on that end.

I tell them constantly, you take care of that end; the other end's going to be a lot easier because you're going to get easier breakouts and you'll see the ball go through the basket and that really helped us.

**Q. Hypothetically, do you think it's better for you guys if you win tomorrow than if you had made the Tournament and maybe lost in the first round? Sort of like that ongoing debate, which one of these is better for you?**

HEAD COACH PATRICK CHAMBERS: Yeah, I've shared a few stories, talking to Jay Wright and John Beilein. They have said it, sometimes it's better winning, continue to win, and get this experience and play in a championship game, because that means we're winning and there's success and guys are getting amazing experiences. Again, at Notre Dame, at Marquette. We can try to schedule that but that might not work out for us, home and home. So those experiences have really helped us.

So to be able to play in a championship, Penn State Basketball, where we started and now where we are, I think for me right now it's playing in the NIT and trying to cut down some nets and put a banner up in the BJC because that's going to be a huge steppingstone for us.

**Q. Wondered your initial thoughts about the matchup with Utah were.**

HEAD COACH PATRICK CHAMBERS: I didn't get to see a lot of them. I was so focused on Mississippi

State, I probably over-watched film. But I know Larry. I've watched his teams. Obviously I'm up late at night so I throw them on. They are well coached. They are very skilled. They are very tough. They run a million sets.

So we're going to have our hands full. We'll watch some film, get our guys together and we'll be ready to go for Thursday.

Thank you.