

Penn State Basketball
Micah Shrewsberry Postgame Press Conference
vs. Ohio State - December 5, 2021

Micah Shrewsberry | Head Coach

Q: Opening Statement

A: First of all I want to really thank our fans that came out tonight. Our students have been fantastic. They keep coming back, they keep showing up. And then the rest of the crowd, the community and everybody else that came, it's a big boost. And you can tell. You start coming back at the end and you start to hear the buzz, the noise. I'm looking forward to the day where we put together 40 minutes of good basketball for them. And more and more people want to come and watch this group play. We're getting better, but we're not playing 40 minutes. And you have to against a good basketball team. That's a really good basketball team. They hurt you in a lot of different areas. They score in the post, they've got shooting, and they've got guys that can drive, and they're one of the best defensive teams in the country. You got to play great when you play a team like that. You don't have to be special. You don't have to step outside of yourself. You have to be the best version of yourself and hope that's good enough. And I didn't think we were the best version of ourselves for 40 minutes.

Q: Micah they made threes at a fairly high clip tonight. Was that more of the same issues you've seen in the past when teams have gone hot against you guys from deep?

A: I mean, they're so hard to defend. It's almost like you got to pick your poison with them. Because Liddell and Zed Key. You know, even Kyle Young Joey Brunk, they just got monsters in the paint, and they force you to take up a lot of your attention in the paint, but at the same time they adjust in Ahrens on the perimeter. The other guys can shoot the ball! So, there's good shooters that we're choosing to leave and rotate from. And they did a good job of passing out of the double team when we were double teaming in the first half and moving around. I think the second half a couple of those were kind of untimely threes for us, were issues on where we got to be there, we got close out harder, we got to be in their face so they can't get those shots off. So, it's hard. They make you make a decision. Like how you're going to guard them. We did a good job like if you told me that Zed key and EJ Liddell we're gonna get 18 points I would have felt pretty good about this. But the threes was a difference in the game tonight.

Q: What did the game planning look like for EJ Liddell, and how do you think your team defended him tonight.

A: Yeah, we tried to switch against him. You know to take away some of his threes, but that puts smaller guys on him in the paint. I didn't feel like we fought him as much in the first half as we needed to. And these are like, everything I say to you guys, I say to our guys in locker room. So, it's not like I'm saying something right now that they haven't heard. We needed to fight him. Right, I get the switch and he starts to walk from three-point line. Like the fight doesn't start in the charge circle. It needs to start at the free throw line, or above the free throw line. You can't let him get there. We needed to be better, you know late in the half he caught it deep in the paint. That's where we'll grow. That's where we'll get better. But we didn't fight as much as we needed to in the first half. Yeah, other than that, I thought we did a great job, I mean, the dude's an All American. He had 14 points and five rebounds, but offensively, we attacked him, we shot faked him in the paint. We got him in foul trouble, and he had to watch some of the game. That was a big part of it too. In terms of how we attacked

him, and you know, he had to spend some time on the bench, which was another part of our game plan as well.

Q: Jalen played 40 minutes tonight, finished with 23, pretty efficient. What did you see from him tonight, especially as he continues to grow into this elevated level of basketball?

A: I think he did a good job of coming off picking roles using his body, getting guys on his hip or on his back and getting into the paint and forcing them to help. Then he played with a lot of poise and got in there and played off two feet. They're a great shot blocking team so we wanted to try and play off two feet. If you are going off one foot, they're just gonna come and block somebody's shot and just start their own break. So we wanted to play off two feet, settle, see if you have your shot, see if you can shot fake and then look for kick outs after that. And he did a great job of attacking when he had the layups and then kicking out when he didn't have that. We're putting a lot on his plate, like he didn't come out of the game, he plays a lot of minutes, but he plays hard defensively. We matched up a little bit differently. But, you know, there's been a bunch of games in a row where he's guarded the best player on the perimeter. And he's playing offense with the ball in his hands a lot. And, you know, for him to play 40 minutes, for him to play, how he's played. That's what I envisioned when we got him was things like this, situations like this. And he's probably upset that he's got four turnovers but he can clean those up and move forward with those and be better at that. But if he's playing like this, he gives us a chance every night.

Q: The route of college basketball is paved with games where a team is winning by 18. And then it's cut to seven and then the team that was winning by seven wins anyway. What is the difference between those two teams? I mean, they made shots that you could have put anybody in front of them and they were going in. Where do you squeeze the orange in a game like that?

A: It's the nature of the business that I work in right now. Right? It's the unpredictability of 18 to 22 year olds. And like some nights you watch a team play, and they'll be fantastic. And you watch them the next night and they'll be awful. You can see the same thing during a game from minute to minute, from half to half and media timeout to media timeout. We talk about 40 minutes of focus more than anything like you have to be focused on the game plan. You have to be focused on your job. You have to be focused on these things because as you're playing good, bad or the other, right, there's people in the crowd that are yelling things at you. I'm a coach, I'm yelling at them for different things. There's people on the bench, there's teammates, there's people on the other team like there's a lot going on out there and whoever can focus the best for 40 minutes usually has a chance. Human nature tells you, you can let your guard down. Like we went on a run to start the game, I felt like we let our guard down after that. I tried to warn them at the timeout, game's not over, right, you have to do this for 40 minutes. We didn't come out to win the first three minutes of the game. But that's something where I think everybody can grow from. That's something as a team, like, the longer we play with focus, I think the better we're gonna be.

Q: Coaching changes and roster turnover tend not to be kind to teams anywhere in the country, let alone playing in the Big 10. I am assuming that you are not a moral victory guy...

Coach: Exactly

Q: With that assumption out of the way, there are a lot of ways that this season could start or go against Big 10 teams to get in year one, the ability to say 'here we've given you an entirely new look team, a new coaching staff and here we go. And we're moderately competitive and have a chance more or less to win the game against a team that doesn't

have to deal with any of those things.' Is there something in there that you can take part in?

A: The only thing I take solace of, or the only thing I am thinking about how I can keep John out of foul trouble, so I can play him just as much as I played Pick. What that kid does every day, in practice, in the film room, in the locker room, on the court, that's Penn State! When I got here and people started telling me about it, you know, I got people on my staff from Penn State, and people in the community telling me about Penn State. What I hear what Penn State is, I see it every day and I see it in John. So, like what he does who he is, I'm gonna fight tooth and nail. Whether I got to get my old a** out there and play too. I'm gonna fight tooth and nail for that dude to have a good season. So, we're gonna come back tomorrow, we're going to watch film, we're gonna learn from this, we're going to get better. And then we play a good team on Wednesday. And then we're gonna get right back at it and watch film, get better and then we're going to Michigan State, and we are going to fight, every night, no questions asked. When you lay it all out, they're like that, you can live with the results. If we're not putting everything we got into our preparation if we're not laying it all out there on the court. You don't feel good. You can't feel good about the results. I don't feel good that we didn't put 40 minutes together. But how we fought in the second half, I can live with the result if we play like that the entire time. And that's all we're trying to do. No matter what this record looks like. I've been on teams that have been four and four before. There's a lot of season left, and we got a lot of ways to improve and we're going to do that.