

**Penn State Basketball
Micah Shrewsberry Postgame Press Conference
vs. Rutgers – January 11, 2022**

Opening Statement:

First of all, I appreciate the students that came out for the THON game. It's awesome to see how much support that they give for what they do. I talked to one of the directors before the game and just asked 'what can I do more to help?' Or, 'as it gets closer, how can I help you?' I want to do everything possible because that looked awesome tonight. I got a chance to meet a couple of the kids that came before the game and say hi to them. I hope they had a great time tonight. A goal of our team is when people come, like I said, every single time people come to watch us play, they leave and say, 'that was money well spent, and I'd love to do that again.' It's easy to do with this team. They earned a well-deserved day off tomorrow for what we just went through. 22 days, from game to game, and then to come back and play four games in nine days, that's tough. We've been going two-a-days, we've been going game, day between game, film, then right back into practice. They were as locked in at shoot around today defensively as I've seen them. I knew when I left there that we were going to be ready to guard. We were going to be ready to defend. It's a different story, though. You still got to do it. Ron Harper Jr. still makes threes. Geo Baker is still tough as can be. They have a good team. They came in hot. But, the look I saw at 3:00 p.m. today told me we were going to have a pretty good day.

Q: Yesterday, I asked you about Ron Harper Jr. and you said that you would do a good job defending him if you held him to less points than he had shots and you actually did that tonight. How do you take this defensive success defending him into Sunday's game against EJ Liddell at Ohio State?

A: I do remember that. I'm not going to tell you how we're going to guard EJ Liddell and Ohio State. We're going to stand there with long arms, I know that's going to be a part of our plan. No, I just said this on the radio – at the start of the year, there probably wasn't anybody in here that was waving the Seth Lundy All-Defensive Team flag. Seth Lundy has guarded the best player, or one of the best players, on every single team this year. I told him tonight, and I told the guys on staff, when Ron Harper Jr. goes out of the game, Seth Lundy comes out of the game. I said, 'Seth, if I'm not paying attention and you see Ron Harper go in the game, get up and check yourself back in. You are guarding him the entire night.' And he did. I thought he did an excellent job. He is fighting. He is making it tough on people. His athleticism, his length, his attention to detail. His attention to detail has really improved. I might be hurting him on the offensive end because he is exerting so much effort on the defensive end, but he is making timely threes and he is really guarding people. Kudos to him, kudos to Jalen Pickett for guarding Geo Baker in the same way. Total team effort. Now we got to do it again. We're going to take a day off, but I don't want to stop. I want to keep playing. I wish we could play tomorrow because I know our guys would be ready. They'd be ready to guard, they'd be ready to fight, they'd be ready to do what needs to be done to win on Sunday.

Q: Sam [Sessoms] mentioned that he didn't put his best effort forward on Saturday. What did you see from him over the last couple of days and what did you say to him to make sure he was locked in for tonight?

A: I didn't really say anything to him. He knew. I didn't have to. Him playing nine minutes was the message. You need to be on board with what we're doing and playing as hard as possible. The video doesn't lie. I got on him on Saturday, and that's hard to take when you're somebody that has been counted on, you're somebody that scored a lot, and now you play nine minutes. There's two things you can do: You can go in the locker room and be a locker room lawyer. You can go to somebody else that didn't play and start talking like, 'Hey man, how come you didn't play? I didn't play either, this coach is doing a terrible job, if we would

have played we might have won.’ Or you can come back and fix it. You can take ownership, you can look inside. That says a lot about his character, who he is as a person, his resiliency to just bounce back and play. He played with more force, he played with more pace, he was attacking the basket. We’re really hard to guard when he and [Jalen] Pickett are both playing like that at the same time.

Q: You had assistant coaches, GA’s, and everybody spreading their arms, what was the message there?

A: Number one, we went back and evaluated our team on those days off and one area where we were lacking was shot volume. I’ve said it before: we were last in high-major basketball in shot volume and that was because we turned the ball over too much, and since game three, our offensive rebounding had taken a dip, so we weren’t getting as many offensive rebounds back. On the flip side of that we’ve done a great job on the defensive boards. They got 11 offensive rebounds, but we’ve done a good job of keeping people off the glass. But how we play defense, we don’t turn people over. We’re safe, solid, and going to be in position every single time. But there is a difference between being in position and standing with your arms to your side or being in position and standing there like you’re covering ground. I showed them clips of our Celtics teams playing the Milwaukee Bucks in the playoffs, two years in a row. The first one, Eric Bledsoe is bringing the ball down the court and there’s five guys all standing with their arms out. Jason Tatum’s in the opposite corner, you know, 50 feet from the ball and he’s standing there like that, there’s people on the bench standing there like that. Our guys have really bought into it. As you see in our numbers, we’re still not turning the ball over. I think it was the Northwestern game and I looked, and we had six turnovers, but it felt like 50. They would drive and we would get our hands on the basketball and swipe it away and it happened again tonight. We turned them over 15 times. We were still being solid, we didn’t change anything defensively. All we changed was getting our arms up where we can cover more ground. Like we’re in two places at once.

Q: You’re talking about Sam Sessoms, and obviously, he comes in today puts up a strong performance after Purdue. What does it say about him to do that in late-game situations?

A: I think we still need to be better late game, but he puts so much pressure on the defense because of the way he gets to the rim. If you look at our numbers, we’ve been good at scoring around the rim and part of that is because he gets in there a lot. He makes those tough shots, but he also forces the defense to come and help. He can drop it off for a lob, he can put it up on the glass and have a shot blocker go try and get it now then John [Harrar]’s free to get offensive rebounds. So, we need the pressure he puts on the defense and the spacing that our guys try and play with to give him room to drive the basketball. It helps our offense when you can play with multiple ball handlers. The more guys that can play off pick and rolls, the better your offense will be.

Q: We saw Jevonnie Scott for the first time on the court. What were your initial impressions of his debut and how do you kind of see his role going forward?

A: I was happy for him. I spent four years with Coach Painter, so I always say stuff that he says all the time. But I said in the locker room I was excited. I was like, ‘Jevonnie, you got your name in the paper!’ Like the old school paper where you flip to the back page, and it’s got the names in the back. You see ‘Penn State: Harrar 16, Dread 2, Scott 2.’ He got his name in the paper man. I’m fired up for that kid. What he’s done to put himself in position to help us and then I just told him to go in play as hard as possible. Don’t mess up defensively, which is

pretty tough to do. Don't mess up defensively and give us everything you got. He's been itching to play, and the opportunity is there and there's fans there and it's exciting. He gave us a good spark in the first half, he played hard. Then he gave us a little spark in the second half and got a bucket. We'll get him to knock down those free throws in too and he could've had four. It could've said 'Scott 4' on the back page tomorrow.