

2012 A-10 Men's Basketball Championship Final – March 11, 2012

#4 St. Bonaventure - 67
#3 Xavier - 56

ST. BONAVENTURE POSTGAME INTERVIEW

Q. Andrew, when it came to having a basket, and you needed to take a charge you made key plays. Talk about being able to do that especially in a situation like a Tournament Final.

ANDREW NICHOLSON: It's a tournament, so we have to play every possession. Every little thing counts, so those are just big plays, whether I block a shot, take a shot, or prevent a big basket.

Q. Andrew, when you were dribbling the ball out, 20 second left, what were your thoughts? Was that when it hit you that you guys actually won this?

CHARLON KLOOF: Before we got the ball, I saw the coach at Xavier telling his guys to back off, and once I saw that I knew that that was the moment, and I was so happy. I can't even describe it.

ANDREW NICHOLSON: Yeah, that's why I came to St. Bonaventure for; that's what I wanted to do, bring the Bonnie's back a Championship. When I saw that I thought, we did it!

Q. The feeling of climbing up the ladder and cutting down the net, what did that feel like?

ANDREW NICHOLSON: It's a good feeling, so much emotion, so much going through your head. Played all season, intense, tough conference, just shows that hard work paid off.

CHARLON KLOOF: Um, I never imagined it, but I always, always knew that if we worked hard, we could get somewhere, so we worked and -- (Away from mic.)

Q. Andrew, how aware were you about Camden, nine years ago, and what happened here and at what point did it strike you about what you were a part of in bringing things back?

ANDREW NICHOLSON: I mean, I didn't really know what happened, as far as being here, but I remember when Coach Schmidt recruited me, he said, "You are a special player, you can do something," and I wanted to come to this school and make a difference, and show everyone that we did it.

Q. Andrew, can you talk about the opportunity to play in the NCAA?

ANDREW NICHOLSON: First time I've been there, something special, it's exciting!

Q. Can you talk about outside of your performance, can you talk about different players stepping up, Charlon stepped up in the UMASS game and yesterday Conger had a near triple-double and today you got a big contribution from Eric off the bench, and yesterday Chris Johnson had a big bench play, too.

ANDREW NICHOLSON: Tournament play you need the whole team, it's not going to be one guy who does it all. You need everybody to step up.

Q. Andrew, today if you look at your numbers, 26, 14, 8, were you sitting there going "I'm going to carry this team today"?

ANDREW NICHOLSON: Yeah, I do that a lot, so, yeah, I basically said we need everyone to just step up.

COACH SCHMIDT: Yeah, this is -- I'm so excited for our players. It's a great moment for the program, for the school, you know, I said it yesterday, from where we've come, it's been a long, hard battle. A lot of times you work and you work and you work and you still don't have success, but someone is looking over us and I told the guys in the locker room, and we got lucky and we had success and it worked out.

Andrew was terrific, he talked about everybody playing their role and the role, guys have to do what they're supposed to do, the point guard has to do what he has to do, and your best player has to do what he does, and our best player was the best guy on the court tonight, and that's the main reason why we won.

Q. When you were hired to bring a program to this level, all of the hard work for you personally, the impact to get to this point what does that mean for you, Coach?

COACH SCHMIDT: It's gratifying. You put so much hard work and you spend -- it's hard to say but you spend more time with your team than you do with your family at times.

Sometimes when you lose, you question if you have your priorities in order. But when you have success like we had success today, it makes it worthwhile.

It's a gratifying moment and satisfying, but it's still the players' win. They won the game, they won the Tournament, they had a great season.

Q. Coach, do you think the players right now have any idea what they've done for the University --

COACH SCHMIDT: No idea. No idea. They know they won a game, but it hasn't sunk in yet and we'll get back to the hotel, and I think once we see it and when our school comes across that board, I think that will be the time where they realize what really happened.

In terms of the impact it has on the University, no. When I was 18, 19, 20, I didn't either.

Q. Schmitt, when you took the job, did you ever any second thoughts -- Robert Morris took off after you left and you initially struggled. Did you have any thoughts about that?

COACH SCHMIDT: The late, great Skip Prosser told me it was better to leave one year too early than one year too late. But he told what happens if your best player blows his ACL? Not that Robert Morris was a bad job; I could probably have been there for 20 more years, but that made my decision for me. There is no second-guessing. You never know whether you made the right decision or not until you're there four, five months and I got a wife, three boys and it a terrific place for us. It's been terrific.

No second guessing. You can't look back, and we knew it was going to be difficult in the very beginning when we took over. Robert Morris was

321 out of 324 in the rpi, and we built that program, and we thought we had the confidence to do the same at St. Bonaventure.

Q. Coach, obviously the biggest stage of everyone's career, the first time playing in a A-10 Championship game and there seemed to be nerves whatsoever, especially the way that you guys set the tone --

COACH SCHMIDT: We were playing with house money, nobody expected us to be there, and we went out and played. I told the guys, we don't have to do anything different, we've got to defend, rebound and take care of the ball and play harder and smarter than the other team and we will win. It's a bigger stage, CBS and all that stuff but our guys went out and played.

We were always on the attack, we didn't play not to lose and I think someone asked that question yesterday, I think we learned a great lesson in the UMASS game where we stopped attack and go we played not to lose and today that didn't happen, they made a run at us and we answered.

Q. Mark, Andrew was saying when you recruited him you told him he could make a difference. What did you see in him and now that it's all over --

COACH SCHMIDT: When I first saw him, Coach Massey has the Toronto area, and he went up there in the fall and saw this kid and called me up and said, "Coach, you've got to get up here" and I said, "Who does he remind you of?" and he said, "Greg Oden," and I said, "Really?" So the next week I saw him walk out of the locker room, this 185-pound kid, and I'm like, "That's him?" And as soon as he started playing, I got goose bumps and I was like, oh my God how does nobody know who this kid is?

We knew he was going to be good, and the adjustment from Canadian basketball to American basketball, and the first game he struggled and the second game he played against Marist, we knew right then we had a player. After his freshman year his mom and dad came down to pick 'em up and I told all three of them -- and at that time he was a chemistry major, and I said, "I want you to get your chemistry degree, but if you do what you are supposed to, you have a chance to be a pro," and he looked at me with those big eyes, and he said, "I had no idea." And he's worked and worked and you see the results of that.

Q. You coached David West. Is Andrew Nicholson the best player you've ever coached?

COACH SCHMIDT: That's a hard question, but he's the best player I've coached as a head coach. (Chuckles.) David was a terrific player, but Andrew is everything for us. David probably had more help around him and nothing against our players now but we had pro's other than David on that team. But Andrew was -- someone asked me before I got up here, is he better than Bob Lanier, and I said, "I can't tell you if he's better than Bob Lanier, but he's 'our' Bob Lanier."

Q. I asked Coach Mack whether this is the best performance he's ever seen, and he said maybe on television he's seen better but not on the sidelines. Can you comment on that?

COACH SCHMIDT: That's Andrew. He has great touch, great feel, great feet, and great mannerisms about him. Looking at the stats,

26-14-8 he had biggest game of his career. He just goes out and plays. This is probably the most he's ever talked in his life up here. He's a pleasure to coach. I can't say enough. I'm lucky to have the opportunity to coach a kid that encompasses everything you want in a player and in a student and most importantly as a kid.

There are not enough words to describe what Andrew Nicholson is and what he means to our program and what he means to me.

Q. Coach, there was a good amount of buzz before the season started about the NCAA Tournament and you were always quick to say one game at a time, we're trying to get into the top-4, we have to earn things before we can talk about that, and here you are now going to the NCAA Tournament.

COACH SCHMIDT: It's a miracle. We lost two of our better players to injuries, one the first second of the first game, Marquise Simmons, Michael Davenport, we lost him, a potential 1,000 point scorer, so two of our top-seven out for the year and you look at each other and you say "what are we going to do?" But the bench grew up. Youssou grew up, Jordan grew up, we got more from Da'Quan and Eric, they stepped up and stepped into those positions and personally -- especially Jordan and Youssou, wouldn't have played nearly as much but when we had those two injuries early in the season they grew and one of the reasons why we're here today is because of our bench.

Q. Coach, can you talk about different players stepping up, on Friday it was Charlon and yesterday, Chris, and -- Conger got a triple-double yesterday.

COACH SCHMIDT: That's the definition of a good team, it's not always going to be one or two guys, guys coming off the bench, Chris did it yesterday, Eric came off especially in the first half and hit shots and that's what you need. It's not going to be such a competitive game, you're going to have your up's and down's, but having a strong bench is critical too.

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