



**2013 Ohio Valley Conference Men's Basketball Championship
Game 7 – Finals – #1 Belmont 70, #2 Murray State 68 (OT)
March 9, 2013 – Municipal Auditorium (Nashville, Tenn.)**

Post-Game Quotes

Belmont head coach Rick Byrd

"If you coach long enough you're in a game like that. Certainly the only game I can think of in all the time I've had the good fortune to coach that was similar was our win over Lipscomb the first time we got to go [to the NCAA Tournament] in overtime. This one was even more dramatic. I can't go any further without talking about Murray State and the success they've had and the program they've built. That was a championship game with a whole bunch of players who had won two consecutive conference tournaments. That's almost not possible to happen unless you've changed conferences, somebody's changed conferences. Then it's really unlikely. A lot of pride on that team and a lot of great players and the way they played and shot it, we were really fortunate. Stacy Wilson – I think we all thought he beat us on that end-of-the-shot-clock throw-in. Our hats are off. We've got a lot of respect for what those guys have accomplished. This great is a great game because of how good their program is.

On the final shot of the game

"The overtime final possession was a play we'd set up. We talked about today in practice as being a play that we would run. They just wouldn't let us complete a pass to initiate the play. We just went to plan whatever it was, which is what we'd done all night long, which is go set a ball screen for Kerron [Johnson]. They were switching at that point, which they did late in the game, and so he had to put a big-time fadeaway on it to get it over Daniel, a great athlete, a long athlete, great jumper. I think I told the folks on TV afterwards that now I've coached over 1,000 games and I think literally only two or three of those have been won on a last second shot. I think that qualifies as a last second shot. That's a pretty good one to come along and he made the shot at the end of regulation. The shots he made, the plays he made, pretty incredible.

On calling a timeout at the end of regulation

"I don't like to let a defense get setup. That's pretty much what we're gonna do. We're gonna open it up and let him drive. He's hard to guard. He gets fouled a lot. Ironically the thing he does less well in some ways is make jump shots. He gets it to the goal. He gets fouled. He probably doesn't shoot 15 of those [shots] that he made at the end [of the game] in a year, stop and shoot a 15-footer. He takes it all the way to the goal and he'll occasionally jump up and shoot a three.

On possible seeding in the NCAA Tournament

"I had thought about that question because I knew we could lose either of these games and I knew the question would be asked. I think, first of all, we don't know what's going to go on from now until Selection Sunday and that will impact our seed without a question. But I think the best thing is to trust those guys to get in there and do the best they can. It wouldn't matter if you had the 12 Apostles in there doing it, somebody would be really upset about the outcome. I think we stand to have a shot at certainly the best seeding we've ever had, but who knows how much the RPI means in that room? Everybody talks about it. We know it's the only thing they look at that's a mathematical formula because they won't look at the other ones because they take into account margin of victory and they don't want that to be part of it. I don't know but I suspect we've got a fighting chance at an 11 or 12.

On Kerron Johnson's cut to the chin late in the second half

"When something like that happens there's just so much else to do that you don't spend any time. I didn't know whether he would come back or not. You've got to get the next person in the game and play it. In fact, Kerron would be the first to tell you, we made our comeback at the end of the first half with him sitting over there [on the bench]. Reece [Chamberlain] came in and made some great plays and made things happen and we don't win the game if he doesn't do all of that. You never know. We did the same thing last night with [Ian Clark] on the bench. Our team is certainly more than those two guys. They just happen to be the most outstanding guys and the guys you notice.

On keeping the ball away from Isaiah Canaan on the last play of regulation

"We tried not to do that for sure. We didn't want him to [touch the ball]. We took the guy that was guarding the in-bounder and we call it twist and turn around so he face-guarded and another guy guarding him to not to let him have it. They ended up not getting a very good look because they wanted him to have it, as they should. That guy can get his own shot better than anybody, one of the best in the country at really getting his own shot.

On the stoppage at the end of regulation

"I think the clock didn't start. Wasn't it that the clock didn't start? They had to find out how much they had to take off because it showed 7.3 [seconds] and it ended up being 6.2. Tyler Hallway on our staff was telling me that when they blew the whistle, the ball was back here [at the foul line]. He kept saying that the whole time. We were, I don't know about afraid, but we thought they might get it up at the hash mark near their bench. I think that's what they had planned for in that whole time. I don't guess they ever asked, 'Where's the ball gonna be?', which is something good to do if you can think of it, but believe me I'm not second-guessing. I don't think of a lot of things. That helped us because I think they probably couldn't do what they really wanted to do and they just had to improvise.

On the two wins against Tennessee State and Murray State

"These two games were harder to win than any two semifinal and final games that we played in the Atlantic Sun. I'm assuming our team, with the high RPI, this team is as good as or better than the other five championships we had. The first year, Lipscomb was an overtime win, but those teams were frankly RPI of 150 or something, 140. I don't remember but nowhere near where we are now or as competitive nationally as we are now no matter how you slice it. We had to beat two teams as good or better than probably any team in any of the A-Sun tournament games. I'm not being critical but overall I think the leagues have been comparable over the last five or six years. Hopefully, us coming here has strengthened this league in comparison. The two games were just tougher, just tougher.

On playing home games previously at Municipal Auditorium

"I don't know if they do or not. We played most here. We played a few down at whatever – Bridgestone, Gaylord, whatever it was called or has been called. We played one in Aquinas' gym, seats about 32. It's just hard to imagine when you think back. We won the North Division champion of the Atlantic Sun here, beat some good programs, Samford and Georgia State, people like that in our last year in this building. So we were making progress. But there's no question that the Curb Event Center and the growth of our University, the quality of the campus, the buildings, the teaching, the students, all of that has helped us, and frankly the city of Nashville – all of those things are great to recruit to combined. The Curb Event Center – it made us look like a Division I program for the first time.

On Belmont's fan support

"It's grown dramatically. Being in the OVC this year has made a huge difference in our attendance. It's made a huge difference in the coverage that we've gotten in the local media. The fringe fans, for lack of a better term, they know the OVC and they know the schools that are in it and now we've got a bunch of rivalries that they care about and they get to come to [Municipal Auditorium] and see the tournament. Murray State has a phenomenal following. I knew it was going to be a little strange to be in a building in Nashville and have more people for a team from Murray, Ky., but that's all to their credit and we're getting there.

Belmont senior Adam Barnes

"Out of the ones we won in the A-Sun, this one is different. Preseason they didn't have us winning and to come out here and do it feels great. And the way we won – overtime and Kerron's shot. We'll look back at this and remember it forever.

Belmont senior Ian Clark

"He's very hard [to stop] because we place shooters around him out on offense. He's such a great driver that it gives him the opportunity to make plays and make decisions based off what the defense does. Tonight they were kind of face-guarding a lot of our guys, didn't want to let us get off 3-point shots, and that's what opens up the lane for him. Like Coach Byrd talked about, [Murray State] switching and going 1-on-1 with a big guy, I'm taking Kerron and those odds.

Belmont senior Kerron Johnson

"You always talk about when you're shooting, having that spot on the floor where you're most comfortable. Those two shots were right in that same area and I'm really comfortable from that area and that range, whether it be a floater or pull-up. I knew if I could get to that range I was pretty confident it was going down. You know that they don't want to foul so they're not going to foul a jump shooter. All you have to do is raise up and knock it down.

"I wasn't in the game when we were down 10 [points] and Ian [Clark] and Reese [Chamberlain] and Trevor [Noack] and Blake [Jenkins], they just fought back and kept fighting. You can't forget Spencer [Turner] coming in, haven't shot all game, all tournament, and he comes down and drains a pretty important free throw and made some big plays. It's great to hit that shot; you want to hit that shot; you want that pressure when it comes down to it. You wanna be able to make that

shot but it was a total team effort when those guys fought back and kept us in the game and kept our poise with about a minute-and-a-half to go.

On coming back after the hard fall on the floor

"Once I got up I was fine. Your adrenaline's going. You're just trying to get in there as fast as you can to continue to help your team.

On guarding Isaiah Canaan

"He's so good offensively. He just has so many moves that all game, I was just pretty focused on doing my job and my job was to slow him down. You can't stop him. You can just make every shot as hard as it possibly can be and that's what O focused on doing. When my offensive chances came I took them but besides that, my goal was to make his night hard. I felt like me and Ian in the second half, I think we did that and he got tired down the stretch.

On the meaning of winning the OVC Tournament

"I think this one has a little bit more meaning coming into a new conference. I think we had a little bit of a chip on our shoulder. We really wanted to win in a 'bigger conference' and do well and play well and perform well. It meant a lot to our fans and to our coaching staff to be able to watch us at home. That's what we really wanted to do, what our coaching staff pushed us all week and they got us ready for these conferences.

Murray State head coach Steve Prohm

"First off, congratulations to Belmont University, coach Byrd and those players over there are a tremendous team, a tremendous program. They've had a terrific season. It was a great championship game. I really believe and I really felt that we had a great opportunity to close the game out in the second half but it wasn't meant to be for whatever reason, you can probably point to a lot of things. But both teams were extremely resilient because both teams went on runs. It was a great game. I'm proud of our guys. The most disappointing thing is that you weren't able for these six seniors to keep playing and get to where we wanted to go because they've represented this program, they've represented this conference and they've represented our university at the highest level that they've probably seen in this conference in a long time, if not the highest level. Then at Murray State, there's a contingent of people that basketball means an incredible amount to and we weren't able to get it done today. But I think that we showed the type of basketball team we were this week. This one will be hard to stomach."

"Let's just move on from that play. I didn't listen correctly. I'll just take the blame on that. I didn't listen correctly and looking back I should have just gotten the ball across half court and called a timeout and run one of our last second plays. I had something set up for the sideline. I made a poor decision in a late game situation so pin that on me."

"Racer Nation is great. There's nothing like coaching at Murray State. The expectations and the pressure, it's just like at a high major university. The high level, high major schools, that was Murray State is because you're expected to win, you're expected to win championships, you're expected to have great players and expected to win. As the leader and the head coach, you're expected to win this game today and we weren't able to close it out. Speaking of our fans, tremendous, tremendous fan support. It's been like that; last year six consecutive sell outs, this year, as we're up and down, we have 7500 people in our arena. It's one of the best mid-major programs, it's one of the best basketball, forget mid-major, it's one of the best basketball programs and support basketball programs. Look at the games on TV, then look at the crowds and then look at Murray State. The frustrating thing is our league needs more respect. Bottom line, our league needs more respect because the top four teams in our league are very good and we probably won't get a NIT berth or a NCAA berth at large. I understand that and I can understand both sides of it, but we need to continue to build our league."

"Kerron (Johnson) made a terrific shot at the end. He made a tough shot over Ed (Daniel). Like I said, we gave up too many easy baskets and layups. If you chart their points, we gave up a lot of layups. I don't think that they made a bunch of perimeter jump shots, but I could be wrong. There was a lot of layups and a lot of scores off our turnovers. Kerron, he's a great player, him and Ian Clark they're a terrific backcourt. Belmont is a great team. Give them a lot of credit. It's frustrating how the game ended though and I'll take the blame for it."

Murray State senior Isaiah Canaan

"It's tough, just losing period. We hate losing as a team and to lose in the championship game is real tough. Things happen for a reason."

"It was a mistake on my part. I was dribbling it like regular, but I guess my foot was in the way and it rolled off my foot."

"I just got better looks (in the second half). My teammates did a good job of finding me when they could. Belmont's main focus was to try to keep me from getting into the lane or get an open shot. My teammates knocked down some shots, Stacy knocked down five 3-pointers, so they had to key in on him some and that freed me up in the second half."

Murray State senior Stacy Wilson

"I thought that we were going to win. That's basically it. I love my teammates. We fought until the end but I guess it wasn't meant to be. I've known these guys for a couple of years and they are always going to be like my brothers but it would've been a better feeling winning than losing because we hate losing as a team."

Post-Game Notes

Belmont wins its first OVC Tournament championship in its inaugural season in the league. The Bruins prevailed in overtime, the first extra period in the championship game since Morehead State's double OT victory over Austin Peay in 2009. There has been just one other title game that took extra time, Murray State's overtime victory against Austin Peay in 1997.

Belmont will make its sixth NCAA Tournament appearance, all in the last eight seasons, after winning five Atlantic Sun Conference championships between 2006 and 2012.

Belmont junior J.J. Mann led the Bruins with 18 points, his 17th double-figure scoring game this season and 12th in the last 13 contests. He also led the club with seven rebounds, his eighth outing this year with seven or more boards.

Belmont senior Trevor Noack posted 14 points in the contest, his 21st double-digit scoring effort of the year.

Belmont senior Ian Clark registered 11 points in the game, his 29th double-figure scoring game of the season.

Belmont senior Kerron Johnson netted 12 points and six assists, his 23rd double-digit scoring effort of the year and the 11th time he has recorded six or more assists in a game.

Murray State dropped to 15-9 all-time in the OVC Tournament championship game. The Racers have appeared in the championship game in three of the last four seasons and eight times in the 15 seasons. MSU fell to 9-5 all-time at Municipal Auditorium.

Murray State senior Isaiah Canaan finished his Racers career fifth in career points with 2,050 after scoring 22 points in tonight's game. The Biloxi, Miss., native is first in career 3-pointers (304), fourth in assists (385), fifth in free throws made (470) and eighth in steals (156).

Canaan also moved up several single-season lists, including fifth in points (676) and ninth in assists (133).

Canaan posted 22 points, 10 rebounds and nine assists, setting career-highs for rebounds and assists in the contest and recording his first-ever double-double.

Murray State senior Stacy Wilson posted 23 points with five 3-pointers in the contest, tying his career-best for points, set previously this season against St. John's in the Charleston Classic.

Murray State senior Ed Daniel ended his MSU career 12th in rebounds (713) and second in blocked shots (156).