PRESS CONFERENCE QUOTES

HEAD COACH SCOTT DREW

#5 JOHNATHAN MOTLEY, JUNIOR FORWARD

#24 ISHMAIL WAINWRIGHT, SENIOR GUARD

Q. Ish, obviously you guys want to get past the first round. How much motivation is that after what’s happened the last two years?
ISHMAIL WAINWRIGHT: What happened the last two years? No, we haven’t really talked about it. We know what we need to do. Coach has broke down everything. Just moving on. This is a new season, New Mexico State is a great team. They’re led by a great point guard. Coach is amazing, too. So we know what’s at stake and we know what we need to do.

Q. Johnathan, their coach talked about it that the teams are very similar in terms of if you look at stats in particular, both good offensive rebounding teams, both good three-point shooting defense. How much of an emphasis will it be to keep them off the offensive glass? Obviously they’re going to try to do the same thing to you, but how much of that will be an emphasis for you guys?
JOHNATHAN MOTLEY: Well, we’re just going to go out there and do what we do. We know we’re a great rebounding team, and we’re a lot bigger than most people. So we’re just going to go out there and impose our will and do what we have to do.

Q. Before you guys started breaking down film this week and before you saw the name pop up Sunday, either one of you guys know anything about New Mexico State?
ISHMAIL WAINWRIGHT: We played against them the last couple of years, and also, I have family in Abu Dhabi, so I know a little bit about Abu Dhabi.

Q. What family in Abu Dhabi?
ISHMAIL WAINWRIGHT: My grandmother used to stay there. She passed away. And I have cousins that stay there, too.

Q. Still there?
ISHMAIL WAINWRIGHT: Yes. I know a little bit about them. But we played against them the past few years, the bigs, Bhullar and all of them. Being playing against them for years. We know a little bit about them. A lot now.

Q. Johnathan, New Mexico State, an undersized team by all measures. Does this feel like a matchup that you can suppose?
JOHNATHAN MOTLEY: Yeah, for sure. We're just going to try to get the ball to the paint as much as possible. And that's what we do and then we just play out of it from there. And usually most teams double team me, so I just gotta find ways to get kick-out threes for guys and exploit those match ups and try to get as many one on one touches as I can and then we're going to be all right.

Q. For Johnathan, I was talking to Ish in Kansas City. I was talking about talked about your body how you're almost like a King Kong or Godzilla-type monster that was the phrase used. Talk about your evolution since you arrived on campus, physical standpoint. How much different you are, how you got that way?
JOHNATHAN MOTLEY: Well, just 'did giving most of the credit to Coach Charlie, our strength coach. He's worked with me so much during my redshirt year. We found days to lift weights like every day, any chance we got we lifted weights. And I gained about 20, 30 months of muscle, sitting there about 240 right now, about six percent body fat. Just credit to hard work. Anything can be done when you work hard.

Q. Johnathan, you and Jarrey went to North Shore. Do you all talk about possibly meeting up playing the second round being North Shore guys?
JOHNATHAN MOTLEY: It'll be good to see him of course, but we gotta take it one game at a time. We know we gotta get past Mexico State first and that's what we're focusing on. But yeah it'll be awesome to see my old teammate again. We text message all the time, got a group message. We've been keeping in contact for years, so it would be awesome to meet up with him for sure.

Q. Ish, the fact that you guys have played New Mexico State the past two seasons, some of the personnel is the same even though they've got a new coach, he was on their staff. How much of that is an advantage come tournament time having at least some knowledge of your opponent?
ISHMAIL WAINWRIGHT: I mean cause they can break down -- coaches broke down what they do against Arizona when we played last year and we can break down what they didn't do. So like he said, we can take advantage of that. And that's really about it. I mean we played against them. We can watch the whole game and I don't know if they're going to put in new wrinkles and stuff. We're going to put in new wrinkles.

Q. Ish, you mentioned on Sunday after the selections were announced that you guys need to get back to playing the way you all did at the start of the season. What does that kind of entail? What do you all need to do?
ISHMAIL WAINWRIGHT: Play with a smile on our faces. It was a time where we looked at it
more of like a little -- like a job and we wasn't having fun. But now I mean we're back to having fun. We're back to being our goofy selves, joking around a lot and that's a good thing just seeing the young guys step up. They actually said that, too, start having more fun and lately we've been having a lot of fun, so that's going to carry over to the court. So you'll see a lot of smiles and a lot of laughs on the court.

Q. Johnathan, I was talking to Coach Drew. He said one of the things that he saw from the start of the season so maybe when you struggled a little bit was as a team when you were more aggressive, when you were drawing fouls, when you're going to the free throw line, that's when you guys were playing your best. Does that kind of fall on the inside guys then to be a little more aggressive in the tournament to draw those fouls and make things happen?
JOHNATHAN MOTLEY: Yeah, for sure. Our teammates look to us, me and Joe and T.J. to do things and that's kind of the way we play our game, inside out. And if we're not being aggressive it kind of just throws off the whole flow of the game because our guards are not getting kick-out threes and opening shots. So we're definitely going to do a better job of being aggressive and getting to the free throw line more. And usually when we get a lot more easy paint touches and free throw shots and things like that, we're usually more successful. So we've been definitely working on that and making sure we're going to carry that out.

Q. Ish, I think you said that Johnathan was one of the first people you saw when you first got to campus. Talk about what he looked like then compared to now.
ISHMAIL WAINWRIGHT: This isn't the Johnathan Motley. That's not him. He was 40 pounds lighter, skinny, like bones and everything and just had a little, you know, not a lot of hair but had a little bit of hair. But that's not the Johnathan Motley. This is the more mature, a bucket Motley. He's a monster, like I told you in Kansas City. I told you in Kansas City he's just a monster, Godzilla, King Kong, that doesn't even compare. He's a monster. So just different. And I'm proud of him.

COACH DREW: Well, we're extremely excited to be close to home, number one. Number two, after a couple days of guys being able to rest and recover, they got some -- got a better bounce in their step. They're excited. And it's the best time of year, so hopefully we can play our best basketball.

Q. I know you've played them twice in recent years, but Paul was an assistant on that team. Now he's the head coach. What's different, though, about what Paul is doing as opposed to what Marvin was doing the last two times you played them?
COACH DREW: Well, both are similar from the standpoint they win a lot and both of them have done a great job. I think Paul is playing a smaller lineup, doing a great job in especially transition. They really push the ball.

But I see more similarities than differences, and that's a positive, because it's an outstanding program. They got a great culture there.

Q. Scott, Ish said the coaches, I guess nobody's really been talking about the previous two
years in the NCAA tournament. Do you all just feel like that's just not necessary anymore, everybody kind of knows what happened?

COACH DREW: Well, I think the good thing is you have players that have been through it, so they know the positives and negatives. Ish has explained the excitement of going to Sweet 16. The guys that have been in Elite Eights, they obviously explained the excitement that involved that.

As far as -- I think the best thing about Ish as a leader is he does a great job in making sure that everybody just understands the importance of the moment. With him being our only senior on the team, it's really important you have a great leader like that who can convey because at the end of the day I'm convinced 18 to 22 year olds listen to their peers more than they do their coaches or anybody else. So I think it's really important to have that leadership.

And with us, we know in 40 minutes anything can happen. Doesn't matter what you're seeded, what you're ranked, what people say in 40 minutes. That's the beauty of March Madness. It's not a best out of seven series.

Q. You've dealt with it before in terms of guys leaving. How do you handle that process? And was there maybe even talks with Johnathan last year in terms of him possibly going out?

COACH DREW: Well, first of all, every player that gets into college that I've coached would like to play in the NBA and most of them would like that to be sooner rather than later. So as a coach, our job is to help them reach their goals. At the same time we try to make sure that they never make bad decisions, because once you leave you can't come back.

So with all our players, we're in constant talk with them whenever they're in a situation where there is a possibility that they could go. And the first and foremost thing is to gather the information and make sure they protect their eligibility so that they have options. And then when they have the information, it's up to them and their family to make the decision.

Q. Coach, did you approach this year different at all, like between the conference tournament and coming here?

COACH DREW: No. I think all year long one thing that we've done is basically keep things pretty consistent, level-headed, control what we can control. And with that I think, again, we've had great chemistry. You've had great leadership from Ish Wainwright. We've gotten banged up. We've gotten the chance to get healthy, so hopefully we can finish playing our best basketball the rest of the year.

Q. Ish was talking about they are playing -- having fun, having more fun, playing with smiles on their faces like they did at the beginning of the season.

COACH DREW: Uh-huh.

Q. How do you see that manifest itself in their play on the court? What changes when they play like that?
COACH DREW: Well, when you're not playing tight and you're not playing timid -- I think some of it, the grind of the season wears you out. You have 18 conference games. You play the SEC Challenge. That's 19 straight games, no off nights, and especially when you get banged up or you can't play as well, it's not as fun.

So, I mean, Ish is coming off an ankle sprain from himself, and the fact that he's healthy now and it's a lot more enjoyable to dunk rather than lay it up or get it blocked.

So I think when any team is at their best, they're having fun playing and not too uptight to where they can't perform to their best.

Q. Scott, you've had a little chance to look at New Mexico State film the last few days. What do you see from them?

COACH DREW: A team very similar to a lot of teams we play from the standpoint a lot of athleticism. They got great length. They play up-and-down, very good on ball screens. It's a team that we've played the last couple years, but their style is a little bit different with their personnel. Coach Weir has done a good job adapting to that.

At the end of the day, I think there's familiarity, though, because their length and their athleticism is kind of similar to teams we've faced, which should make it fun for the fans to watch.

Q. Scott, you mentioned Manu. Can you give us an update on him, and what's the key to the offense being more productive than it has been recently and maybe it's just as simple as getting outside of the Big 12 conference?

COACH DREW: I think if you look at Kansas State and their last couple games, the points they scored and then the first game they played in the NCAA tournament. When you're not playing the same people for the third time and second time that no -- I mean, seems like in the Big 12, that second or third time if your player is in the wrong position, they actually tell you, hey, you're supposed to be here on that play. So it just makes it real tough to execute score. And you know their tendencies.

It's one thing to watch on film and it's another thing where he got me with that move, he got me with that move. He ain't getting me the third time with that move.

So that's the beauty of the NCAA tournament. Everybody gets a breath of fresh air. Different venue, different excitement and playing different teams.

With Manu, the big thing is we've been able to practice with him and it's really hard if you don't practice with someone and you put him in games and now he's not as aggressive or he's not as in rhythm with things or in sync with things or the teammates. He might be, but the other teammates aren't with him. So we all know the importance of practice. Now, I think players would all prefer to just show up for games, but we all do know the importance of practice.
Q. How have the early exits the last couple of years impacted maybe the way you're approaching or the way you want your guys to approach this tournament? Sort of take us through that process, if that's had any impact at all on the way you're dealing with this year.

COACH DREW: I think every experience has an impact, but the best thing is when it's personal experience, I think especially from the players' standpoints. The ones that were around last year or the year before, they understand the importance of each and every game. And just like when we went to the two Elite Eights, went to the Sweet 16, won the NIT championship.

I mean that's the beauty of March, nothing works every time. And we've had a lot of success, and we've lost some games. So again, we're going to control what we can control, and hopefully that's enough.

LOCKER ROOM QUOTES

#20 MANU LECOMTE, JUNIOR GUARD

On motivation for the team...
“This is my first NCAA Tournament game, but a lot of the other guys have been here before. I know there’s a lot of motivation even though this is the team’s fourth straight time. We know what we’ve got to do. New Mexico State is a good team and we’ve got to bring our A game.”

On avoiding looking past the first round matchup...
“You’ve just got to play hard from the start. You can’t be complacent and then it’s a tie game at the end. You can’t let the other team think they can win the game. That’s when anything can happen. You’ve just got to start strong. Anything can happen, but in my mind, I’m always the underdog. It’s all new for me. We’ve got some other guys in here that haven’t been to the Tournament. So we’re all really hungry.”

On neutralizing New Mexico’s speed...
“They have good guards and very good shooters. We just have to guard the ball and guard the ball screen really good like we’ve been doing all year. It’s going to be a team effort on defense.”

On the best part about playing for Scott Drew...
“He’s a very good coach. He’s very smart. He knows a lot about basketball. He did a great job keeping us motivated throughout the year. That’s why we played every game like it was our last game. It’s really important to have a coach that can motivate you every game and not just during the big games.”

#0 JO LUAL-ACUIL JR., JUNIOR FORWARD

On utilizing size against New Mexico...
“We just have to be aggressive defensively. They’re a great offensive rebounding team, so we’ve got to do a good job boxing out. On the offensive side, we’ve got to go after our missed shots and get as many offensive rebounds as possible as we can. We need to win the battle on the glass.”

**On avoiding complacency...**
“Don’t feel like that’s going to be a problem. We’re a loose group. We like to have fun. But we know when it’s time to play. We know what we’re playing for. This is what every college basketball player plays for. We just want to live in the moment.”

**On keys to staying focused through the season...**
“Coach Drew does a great job breaking down film and showing us things we could have done better. After every game, we break down the film and we learn from what didn’t go well. But the main thing is that we’ve been a tight unit all year and we play for each other.”

**On what he has learned from Coach Drew...**
“Personally for me, we have a great relationship. He’s very positive with me. He talks to me about basketball and he talks to me about God and helps me spiritually. He shows me that there’s a lot more to life than basketball, which is surprising coming from a head basketball coach. He’s a great guy. Love him as a coach. Love him as a person. He knows how to keep us together as a team and he just does a great job of leading us positively.”

**UNIOR TERRY “TJ” MATSON #31 Forward**

**On feelings going into tournament...**
“We just had a nice little walk through. Confidence level is definitely where it should be. We know this is a business trip but I think it is just our team’s chemistry to have fun. It makes everything better. [Tulsa] is a pretty good city. I didn’t know there was so many buildings like in the downtown area. It’s really nice. It’s kind of cold.”

**On the school’s record of four consecutive appearances in the tournament...**
“It’s a little pressure. Knowing that we only made it to the first round for two years in a row. I think we need to just come in with a different mindset this time and take it a little more serious. We are all having fun off the court but everything on the court, like shoot arounds and preparing for practice, are serious, even on the bus rides over. I think we are going to be good.”

**On the team’s focus for tomorrow’s game...**
“Defense and making sure we know our personnel and what New Mexico State can do on the court. They are really good and athletic with a couple of shooters. We just need to know who everyone is on the court to win this game. I think if we perform like I know we can and do what we do, it should be a pretty good game.”
On his preparation for the game tomorrow...
“It’s one o’clock right now so I’m not really thinking about it yet. I’ll think about the game probably tonight and tomorrow when we are going through warm ups. I think everyone is just excited to be here right now. We are ready to get some shots up in the gym and get a good feel of the rim, the ball on the court. We are just enjoying it. We have to enjoy this. A lot of teams are sad that they aren’t here. A lot of times, people get so serious and so focused. That’s a good thing to be focused because you have to be focused on the court and bring you’re A-game but you have to enjoy it.”

On the school’s record of four consecutive appearances in the tournament...
“Every team I have ever played on in my life has been a really good team so for me, I never expected anything less for us. In high school and during my two years at Olympic, we lost like four games in two years. At Findlay Prep, we lost one game to the #1 team in the country. Now I am here and went to the Sweet Sixteen and every other year have gone to the tournament. I don’t know what it’s like to be on an unsuccessful team.”

On the tournament being fun or business...
“It is business. We have to get the job done but we have to enjoy it. We are going to look back a few years down the line. A lot of friends of mine that played college basketball are posting Instagram pictures in honor of the NCAA tournament. They are thinking about what it was like when they were playing. It’s important to enjoy it right now but when we get on the court in front of national television we have to turn it on and bring our A-game. This is business but you have to enjoy the business that you do.”