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An interview with:



THE MODERATOR: We'll start with the student-athletes from Villanova. Questions for the student-athletes.

Q. Coming into this game against Kansas, they're a big finesse team, how do you deal with that? Have you dealt with it in the Big East Conference with a team like Georgetown before?

SCOTTIE REYNOLDS: Well, a team like Kansas, when they're all well-rounded the way they are offensively and defensively, you know, you can't just take away one person, it has to be a collective effort.

I think this has to be our best team basketball game.

Q. Could you talk about obviously your decision where to go to college has worked out well for you, but could you take us back with your decision to go there, how you ended up there after making the previous commitment?

SCOTTIE REYNOLDS: I could be here all day (laughter). I'll give you the short story.

Basically after my talks with Coach Capel, he let me out of my commitment to Oklahoma. That opened up the process for finding a school. I had about a month and a half to do that. So it was a very hectic time for me visiting all types of schools.

It just came down to the people that stuck with me throughout the whole process and my family. I didn't want to go too far away. I wanted them to be able to come see me, support me. They've been with me all along. So I know they weren't going to go away like other people had been.

Q. When you played in the PanAm trials, made the team, what do you remember about Collins and Chalmers? Do you carry any of that into this game?

SCOTTIE REYNOLDS: I think me, Sherron and Mario created a pretty good relationship. We was together in the USA trials, but we were also together in the Steve Nash Skills Camp. Those are great players, great competitors.

I know Sherron for a little bit. Actually when he got hurt with the ankle problem, I actually hit him with a text, you know, told him God bless him, hope everything's all right. That was a little bit earlier in the season.

I think the USA PanAm thing is over with, done with. I don't think that's going to play a part in it.

Q. The stats say that you guys are better tempo-wise when you slow it down, play more possession for possession. How important will tempo be in this game? Do you think it's necessary to slow this game down or can you run with Kansas and win the game?

SCOTTIE REYNOLDS: Well, I think the last couple of games have helped us prepare for Kansas, especially with Clemson and Siena. They like to pressure you defense-wise on the halfcourt. But Clemson likes to, you know, full-court press you the whole time. I think we did a good job in the Clemson game just sticking with it. Finally towards the end of the game, we kind of got a feel for how to break it and get easy buckets.

So I think that's gonna help us, you know, tomorrow.

Q. Do you go into this game with a nothing-to-lose mentality? Kansas is expected to win big.

DWAYNE ANDERSON: We've been in that position before. Everyone expected us to lose against Clemson. That's something we have, underdog mentality. We're going to approach this game the same way.

Q. What were your thoughts about playing in this dome, the depth perception, the atmosphere, playing in such a huge place? Is this so far different than playing in the Carrier Dome, that it's not comparable?

DWAYNE ANDERSON: When I first saw it, I thought -- when I first heard about it, I thought it would be similar to playing at Syracuse. When I actually walked out there, it was amazing. The court was elevated. So many stands, so many fans can be seated.

It's an experience that we enjoyed when we first walked on the court. Once we got going, once the ball goes up tomorrow, none of that matters. We're going to do what we do best, which is play Villanova basketball.

SCOTTIE REYNOLDS: We got sent an email kind of like the overview of the court. You could see all the stands, and you see this little wooden thing, it was about like a thumbnail small. We was looking for the court. Then we saw it in the middle. It was amazing to see from a picture aspect.

When you get out there and start playing, getting the feel of it, it just felt like a regular gym. We try not to worry about the things on the outside, just worry about the 94 by 50 feet, 10-foot hoops.

Q. You said it feels like a regular gym once you start shooting. What is the background like?

SCOTTIE REYNOLDS: You're up about three or four feet. It's kind of different 'cause you have -- it's kind of like a lower level of fans, then kind of raises up, so the backdrop is a little bit different.

But once you get used to it, you think you can shoot from halfcourt and stroke it. We did a pretty good job out there shooting the ball out there. Hopefully that's gonna continue tomorrow, you know.

Q. This is a prototype, the NCAA is looking for how this court works for everyone to do future sites like this. What about the bench? It's like a boxing rink. You're looking at everybody's knee caps.

DWAYNE ANDERSON: I think the advantage to that is that Coach Wright, I'm not sure where he'll be, but if he's down low, he won't be on top of us yelling when something's not going right (smiling).

When we're in the game, we really couldn't experience it today because we were on the floor. But tomorrow I guess it will be interesting to see how we adapt to that.

DANTE CUNNINGHAM: Yeah, the same thing. You know, it will be different. It will definitely be a different few. I asked Malcolm Grant, the smallest person on the team, would he be able to see if he sat down there (smiling). It was actually kind of funny, because the only thing you could see was his head above the court when he's standing there (laughter).

SCOTTIE REYNOLDS: I guess more than the seating was like, you know, What about we go for a loose ball, dive and go off the court? I mean, that's the thing I was scared about, so...

Other than that, we fine.

Q. Hopefully somebody will catch you.

SCOTTIE REYNOLDS: 6'9", 225, I'm good.

Q. Dante, has this team played a team like Kansas in the Big East Conference? Your team seems like a very finesse team. I think you could give Kansas a game tomorrow night.

DANTE CUNNINGHAM: Yeah, I think that the Big East is definitely just a great all around conference. We have, I guess, the biggest of the big in Georgetown. We also have the smallest of the small. I guess just being in the Big East prepared us for different teams that we play in the NCAA tournament.

So, I mean, I think we'll definitely give them a good run.

Q. Could you tell me what you remember about Corey Fisher first practice and where he's come from since then.

SCOTTIE REYNOLDS: First practice? Oh, my goodness. First practice, you know, it was

kind of like a fill-in kind of practice. I hadn't really seen him play. The last time I saw him play before the first practice was ABCD Camp. That was about a year ago, at that time. Just seeing him with the ball, him creating shots for himself, shots for the teammates, shots for me, it was amazing. Just for him to get in there, not be nervous, not be hesitant, just going out there and playing. I think that was the first thing I remember.

Q. And now?

SCOTTIE REYNOLDS: Now he's grown so much. He has better decision making in the full-court and halfcourt. He gets his team open shots. He knows time and scoring situations now. He's grown into a mature basketball player on the court where, you know, if a shot doesn't go in, he doesn't bother him. He knows he can make it up in other aspects of the game.

Q. Dante, when Jay was talking about the leadership of the team, he mentioned you came in, your family has a military background, he thought you would be a good leader because of that, but he found out instead that you were a good soldier, kind of had to adjust into becoming a leader. Can you talk about that this year?

DANTE CUNNINGHAM: Yeah, in a way, you know, coach is right. I'm not as vocal as I guess some leaders are, as these two are over here. But I'm more of a get it done, show you the right way. Like coach said, sometimes you need to have a more vocal person. Sometimes you need to grab the younger guy, yell at him a little bit, tell him he's not doing something right. I definitely learned how to do that a lot more. I'm not gonna like grab him in the middle of the floor, kind of almost embarrass him almost, but I'm going to grab him on the side as the huddle is breaking, get in their face a little bit, things like that.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks, guys.

COACH WRIGHT: Well, we've got a great task Friday night. We're playing against, you know, arguably one of the best teams in the country. They've proven that all year. That's what you get when you get to the Sweet 16.

We didn't expect to play anyone less talented than this. We have great respect for this Kansas team. I do personally for Bill Self, what he's done in his career. We're friends. I just love

how his teams play. I really admire this season they've had.

But we got to forget about that. We got to go at it Friday night.

Q. I couldn't help but notice the court setup out there. What do you think of it? What are you gonna do tomorrow on that bench? Are you going to be below, up high, crouching down, what?

COACH WRIGHT: I think that's a really impressive setup. Of all the domes, stadiums, anything I've been to, the seats are closer to the court than anywhere I've ever seen. Having the floor elevated even makes it feel like -- for some reason, makes it feel like even the elevated seats are closer. It seems much more closed-in than any domed arena that I've been in. I really like it. I think it's going to be comfortable for the players.

When I saw a picture of it before, I didn't think so. I never sit down the entire game, as you know. I think I'll just be standing up on that runway there. I don't yell at my assistants. They'll be happy, the players I turn around and talk to a lot. They'll be happy I'm separated from them a little bit.

We had to go through how we're going to handle timeouts. The players are going to have to crawl up on there. They give you benches. We don't do that during the year either. We sit on our regular bench.

We talked about all that. We'll just review it with the players tonight.

Q. Could you give us your perspective on the development of Scottie Reynolds as both a player and a leader.

COACH WRIGHT: Well, it's been pretty amazing to watch and it's been very impressive. Last year he was a great scorer. And our team had four seniors, three of them that started, really did all the dirty work and allowed him to do what he did best, which is score.

This year we asked him to score, run the team, be a leader, defend the best guards, really be what we call a Villanova guard. As great as he was last year, within our program, he didn't really earn the stripes as a Villanova guard. But he has developed into one of the best we've had. He had eight rebounds in his last game. He guarded Ronald Moore, their point guard, the entire game. He got pressed for 40 minutes. Only had two

turnovers.

He was the guy in the Clemson game the whole time in the second half saying, We're gonna finish this one, guys. They really respond to him now.

As a coach, you're like a parent. You love to see your children, you love to see your players grow up and become what they're capable of being. I think that's what Scottie is now.

Q. I did read some things this week where maybe you had to sit down with him at the beginning of the season, tell him to be more selfish because he's the guy that drives your team. Coach Self has had a similar thing with Brandon Rush. As a coach, how do you do that, saying, You do a lot for us, but you need to be more selfish?

COACH WRIGHT: Yeah, well, I think sometimes if you're a real talented player and you're not willing to use all of your talents, that's being a little selfish. It's crazy to say, but that's what we had to convince Scottie, to say, Your best ability to help this team is to use everything you have.

Some guys, their role is to maybe cut back on a few things they do. But Scottie's role on our team, we needed him to do everything he could possibly do. And it took for him to understand that. When he understood that it was unselfish for him to go and be aggressive and take more shots, then he would do it.

He's such a good kid. He was brought up by two beautiful parents. His high school coach, Gary Hall. He was always taught to be selfless. Until he figured out actually being unselfish was giving everything you had, scoring when you had the opportunity to score, that would make everybody else better, that's when he let it go.

That sounded kind of like a Sigmund Freud comment. I'm confused. Hope that made sense.

Q. You were mentioning the timeout protocol for tomorrow. Are you saying the players are coming off the lower bench onto a different bench?

COACH WRIGHT: I asked about that when I was out there. I'll get it clarified when we leave. Seems to me they're going to have on the court, on the baseline, stools. They're gonna bring six stools out. Excuse me, they're going to bring five stools out. There's going to be already a stool up there for the coach if the coach wants to sit on a

stool on the sideline during a game, which I don't really need. They're going to bring five others out for the players. The other players are going to have to come up onto the court. But I got to get that cleared.

During the season, a lot of teams did that. They bring the chairs out on the court. We go to the bench, do it old school. We got to get that picked out. But I have five players sitting on stools, the other players will climb up, they'll have a stool out there for the coach to face the players.

Q. During the action itself, you'll be on the higher court?

COACH WRIGHT: Right. They're going to have a stool up there if you want it. I just said that we won't need it (smiling).

Q. Could you tell me, when you evaluate a point guard, particularly a New York point guard, is there some X-factor, something that you see that the special ones have? Do you see it in Corey Fisher?

COACH WRIGHT: Most definitely. And I do think there is an X-factor to New York guards, Jersey guards, D.C. guards, Philly guards. There is. I would say it is they have the ability to take over a game and score when they need to score. But if it's not needed, they will play the game and make everyone else better.

But when they sense it's time for them to take it over, they just know. They know. And you see it when they're in high school, you see it when they're young.

You know, if they're a guy that just tries to take the game over all the time, then they're not point guards; they're scoring guards. When they just do it only when it's needed and necessary, I think that's what makes the special ones.

Q. Do you see that in Corey?

COACH WRIGHT: Oh, yeah. Corey Fisher's got it. There's a lot of thing that Corey Fisher has to learn to be a great college guard, but that characteristic that you can't teach anyone. When the lights are on, you need to take over a game, you've got to be able to do it, he's got it. And he's done it already. He's done it at Villanova.

Q. Obviously you got a chance to see Sherron Collins and Mario Chalmers at the PanAm tryouts. What are your impressions of

them as players? Is that the hardest thing about coaching that type of team, that you have to cut some guys like Chalmers and Collins?

COACH WRIGHT: Let me make this clear. I didn't cut them (laughter). The committee makes the choices. I would have loved to have them on the team.

But, I mean, I understood what the committee did. I supported it. But I'll tell you, what I saw of those two, which amazed me, you get to coach these kids, you think, I wonder what they're like to coach. I wonder if they're tough to deal with, 'cause they're stars, you see them.

Then you coach 'em and you realize that's why they're great players. You see their talent. But then you get to coach 'em and you see they're good kids, they want to learn. Those guys were proud to be there. They were unselfish. They listened to anything you told them to do. They were great competitors, both of 'em. I was so impressed.

I've seen, even from the summer, watching tape now, both of them have improved incredibly. They were both young. They're both underclassmen. We had seniors, a lot of seniors, on that team. But they've improved even from the summer. I was very impressed this summer.

I got to say, you're not that good of a team -- you don't go 33-3 without really quality people. They're really, really good kids, the kind of guys you'd love to have represent your university and the USA.

Q. You look at this KU team. I think the first thing that jumps out at everybody is how many different guys can score. Is it their team defense, is that what really sets them apart?

COACH WRIGHT: I know this sounds cliché. I wish I could find a better way to say it. I think what makes them such a great team is they're an outstanding basketball team that plays the game, every aspect of the game, extremely well. Great team defense. Great inside game. Outstanding guard play. Very effective in transition. Very unselfish. The guys that come off the bench could be starters on teams in this Sweet 16. They come off the bench and enthusiastically embrace their role. I think it's a great credit to Bill and his staff, but also I mentioned the quality of kids they have.

The team defense is something that we're very concerned about. You know, you got to be able to score against these guys. Because if

you're not scoring, they are. They're going the other way. And I do think that's probably what separates them from other outstanding teams that can just score. They can really shut you down on the defensive end.

Q. Some may consider you a coach who is a 1-seed when it comes to your wardrobe. What do you think about Bill Self and his wardrobe?

COACH WRIGHT: I think I check him out during games. He looks good, man. He looks real good. Us guys on the East Coast, we think we know where to go to get all the good clothes. He's out in the Midwest. He must have found his spots out there. He knows.

He looked good. He'll have something good for me tomorrow night, I know that.

Q. Send him a tip?

COACH WRIGHT: That's the New York guy right there. That's what we deal with in the East.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks, coach.

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