

March 14, 2014



Wisconsin - 83
Minnesota - 57

An Interview With:

**COACH BO RYAN
BEN BRUST
NIGEL HAYES**

COACH RYAN: Well, I'm just proud of our guys to have handled a couple runs that Minnesota made. We know they can score points in a hurry. It's not like we relaxed. But I give our guys a lot of credit for toughening up and getting the help from the bench. And they played off of each other pretty well, and we played it all the way through.

The guys that came in at the end that very rarely get any time, they made hard cuts, they played the game and respected the game, and I thought we did that for 40 minutes. I thought we did a pretty good job of going to our strengths.

Q. What does it mean to you to put together that kind of performance and put your team through this tournament?

BEN BRUST: As long as we get the win, that's all that matters now in March. Just came out and some things started falling and then just tried to play with energy throughout the whole game and come up with a couple loose balls. Didn't get one of them that I can remember, but just tried to play with energy all the time, get my guys going. And I think Nigel [Hayes] did a great job coming off the bench, so did Bronson [Koenig] in the first half. He hit some timely threes there to get our lead back and then we kind of just weathered the storm from all their runs and went from there.

Q. Nigel, you and Bronson have been put in some situations where you've been able to play a lot as freshmen this year. Why do you think the two of you have been so successful,

and at this point do you feel like you're even a first year player anymore?

NIGEL HAYES: That's all credit to Coach Ryan and the coaching staff. They do a great job of preparing us for this as well as upperclassmen, such as Ben Brust right here next to me. They do a great job of talking to us and explaining to us how situations would be for when we get out there and see that situation, we're already prepared to handle it. I think we just -- with the preparation we've been given, I feel like we go out there and execute and do pretty well.

Q. Nigel, it looked like they guarded you with three guys, first Walker, then Eliason, and then King at one time. Did you recognize that you had some quickness advantage, especially over the first two guys, that you could take advantage of?

NIGEL HAYES: I did. That's why -- well, really I was just trying to get the ball to Ben [Brust]. Ben was shooting the ball pretty well, so if I did have the opportunity to take my own shot, I was trying to make sure that I made it because Ben makes his. He's looking at the sheet. Josh [Gasser] always makes his shot. Bronson [Koenig] was five for five, so I was just trying to be like those three, and I feel like I did pretty well. Not as good as them, but I have work to do, and I'll try and do better next game.

Q. Ben, what does that warm-up shirt mean to you?

BEN BRUST: Just going out there, playing hard and trying to do things to help make the team successful. We got a bunch of guys who try and do that, and it was a good win today. But we know that we've got to get rest now and get ready for the next opponent, whoever that is.

NIGEL HAYES: If I could elaborate on that, in all seriousness right now, the epitome of the Badger would be Ben [Brust] and Josh [Gasser]. You know, they always hustling. They never take plays off. As Coach Ryan says, they

put their face on the ball 110 percent, grinding it out, no easy possessions for the other team. I feel like when all of us, we put games together like that, like we did today, we were almost there, we get the results that we got today.

Q. Ben, did the guards think that if you got the ball to Nigel he had some mismatches to take advantage of?

BEN BRUST: That's the great part about Nigel [Hayes]. He's got quick enough feet to get by guys and he can step out when guys are playing back on him, so he's the ultimate mismatch. Great footwork, great decision-making, and starting to knock it down at the line which makes him a dual threat at all times. It's always good to touch the post when you've got guys doing good things with it.

NIGEL HAYES: Ben [Brust] makes my job easier. When you're surrounded by shooters such as Ben, Josh [Gasser], Sam [Dekker], Frank [Kaminsky], Bronson [Koenig], Trae [Traevon Jackson], you know, it makes the inside job a little easier. Guys can't double. So I give credit to this superb shooter right here. He's well on his way to breaking records and everything, and I just want my children to be like him.

Q. Ben, Bronson and Sam talked about, during the week, being more aggressive, and it looked like Sam tried to set that tone early, and then Bronson attacked, as well. Did you guys notice that when they were in the game?

BEN BRUST: I think they did a lot of the same things that they've been doing, but they did a good job of being aggressive and being smart with what they were doing. They made smart plays when they were in there, and Sam [Dekker] finished well and Bronson [Koenig] created some good shots for himself and knocked them down. It kind of just spreads through all of us. That's the good thing about the group of guys that I'm with. You never know who's going to step up next, and that helps.

Q. We talked about Nigel and Bronson a lot this year with good reason, but how satisfying is it for you as a coach to have two freshmen you know you can rely on in big games like today?

COACH RYAN: Well, this is one example. This is one game, so I won't get carried away. I mean, they've learned things through trial and error. They happened to fall into place today with

the shots going down, but, more importantly, on the defensive end I thought the two of them did a really good job of some things that they're still working on and learning because of the lack of possessions. Some of our guys have been through a lot more possessions than others.

So they're improving, and that's what we like to see. I don't know how often you can have two freshmen have that kind of night shooting-wise, but I'm impressed with what they were doing defensively.

Q. You guys usually have a very well-balanced scoring sheet, but tonight Ben with 29 points. What do you think about his performance overall?

COACH RYAN: You know, he didn't force anything, so sometimes you can look at a stat sheet and say, well, a guy took a lot of shots or whatever, and the seven that he missed, he missed six threes, how many of them were forced? I didn't see any forced. I thought he did a good job.

Plus he draws attention when he cuts. That one rim run he had for the lay-up, guys find him. He's a hard matchup for some guys defensively because of the way he moves.

Q. You guys lost your last game to Nebraska, you lost earlier at Minnesota. You seem like the focus was to get off to a good start tonight. Do you think you guys did that?

COACH RYAN: Well, the stats will tell you that. Just go play by play. But we've gotten off to good starts in some of the games where we've taken bumps, so it's not a total indicator. But you certainly would like to get on the right track as soon as you can.

We've been ahead or got off to good starts in some other ones that we've taken bumps in, so I can't say that it's universal.

Q. Having a guy like Ben, a senior leader and somebody who's been through so many big games, what will that mean for a fairly young team going through the month of March and so many important games here?

COACH RYAN: I only know of one game, and that's tomorrow's. How important is that? That's our next 40 minutes, and that will be a challenge, let alone any other games after that. But we have the right now. We've gained the right

to play another 40 minutes in Indianapolis in the Big Ten Tournament. That's all this game meant right now.

They're looking forward to another 40 minutes.

Q. With Villanova getting beat yesterday, you guys have been mentioned as a possible 1 seed. I just want to know your thoughts about that.

COACH RYAN: I never answer anything about seeds. Sunflower seeds, when I used to play baseball, I chewed them. That's the only seeds I know anything about.

Really, I've never answered any of those questions because I really wouldn't know what to say.

Q. I was trying to understand how you went through that funk because you looked so methodical tonight. You took a bubble team systematically apart. Did you learn something from your funk awhile back? Because I've heard people tell me that you guys have been rolling ever since.

COACH RYAN: Well, we've had some ups, we've had some downs. Fortunately more ups. It's not like making a few shots doesn't cure some things during the course of a game. I think in a couple of those games, we shoot anywhere near or within ten points of our three-point shooting percentage, we come away with two on the left-hand side, maybe three.

But you know how many teams out there are going, Boy, if we just would have made shots? So the other team's defense had something to do with it. The type of shots we're getting might have something to do with it, but there were two or three games there where you go to a shot chart. This is what most coaches that I know do, and find out if they were the same shots that people had been getting when you were on the streak the other way. They're not far off. It's not like we were digressing to something that wasn't us.

Defensively, a half step on three, four, five possessions at key points in games, and you get behind, and that's all it takes in this game. That's why the Big Ten race was so hard to figure out. Not only was that happening to us, it was happening to other teams in the league, and it was happening to other teams in the nation. We weren't the only ones by far to go through a period of losing five out of six, four out of five. I mean,

look across the country; I have never seen it like that. Maybe you guys have.

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