

# Maui Jim Maui Invitational

Wednesday, November 27, 2019

## Mark Pope Zac Seljaas

## TJ Haws

BYU Cougars

BYU - 90, Virginia Tech - 77

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with an opening statement from Coach.

MARK POPE: Well, I couldn't be more proud of these guys. What an unbelievable effort they put on the floor and did it together from start to finish absolutely together. It was extraordinary. And really excited for the future that we have together throughout the season.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks, Coach. Questions for the players?

**Q. TJ, you're in foul trouble the first half. What did you see in the second half to kind of get yourself going? You went on a little run there.**

TJ HAWS: I felt like I could see the ball go through the hole one time and getting a little bit of rhythm. But really I was just getting good looks and fortunately they fell. But we were or I feel like our whole team was really in a great rhythm and that momentum and energy is contagious and it's good to see the ball go through the hoop.

**Q. For both guys: How important was it to get the second win here after losing yesterday?**

TJ HAWS: You know, it was huge for us. Last night, it's hard, it's hard to lose but I thought our guys did a really great job of throwing that loss away, moving on, because we needed to win this game and I thought our guys were really ready to go tonight and that was huge.

ZAC SELJAAS: Yeah, it's like Coach Pope always says. It's a learning, every game you learn and you grow and you become better each day. And it's most importantly, you don't lose two in a row. You keep learning from it and you just go harder the next game.

**Q. TJ, the ball movement in the second half, is that kind of what, kind of envisioned, kind of the perfect way you want to play this season?**

TJ HAWS: Yeah, I thought it really came together for us in the second half. We moved the ball really well. We trusted in our offense, we trusted in each other, we



trusted in our game plan, what coach has been saying to us. And we really were just finding the open shots and guys stepped up and made big shots and that was super fun to be a part of tonight.

**Q. Zac, what was it like to see TJ just kind of take over there and just go on a little run and really give you guys a big boost?**

ZAC SELJAAS: It's awesome. Always. It's fun when your teammate does something great, whether it's a TJ or Jake or Alex, whoever it is, when you see them go on a run like that and they're hot and you just keep giving it to them and it's fun to watch and it's fun to be a part of a teammate to have that kind of ability. So it's just awesome and it gets everyone going on the team and it kind of started our run.

**Q. TJ, what do you feel like you guys take away from this experience in Maui? What will stand out? What will kind of carry you as you move forward?**

TJ HAWS: It's like Zac said. It's a learning experience for us and I feel like when, what I'm taking away so far is when we really put our trust in this game plan and the things that we have been working on, we're a really good team. And we move the ball and share the ball and when we guard defensively like we did, we're a really good team. It showed in the second half when we were, when we had things rolling a little bit. When we do what we do and do the things that we practice every single day, we're a really good team.

**Q. Both teams shot really, really well. You guys were 50 percent from three and 32-59 for the game. Overall, what, how soft are those rims? They shot really good too.**

TJ HAWS: They're a great team and we knew that coming in. We knew they could really shoot the ball. But for us, I think when helps us shoot the ball well is we take good shots. And we move the ball until we get good shots and that helps us shoot a great percentage.

THE MODERATOR: All right. We'll let you two get back to your team. Any questions for Coach?

**Q. Last night I talked to you about pace. In the first half you were playing a little bit slower. Second half you really picked it up. What did you do at halftime to really get into that much more of a quicker game?**

MARK POPE: Well, here's the thing is, so it's, we're reaching a little bit right now. So when you talk about a rhythm to the game that you're shooting for, it's not a tangible dot-to-dot diagram play or set. It's an outline of how you want to feel in the game, how you want the game to feel. So it's hard to learn. It is way harder to learn than it is to just come out and run a set exactly correctly. So that's why it's elusive for us. It just is. But I think our trajectory is really good in terms of these guys having a few more possessions every single game. Maybe the first game we had 10 possessions that we felt right and maybe tonight we had 25 possessions that we felt right. And if we can keep on that run where we can just feel right more often, it's really important. And that's what we talk about. That's what we talk about pregame. That's what we talk about in post-game last night. That's what we talk about is we're searching for a feel and rhythm for the game that's pretty special. And these guys lived in that space for quite awhile tonight.

**Q. I look at this box score and there's some weird numbers here. They had only 8 turnovers. You guys only had 6. I looked at the stat broadcast. At the under four timeout you guys had shot three free throws for the entire game --**

MARK POPE: That's a problem.

**Q. Yet you guys walk away with a 13-point win. How do you explain that?**

MARK POPE: Well, listen, part of this is just due to the difference in the teams. Tonight you had two teams, maybe the two best shooting teams here and the two smallest teams here. So neither of us is battling. It's, last night we were battling against this extraordinary length and physicality, and that, there's a -- that has an impact on the game. So for us to combat that we have to play faster and freer and more decisively and make more simple plays quicker. With us as more similar opponents right here it makes it easier, it just does. You're not battling length. We could actually hit the roll tonight. Last night we're staring down a 7'2" wingspan and 7'4" wingspan just trying to hit the roll. The roll's wide open, but we can't actually hit it. So we will be able to by the end of the season. So that's probably why you saw some of that today. Both teams can really, really shoot the ball. We both play a similar style. We both really want to move the ball. This Landers Nolley, Michigan State can't guard him, nobody can guard him. I mean, it doesn't matter how big and long you are, nobody can, nobody's guarded this kid yet this season. He gets the ball out of his hands so fast it's unreal.

So hopefully, this was a really fun matchup for us. I think Mike Young is one of the finest coaches in college basketball and I'm not just saying that. I have so much respect for him. I've actually been a fan of his. I watch

his stuff. I try and steal from him all the time. I think he's so smart and I love the way his teams feel. And so, man, it was fun for us to play against them tonight.

**Q. How important is it to walk away from here 2-1 rather than 1-2?**

MARK POPE: It's so big. It's just so big for these guys. They're going to get on the plane tomorrow -- it probably didn't look like it post-game. Probably post-game it probably looked like we won the tournament championship. But for us to roll out of here, like, claiming third place in a tournament that's just ridiculously stacked and minus what people on paper say is our best player, and to beat -- you know, you think about it, this Virginia Tech team, what they have done? I mean, it's crazy what they have done this year so far, culminating in beating Michigan State. And then everybody saw it tonight how good this Dayton team is that they lost to yesterday. This Dayton team is probably a Top-10 team right now. So this Virginia Tech team is a great team. For us to be able to come here and beat UCLA and Virginia Tech and get a little bit humbled and learn from Kansas is huge for us because our goal is to keep rolling.

So we'll get on the plane tomorrow, actually feeling really good. I haven't really seen, my whole family is here I haven't really seen them for about 10 minutes a day for the last five days. And then we don't fly out until noon tomorrow, so we're about to party all night long and that's going to be great.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

MARK POPE: Yes we are. We're going to do a non-alcoholic party for the next 16 hours, baby. We know how to do that. You know that. We know how to do that.

**Q. How is Yoeli, with him being out, how does he help this team during these games when he's not able to be on the floor? What has he done to help his teammates?**

MARK POPE: Well, the first thing he's done is he beats us up in scout team every day. He's really good. So it's a, you know, sometimes you feel like you can't, you can't actually get the experience you're going to get against an opponent because you just don't have that much talent on your scout team. We got probably a Top-20 player in the country on our scout team. We're preparing for UCLA against those two bigs who had just had put on a show all season long. And we actually probably had a way better player we were going against in practice every day, so we were ready. And even Kansas, I mean, clearly we had issues with one of their players inside. But to have Yoeli to go against every day in practice has been really special for us. And then him on the bench, his demeanor, his support, you can kind of see, for example, he's kind of worked

hard to take Kolby Lee under his wing as a personal project. In fact, both our guys sitting out. Rich has also. And you see how much confidence Kolby Lee is playing with? Kolby Lee was 5-5 tonight. I think he was 6-7 last night. I think he was 6-8 the night before. This dude's got to have the highest field goal percentage in the tournament, maybe. And he didn't play at all last year. So he's had a huge impact that way. But I'm hopeful that he's going to have an even bigger impact when he gets to put on a uniform.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

MARK POPE: Because we couldn't make it -- let's go. I'll take the team wherever they want to go right now. Thank you guys. Happy Thanksgiving everybody.