

**March 12, 2011**



Semifinal – Game 9  
Dayton – 64  
Saint Joseph's – 61

An Interview with:

**COACH GREGORY  
CHRIS JOHNSON  
CHRIS WRIGHT**

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Brian Gregory and student-athletes Chris Johnson and Chris Wright. Coach, an opening statement and then questions for the student-athletes.

COACH GREGORY: Very pleased in terms of being able to advance. Give Phil and his staff and those guys a ton of credit. I know how the beginning of the year was tough sledding. Took a little criticism, and those young kids are so good, and they just kept playing them and kept getting better. And that's the best 11-21 team I've ever seen.

They move the ball, they share the ball, they've got guys that can make plays on their own and it's hard.

You play those young guys and you go through some tough times, and I always say it's in those tough times that true programs show, and that's what Saint Joseph's is, a true program, a first-class program.

The one thing they got the last few weeks was some great senior leadership from Bentley and Hilliard. Those two guys played great.

We were very fortunate to win the game. They battled on every single possession. I thought the key stretch was that 6- or 7-minute stretch in the second half where we really defended well and played with great energy and got some really good offensive possessions out of our defense. They gave us the 11-point lead and we were able to hang on there at the end.

So fortunate to beat a very good team. Record doesn't show it, but it's a team -- I know we're not too far from Philadelphia, that over the

next few years is going to be reckoned with. So really he's got an unbelievable foundation and it won't be fun to play those guys the next three or four years.

**Q. Chris Wright, your team just really seemed to have a real purpose about it now. I don't know if something's changed or nothing's changed, but you just really picked up steam the last few games.**

CHRIS WRIGHT: During the season, if you were to lose a game or not play well, you got time to go analyze, watch film, get in the gym. Being here at the tournament, if you lose, you go home. Coming out here we've got to play till Sunday. You've got to have faith in yourself coming into a tournament like this and to be playing in a championship game on Sunday. I mean that's what you come for.

**Q. Do you have anything to add Chris?**

CHRIS JOHNSON: He pretty much shut it off. During the season we had ups and downs. But we're a great team and we can keep getting better every day in practice, and that's what we emphasize, we just keep it together.

**Q. After how the season has gone and the ups and downs, to know that you have one game tomorrow for the chance to go to the NCAA Tournament and all you have to do is win that one game, how does that feel after everything you've been through this year?**

CHRIS WRIGHT: That's like a chance of a lifetime. You've just got to try to take advantage of every opportunity that's put in front of you. Yeah, our chances during the year to win games or once-in-a-lifetime things. And tomorrow we've got an opportunity to get an NCAA berth. It's something that we're looking for. We can't wait to get out there. It's just something you can't really explain. You've really got to be a part of it.

CHRIS JOHNSON: We've got one more game left. 40 minutes tomorrow, we've got to go

out and play even harder than we did today.

**Q. What was the feeling like for you guys after that emotional game against Xavier coming out today? Was it difficult to get the engine going again or the stakes were enough?**

CHRIS WRIGHT: That was a huge key in today's game playing Xavier first before we played Saint Joseph's. That's a big rival game for us.

So Coach did a good job of saying we've got to get out there and have the same type of intensity at Saint Joseph's as we did at Xavier.

We played hard against Xavier. Tonight we just wanted to focus on executing and really getting out and doing the things that we do best. Running the floor, rebounding and defending.

Sometimes we have some downs in the game, but we stuck together and fought it out. That was one of the keys going into today's game making sure we have the same focus and energy that we did the night before or the day before.

**Q. Only 31 fouls called today. Would you rather play in a game where there's not a lot of fouls called, or how did you feel about that?**

CHRIS JOHNSON: I'd rather not play in a game. We're a fast team, so we can get up and down the court. The more pace we get, the time we go out especially if we're doing the things we're capable of doing it. We've got to grab it and win it.

CHRIS WRIGHT: I know, for me, during the year I had a lot of fouls, so I'd be sitting next to BG a lot. So I'm happy we had a lot of fouls that aren't called. To only have one foul, that's new for me.

**Q. You guys have a tendency to make things interesting at times toward the end of games. Can you explain the free throws at the end could have made it a little easier?**

CHRIS WRIGHT: Yeah, I mean, we did a good job getting the ball to our free-throw shooters, we just got to go out and knock them down. We didn't knock down the free throws down the stretch. But just can't have repetition of knocking down free throws.

**Q. Your attitude going into the championship game, you know you're going to be challenged?**

CHRIS JOHNSON: Yeah, I mean there's only two teams left now, so only one team can win. So it really doesn't matter who's playing. We won

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today. We're already in the championship. So I know it will be Richmond or Temple. They're going to bring it, and be prepared and ready. So we've got to bring it. It's win or lose and go home. But we'd rather play hard to try to get the win. But it really doesn't matter who we play.

CHRIS WRIGHT: Really doesn't matter, like he said. We're in the championship. It will be a great game, Temple or Richmond. Whoever we play we'll be well prepared for them.

**Q. Today going into the game, either way a non-bye was going to make the final. Having to play that extra game, did it help your team personally? Two of the bye teams are gone.**

COACH GREGORY: Well, I'll let you know tomorrow about 3:00 o'clock. But here's the way I look at it: We played 16 unbelievably difficult teams in the league, at home or on the road, and there has to be something rewarded for the team that's did better during that time.

I did like the format of that Tuesday game. It was even harder for us if you look at our schedule the week before because we played on the road Saturday. We were at home on Wednesday, and then we played a home game Sunday afternoon. So we've played a ton of games in the last two weeks. It's like an NBA schedule kind of.

We found out right away on Tuesday if our guys wanted to try to accomplish something special. They practiced well on Sunday and Monday. But you just never know. We came out and played really well, played hard on Tuesday night, defended well, rebounded well. We've rebounded well all three games. Today we didn't shoot the ball as well, especially in the second half, maybe a little tired. But our defensive intensity to start the game was tremendous again.

It's going to be hard on the guys tomorrow. There is no doubt about it. But you do have some momentum going, you know. And I think sometimes maybe that second game, yesterday's game, gives a little advantage to the team that played on Tuesday, because they already feel good about themselves.

One, they accomplished going to Atlantic City, you know. And two, they just won their last game. Maybe it hurts tomorrow afternoon, maybe. But we play enough guys. Our guys get to rest in May and June, so we'll see.

**Q. Before you said about Phil's program about how they go through tough times and kind of shows the medal of the program, I think. Turn that around on your program and you guys had some tough times as the year went on of the what's this show now or what are you seeing about your team now?**

COACH GREGORY: Well, as I said from the beginning, every team is different. You have to form a different identity. Obviously, you want the same core values in your program and so forth. We struggled at times with the consistency of to be honest with you, sticking with those core values.

We played hard, and we play at a high energy rate, and we set the bar pretty high the last few years for that. That's why I think sometimes people watching us were most disappointed just due to the fact, not if we lose a game, but we didn't play at times with the same energy.

It wasn't as though we weren't playing hard because we even played hard in those games, but not as close in comparison to what we do in our program, which is really important to me as a head coach. And our guys came to play here knowing that's how we play and that's the way they wanted to play.

You've just got to keep selling and keep selling. You've got new clientele that have to buy into it. Then you've got some return customers that are in a different position, you know? And everybody in the family is in kind of a different role, so they have to buy into some different things. And that takes some time, you know.

We're not there yet. That's a never ending process, to be honest with you, but it's been better. It's been better. I do think it says a lot for the character of kids. Somebody asked about changes. We haven't made any changes. It's not about changes I made. It's the guys. It's about the guys. It's got to be about the guys. It shows what kind of character those guys have. They could have packed it, given up or however you want to say it, but they weren't going to do that. There was never a question in my mind.

There were times they weren't great, but that's just not who they are. They weren't raised that by way their families. To be honest with you, they probably wouldn't be in our program if that's the kind of guys they are. They're not perfect, but they're tough kids and they've got some pride. Last week we've done a much better job of

reestablishing the pride in how we play, which is good.

**Q. I wonder if you were as a coach concerned with the kids looking at the record and all that stuff going into this game? And maybe what made you convinced that today you were going to be okay?**

COACH GREGORY: Well, the last second is when I was convinced we were going to be okay. Obviously, that's a concern. The one thing right off the bat, we just told them, hey, they're one of the four hottest teams in the Atlantic 10 at Saint Joseph's.

We didn't play well against them the first game. Kind of played in a funk, especially in the later stages of the first half. They outrebounded us, so that made sure our guys got their attention on that. They had just won at G.W. three days earlier. We couldn't do that. They beat Duquense yesterday. We struggled. They beat us bad one game and won in the closing minutes the other.

The one thing I told them was every game you advance in the tournament, that game becomes more magnified in terms of what you need to do to be successful. You can't play as hard as you can the day before and win the next game. It escalates. The price tag doesn't get any less, it only increases.

The price tag today was going to be a little more, it might not have been as flashy, but we had to grind that thing out and make some crucial plays, which I think our guys did.

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