

## **Postgame Quotes**

**Florida State 58, Michigan 76**

**March 28, 2021**

**NCAA Tournament Sweet 16**

**Bankers Life Fieldhouse, Indianapolis, Ind.**

### **Michigan Head Coach Jawan Howard**

JUWAN HOWARD: I just want to say this. I'm so proud of our team and how they competed from start to finish. Give a lot of credit to Florida State, well coached team, a coach who I know very well, I have a ton of respect for. He runs an excellent program, developed young men, and I've been one of the recipients of some of the development, learning from Coach Ham. It was a hard-fought victory, but now it's just one game at a time. We've got to keep competing, which our guys are looking forward to the next matchup.

**Q. Franz Wagner obviously was key tonight on both ends of the floor. What are some things that he did from your perspective in this game that he wouldn't have been able to do a year ago?**

JUWAN HOWARD: Well, Franz has developed. He has gotten better each and every year, and he's only been here for two years. It's been a joy to coach, and I know my staff will agree, a guy that has a high IQ, high ceiling, loves basketball, a grinder. Today the impact that he has on the game, just like his teammates, was extremely effective with having the ball in his hands and also being on the defensive end.

**Q. When it comes to dealing with this group, just the amount of guys that you have who are 22, 23 -- like it's an older team, and I just wonder for you, being able to execute a game plan or just being able to communicate, things like that, just what it's like being able to coach a team that kind of has that as a commodity that a lot of other groups don't have?**

JUWAN HOWARD: I just have to correct you. We have Hunter Dickinson and Franz Wagner, who are very young, and those two guys are starting lineup. It's been great to coach all the guys, whether it's upperclassmen or underclassmen. Our two younger guys have a high IQ, and it's been beautiful just to learn from them just as much as our seniors. But we're grinding, man, and we're doing it collectively. It's beautiful just to see the development that's happening before our eyes.

**Q. You guys had 11 offensive rebounds and 17 second chance points. Could you talk about the work you guys were able to do on the offensive glass tonight.**

JUWAN HOWARD: Yes, it was based on effort, energy, and toughness. Our guys came with a mindset. We talked about it leading up to the game. We showed it on film. We also talked about it before the game, about we have to attack the offensive glass. We can't sit back on our heels and leave it untouched. Shot goes up, let's go. You have the habits of transition defense. If there's a numbers advantage, we have two guys that's going to be back that's going to, of course, communicate and try to stop a layup. I just love the effort that our guys brought and the energy and the grit.

**Q. Franz Wagner spoke about the confidence you and the coaches give the players. I guess, can you speak to the balance of making sure your players are aware of what the opponent does well while still giving your players confidence that they can handle it?**

JUWAN HOWARD: Well, why not give them confidence? That's what we're here for, to empower these young men who's put in a lot of hard work and effort each and every day in practice, games. If you break their confidence, then they will not be able to go out there and compete at a high level. The trust is earned, not only just from the players, but also coaches. We have to earn their trust. So with all the work that we put in practice, we see what our guys provide from a skill level, also being neck up, and then also the hard work they bring in with the energy and effort. So the trust and the belief is there on both sides. That's a part of our culture, a key word, trust.

**Q. Florida State switches a lot of screens, which I feel like is something that you didn't see all that often in the Big Ten. What did you make of your team's ability to handle that on offense?**

JUWAN HOWARD: Yes, they do, but we've seen some of that in the Big Ten. Rutgers switched ball screens. Maryland switched. They do a lot of switching. In the tournament, we also saw versus LSU, they do a lot of switching. But, yes, it's challenging when you have a team that have length that also can switch one through five. Our guys did a great job of handling it. We practiced it all week, and it was great to see how they applied it on the floor.

**Q. I'm wondering defensively what did you try to stress to everybody coming in? How did you think the team executed?**

JUWAN HOWARD: Did you say defensively or offensively?

**Q. Defense.**

JUWAN HOWARD: Defense has been one of our staples of our identity as far as on the offensive end. We have habits on how we developed it last year when I first arrived, and when we returned to the campus in June, first thing that we met as a staff, and then also the first meeting when we were able to have our first official practice, we talked about how we're going to be a better defensive team. A lot of drills that we worked on was based on developing that defensive prowess, where we can, of course, be disruptive on the ball and then off the ball. So if you look at the field goal percentage, yes, we held them to 40 percent from the field and also held them to 25 percent from the free-throw line. It was a great defensive effort.

**Q. A lot was made about Florida State's size coming into this matchup. So how were you guys able to kind of neutralize them in terms of banging down low in the post?**

JUWAN HOWARD: Yeah, we heard it all week. Yeah, sure did. We did a really good job of preparing for it. Yes, you cannot duplicate it in practice because you just don't have that Florida State roster. But it was great to know, as far as our guys buying in, and as the guys I'm speaking of, our scout team watching film and studying Florida State's offense and the players' strengths. When it came to preparation, I was just so proud of how the scout team really bought in to preparing us.

**Q. Eight teams left after tonight. Was there more celebrating going on or more, hey, we're not done yet in the locker room?**

JUWAN HOWARD: One game at a time. We can celebrate tonight, but tomorrow we're looking forward to and preparing for our next opponent.

**Q. Through the years now and then, we've seen teams that had great seasons but a big blow near the end of it, like the one you took. Could you describe what it is like to try to adapt to that when there's not much time left to adapt?**

JUWAN HOWARD: What blow are you speaking of?

**Q. The injury to Isaiah.**

JUWAN HOWARD: Well, we don't make excuses here at Michigan. We feel so sorry for Isaiah with the injury. During any time of the season when a player goes down with an injury, it's very unfortunate, and you feel, and your heart breaks for that player. Isaiah, all the hard work he's put in, senior year, and get to a point where end of the season injuries you cannot control. Our guys band together like brothers, be there for their brother, they lift them up and keep their spirits. He's been amazing on the sidelines as far as with his injury and keeping guys engaged and being another coach out there for us. But it's great to see that other guys have stepped up, and it's been collectively as a group where guys have stepped up with his absence.

**Q. Just confirming, Isaiah's out for the rest of the tournament? Is that accurate?**

JUWAN HOWARD: He's out indefinitely.

**Q. So there's a chance he could return, or is he out?**

JUWAN HOWARD: He's out indefinitely.

**Q. Your team got a lot of good shots in this game, and a lot of it was ball movement, but some of it was that ability for your players to attack and yet to be patient and adjust to double-teams and such. Could you talk about that aspect of your team's play today.**

JUWAN HOWARD: Our guards, not just the guards, but our team in general played a very smart, aggressive game, just like how we prepared in practice. It's great that we had a -- we were able to apply it in a game situation because it's tough no matter in practice on how you tried to prepare for it. You're hoping and praying that there is a transfer to the floor, but it was. And the part of just taking your time and taking advantage of what the defense gives you.

**Q. I don't think I've seen a team in this tournament happier than when Jace Howard had the and-one play at the end. What does it mean to you, either as a father or a coach, when that happens?**

JUWAN HOWARD: Our guys do an amazing job of celebrating one another's success because it's a brotherhood that's special. It's not just a word when you talk about family and brotherhood. Those guys really believe it and buy into it because that's the care and love that they have for each other. So whether it was Jace or if it was Zeb Jackson who got the and one, you would see the same exact excitement that they will display for their brother, and it's not been the first time that our guys have been excited for guys that come in the game and able to have an impact on the game. If you watched us all year, our bench brings that energy, and they also cheer for one another. As a father, it was beautiful to witness it because I see the hard work he's put in, and he deserved to be here, and his teammates have really embraced him, and he's embraced them. So it was. It also put a big smile on my face to see that he made the free throw.

**Q. Michigan's been to four Elite Eights now. What does it mean to you personally to continue the tradition of success with the basketball program getting to yet another Elite Eight?**

JUWAN HOWARD: As a player, I've been to three Elite Eights. So Michigan has had a lot of success in the basketball program. It's just beautiful to see that all the hard work is paying off this year.