

# Atlantic 10 Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Saturday March 10, 2018

## Phil Martelli

## Nick Robinson

## Shavar Newkirk

Saint Joseph's Hawks

University of Rhode Island 90, Saint Joseph's 87

PHIL MARTELLI: A couple of weeks ago, we lost to George Mason at home on a last-second shot, and some would take it harshly but I told my team, that day, we got exactly what we deserved. We had trailed by 20, worked our way back. But we had not really made an emotional commitment that night to the game. Now it turns out two guys were sick; they didn't want to say anything, because James Demery was out.

And tonight, the opposite is true. We didn't get exactly what we deserved. That was a championship effort. Six guys in double figures, ten turnovers -- really, nine, nine turnovers. The last one, that's just silly. That's just silly that a guy would take away the kid's chance to fire up a half-court shot. That's just silly.

But it was the offensive rebounds. Great credit to Rhode Island. Maximum effort. Fabulous fan support, which is great for the league, and a game that I think was worthy to be seen by the whole country.

So we congratulate them, wish them well tomorrow, and then next week as they play more basketball.

**Q. Coach mentioned the offensive rebounds. There was one sequence later in the second half where they got two, got a pass out to the wing and it led to a big shot, going up by seven. Can you describe that play and what that felt like? Did that feel like a back-breaker at all?**

NICK ROBINSON: It was really just how the whole game was going. We lacked physicality today, and that is -- that's why the outcome was what it was. If we came and we controlled the boards, it wouldn't have been a problem.

**Q. Obviously today wasn't the outcome you wanted, but can you take anything from the way you all finished this season, came back from a really bad place, to get yourselves into this position; and even in the game today, you have the**



**lead, to go up -- they take the lead, they go up by seven, and you guys still keep fighting. Can you take anything from that about you guys as players?**

SHAVAR NEWKIRK: That just let me know that Saint Joseph is a championship team. Next year I believe that we'll win the Championship next year.

NICK ROBINSON: I would just feel like we just have a never-quit attitude as a group, and we're all brothers and we just continue to fight for each other, and it showed towards the end of the season. We never gave up, even though our record wasn't what it should have been, because we didn't finish games well, but it never quit, and it showed during the end of the season during that last month of basketball.

**Q. Shavar, looked like you played for a few minutes after you first tweaked your angle, did you re-injure it at any point or did it get worse?**

SHAVAR NEWKIRK: Yeah, it just got worse. I thought I could play through it. And it just was a nagging pain, so I didn't want to jeopardize the team on myself, so I sat out.

**Q. Shavar went out with a little bit under two minutes left for the game. How did that change your ends-of-game strategy, if at all?**

PHIL MARTELLI: Well, he's not going to rebound, but I think the ball was broken loose a couple times, and he hobbled -- we wouldn't be able to use his straight-ahead speed. We had a couple of different wrinkles. We made some deep threes there. Cesco made a three; Nick made a three. We were trying to get Taylor Funk to trail and flip a flip-back three.

But look, he gave everything that he had, and he got clearance to go back in. I would never jeopardize anybody going back in. You know, I know more than I ever have wanted to know about medical stuff, so you know, I listen to the doctors and our trainers. We have the best guys. They told me he couldn't go and we just went to -- I'm not a next-man-up. I think that's a myth. That might be true in pro sports, when the next guy is, you know, a millionaire, too.

But here, we don't have anybody like Shavar. We're going to, but we don't have anybody like him on our bench, or they would be playing, and that's been the same all year. Like we don't have anybody like Charlie

Brown or Fresh Kimble or James in the games he missed or Nick had missed a game. So it's not really next man up; it's can this guy do enough to keep our puzzle together.

**Q. There was a point during the bad stretch where you kind of said this team didn't have an Alpha dog. I don't know if there's an Alpha dog in there, but can you talk about the way this team came together as an effort and finished this season the way they did?**

PHIL MARTELLI: Shocked me to be honest with you. I am just shocked. I've said it all year. I've said it to them and I'll say it again. It's not a real mature, manly group, and it took a long time.

We went to Davidson and we didn't compete. We were -- it was just -- there was a drastic difference between the two teams. We had a day off and we just came back and just said, we're going back to this idea. Today is the only day. Let's be a championship team today.

And they practiced better. Shavar got a little bit more vocal. Shavar played better, too. He wasn't injured. For four-fifths of the year, he was an injured kid playing.

I think that they just put their head down, and they never overreacted. Like if you went back, which I did last night; if you go back and watch the Rhode Island game, there's no stupidity. There's no like pointing to a crowd. There's no sshhing a crowd. They just made the next play and the next play and the next play, and we did the exact same thing here for about 34 minutes, and then the pounding, the physical pounding got to be too much, 19 offensive rebounds.

Here was the number: We had 16 turnovers in the last game. If that number was half, eight, we gave up 16 offensive rebounds last game; if that number was eight, I knew we were playing tomorrow. They had 19 offensive rebounds and we had nine and one bogus turnover.

**Q. You had said yesterday, you were looking for low 70s to give yourself a chance to win. When did you know that that was not this type of game and what did you do to make those kinds of adjustments for this game?**

PHIL MARTELLI: Well, obviously at halftime, it's 47-40, and you're thinking, what is the number that we're going to have to get to.

I still thought it would be high 70s, because I thought both teams would bring it down. But I give the crowd on both sides a lot of credit. They gave energy to kids who were playing their second day in a row, and you

know, at some point you look up and say -- you know, there's going to be a point in time -- I'll be honest with you. There's going to be a point in time when I'm daydreaming this summer and I'll say, you know what, that's pretty good. It took 90 to beat us. It took 90 to beat us. Anything short of 90, we would have won that game.

So a couple years ago, we won the Atlantic 10 Championship and people said to me, was that fabulous. I said, no, we lost the game at Davidson, 94-91. I can't ever imagine one of my teams scoring 91 points and losing. We lost a game at Bonaventure, 99-96 or something like that, 96-93. I was like, man, that's pretty good hoop. I mean, seriously.

We're walking out of here having shot 56 percent against that defense. It hurts. It hurts because we're collecting our uniforms, but we're not walking out of here chumps. We can walk out as champs.

Thank you very much.