



2013 America East Men's & Women's Basketball Championship Presented by SEFCU
Men's Semifinal #1: #2 Vermont 85, #6 UMBC 72

Vermont Coach John Becker's opening statement:

Great team win tonight. I give credit to UMBC. They played really well, they had a great shooting. I haven't seen shooting like that in a long time. But our guys stuck with it and in the second half we finally stopped them. I think when we switched and put Luke [Apfeld] on [Ryan] Cook, he slowed him down a little. Candon Rusin with amazing shooting tonight once again. Luke 16 [points] and 5 [rebounds]. Great free throw shooting. It is unbelievable. We worked hard all year, we keep finding a way to push forward.

Vermont's Ethan O'Day on being an answer in the second half:

My teammates did a great job finding me. Brian [Voelkel] was finding me all the time. He gave me most of the assists and I just executed.

Vermont's Candon Rusin on a personal great shooting game:

My teammates just found me on the great spots and I was lucky enough to make those them. I definitely fed off of UMBC's amazing shooting; I had to match that.

Vermont's Luke Apfeld on being a leader and playing next weekend:

We are family out there, we go to battle together. Anybody who watched us together knows we go through a lot. We struggled defensively, but we stuck together and found our way to win. This is what we all came to Vermont for – to win this title.

We really want to play at home. Our fans are incredible. Everywhere we go they come to cheer us on. So it would be amazing to play home. But it doesn't matter who we get. We are super confident so it doesn't matter if we play home or at Long Island. Or if we play Albany – it doesn't matter – we are super confident.

Coach Becker's closing statement:

UMBC had a great shooting game, but we did what we planned. This week of practice wasn't as good as I was hoping for but we did our job this weekend. I talked to Luke about being a leader. We need him on the court to lead us, we need him at all time, guys respect him. He is our captain and he did a great job tonight and last night.

If we play Stony Brook it is going to be hard. They have it all from the best player, best coach to the best rookie. But we will see, it doesn't matter who or where we play, we are going to be ready.

UMBC Coach Aki Thomas' Opening Statement:

You've got the bear with me, everything has been a first for me this year. This is the first time I have to do a post-game press conference after a game like that. You know Vermont is a very good team. I thought all of the guys fought very hard, just staying in the game and sticking to our game plan. Vermont did some things in the second half: offensive rebounding, forcing some turnovers which ultimately cost us our game and cost us our run. But I am proud of these guys, I am really proud of the effort they made this year and moving forward we have a lot of things to work on. I am proud of our seniors and everyone else on the team and the effort they made this year.

UMBC's Ryan Cook on momentum in the second half:

Getting past the big guys wasn't the problem. It was after that they have three different guys on you that made it difficult. So I had to try and distribute the ball and do what I had to do.

UMBC Seniors reflecting on the tournament and their careers:

Cook: I feel like I had a great tournament, coming from last year to this year. I worked pretty hard over the summer and try to step up my game and I feel like it worked. Coming into the tournament I wanted to give it everything I got and I feel like I did do that.

Brian Neller: I feel like I had a good career. Coming into the tournament I worked really hard and unfortunately we came up short.

Cook on the past four years and playing in this tournament:

This year there was a big change with Coach Thomas becoming head coach and he has done a great job with us getting us ready and getting us prepared for this tournament. We came into this game and we knew what we wanted to do and in the first game we came out on top but this game was a little bit tougher and we came up short.

Coach Thomas on Cook and his first year

Guys like Ryan don't come around often. To lose him to graduation is great but to lose him, period, is not so great. Finding guys to replace him is hard; especially those who are truly passionate about the sport and about the game of basketball and that is what he is. You never have to worry about Ryan. He's going to come early and he's going to leave late and you never have to worry about him. He's a good student and a fine young man and he's going to get a great degree in financial economics.

It was a blur. Like I said in the beginning of the press conference, it's funny when you're doing things for the first time and you're not sure how things are supposed to go. But I have great assistants and that's key. John Zito, Jay Greene and Brian Johnson, the people around me have been so supportive and just good at their jobs and along the way and that's the key to why I am sitting here right now. It's easier to deal with when you have good people around you. Adversity doesn't feel so tough to deal with when everyone is on the same page and supportive of one another.