

**March 12, 2015**



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AN INTERVIEW WITH:

## TENNESSEE

THE MODERATOR: We'll go ahead and get started with an opening statement from coach and then take questions for the student-athletes.

COACH TYNDALL: Well, let me start by saying how much respect I have for Coach Stallings and the Vanderbilt program. We have obviously played them three times this year and every game has been an absolute battle.

I thought tonight certainly was a game of runs and our guys were very resilient. Their team was tough as well and we were fortunate to end the game the right way, mostly because we were able to finally get some stops and get out in the open floor and convert in transition.

But a very well-coached team in Vanderbilt and it took a complete 40-minute effort from our guys to win the game.

THE MODERATOR: Take questions for the student-athletes, please.

**Q. I believe you hit the three that started the big run at the end. You also hit the three that took the lead. Can you talk about your feelings there the first one, and the second one how you felt like the game kind of went in y'all's hands?**

ROBERT HUBBS: I just had to bring some energy to my team. We needed a pick up when we were down 12. So if I got a free look, I was going to take it. Coach said treat this game like it's free balls. That's what we did at the end there. They went in, so I kept shooting them.

**Q. What did you tell the team when you guys were down by 12 there midway through the second half?**

JOSH RICHARDSON: I just came into the --

COACH TYNDALL: I don't know if he can repeat that. But go ahead.

(Laughter.)

JOSH RICHARDSON: I just said that we were playing like we didn't want to be here, like we didn't know how to play basketball. I told them we were going to be on our way home if we didn't turn it around. I think we definitely picked it up right after that timeout.

**Q. For both players, you guys played Arkansas. You split each one by five at home. How do you see the rematch here, or, I guess the third, the three-peat here on a neutral floor? Also, you guys had four starters play 30 minutes-plus. How tough is that when you know how Arkansas likes to get in a team's legs and they didn't have to play today.**

JOSH RICHARDSON: Arkansas's a great team and I think we have good matchups with them. They haven't beat us by very much when they did at their house, so I think it will be a close game.

We have had guys all year playing in the upper 20s, lower 30s all year, so I don't think it should be much different. I think we should be able to turn around and play like we know how to play.

ROBERT HUBBS: They're a good team and they're going to be aggressive. We just got to match their intensity. We're going to come out here and be aggressive too and play team ball and just play the way we play.

**Q. For either of you, what's the mentality for the rest of the tournament? Do you guys feel like you're just sort of playing with house money now?**

JOSH RICHARDSON: I just think that for the rest of this tournament, we have to be aggressive. I think that today when we were settling or when we were kind of letting Vanderbilt be the aggressor in the first half, I think that's when they were capitalizing off our mistakes.

In the second half, when we stopped thinking and just started playing and attacking, that's when the game turned.

So we have to do that from the jump next time.

**Q. For either of you. Vandy was one of the hottest shooting teams in the country really the last few games and they lit it up against y'all in Knoxville. What was the difference today that shot 23 percent from three? What was the difference?**

ROBERT HUBBS: We just got to them this time. Plain and simple. We closed out. Unfortunately they missed some shots. We got a chance and we got down the floor and played fast-paced basketball.

**Q. Robert, you missed that three against Arkansas last time when you played at their place. Excited and looking forward to being able to hit that shot against them tomorrow?**

ROBERT HUBBS: Definitely. If I get that opportunity again, I'm definitely going to take it. Hopefully it will go in this time.

THE MODERATOR: All right, we'll excuse you. You can return to the locker room.

Take questions for coach.

**Q. Seems like you guys matchup pretty well physically with Arkansas. How do you see the matchup and how do you like it on a neutral floor, considering how close the games were with the home teams?**

COACH TYNDALL: Have you seen their team? And you think we matchup pretty well? I don't know if we got six guys that equal Bobby Portis.

But I know what you're saying regarding style of play and athleticism. We have some length. But they're well coached. Mike's teams always, always play hard. They have obviously a first-round pick in Bobby that anchors everything they do offensively and defensively. They're going to press and get after us a lot like we try to play.

I think the biggest thing for us will be we have to contain dribble penetration. Do the best we can to try to neutralize Portis inside.

Then the second part of that is if we do make them miss, we got to be able to rebound the ball. If you give that team second and third shot opportunity, you got no chance.

**Q. Both Armani and Josh emphasized drive and attack the bucket before you all headed down here. Was that a big emphasis in practice? Did you feel like your guys' aggressiveness across the board was where it needed to be today?**

COACH TYNDALL: Well, I do think our mentality was such that we wanted to drive the ball. It's more difficult or challenging really when teams go zone and they probably played about half of the game in zone. They actually went to a box and one or diamond and one late in the second half.

So you don't always get the same driving angles versus zone as you do against man-to-man.

But I do think even against the zone, we didn't settle. We tried to drive the ball and get to the paint. Then that's when we were able to get some kick-out threes to Robert and Kevin. We were fortunate, but I do think the mentality was right to drive the ball and stay aggressive.

**Q. You've got a young inexperienced team. We all know that. But you've said this year they're competitive. Basically except for that first half against LSU, is it almost not surprising that they would keep themselves in it tonight?**

COACH TYNDALL: Well, no question, it's not surprising. I mean, we haven't played well quite a few times this year. But we have played the right way in regard to competing and playing to the final buzzer, sharing the basketball and all those things we got to do to even have a chance to win.

Even when we were down 12 or 13 with eight to go, we said in the huddle, We're going to find a way to win this game, just keep grinding. And our team did that. There's no quit in this team.

Again, we have been competitive all season long, other than that one half against LSU, and I'm proud of these guys for continuing to scrap and fight.

**Q. With Derek and Armani being in foul trouble most of that game, did it surprise you a little bit that Damian Jones didn't get as many touches as he did late in the game there?**

COACH TYNDALL: Well, we have done this before this year, but we switched and went some man-to-man and then they would ball screen and roll and we would switch it. They were trying to isolate Jones against the perimeter player, because we switched the screen. We did a good job of really sagging from the weak side to help.

But those guys being in foul trouble in the first half really impacted our team and they both picked up their fourth pretty early in the second half. Fortunately, they were able to play through foul trouble the last 12 or 14 minutes, which is hard to do against Jones, because he's a monster. He's a heck of a player.

You know I was just joking earlier, right?

**Q. That's cool. Hey, Arkansas, obviously was resting today or having a light workout. You guys had four guys play 30-plus minutes. With the style they like to play, what's the challenge tomorrow night?**

COACH TYNDALL: Well, we got to get hydrated tonight. Get in ice baths and try to get our legs back as soon as possible. We probably won't do anything on the floor tomorrow.

That's a huge challenge, no question, because Arkansas is a deep team. They're a team that wears on you with their press and their style of play. We're just going to depend on our bench a little bit more. We'll have to.

The fact that these guys are fighting for their basketball lives, hopefully they don't get tired.

**Q. It's one thing to get a run like you did, but you get three 3-pointers in under two minutes. What kind of affect does that have on morale when you can just erase a deficit just like that that quickly?**

COACH TYNDALL: Well, that's exactly what they did to us at our place, if you remember. It was bang, bang, bang, and we were up 13. All of a sudden we're down five or six.

Basketball is one of those games. It's a game of spurts. It's a game of runs. Both teams tonight made several runs. But fortunately, we closed it out the right way.

When you are making those shots, as you know, whether you want to admit it or not, it helps you at the defensive end. Your kids play a little

harder defensively. They rotate a little quicker, and I think that's exactly what happened to our team.

**Q. You just talked about getting ready for Arkansas physically, but mentally, how tough is it? Do you allow the team time to enjoy this one?**

COACH TYNDALL: No, no, we'll get back and get them in the film room. We'll start watching Arkansas here in about 30 minutes.

This time of year, you don't have time to enjoy it. You just move on to the next one and you're relieved and excited you still get to play. But there's no time to bask in the glory, if you will.

**Q. Talked a lot about Josh this week with all the accolades, but just from him being on that team last year and they had fights like this in games against Iowa and even Michigan, how important is it to have him as your leader on the floor and in timeouts? I know that you can't repeat what he said to the team, but to have him be there for those things.**

COACH TYNDALL: Yeah, he's been fantastic. I think that any time you get to experience those things as a player, you grow and you learn from those experiences and then you can make decisions the next time based on those.

That's why I'm excited about next year with all these guys coming back, other than Josh. They have been in a lot of games like this, so hopefully we'll have other guys step up and be that leader next year.

But Josh has been amazing all year long. He's a tough kid. He's a great kid. He's a resilient guy. When things don't go his way, he doesn't hang his head and pout. Our team sees that. They feed off his leadership. He was fantastic tonight.

**Q. It looked like that there for a little bit all your bigs might foul out in that game. What does it say about them that they end the game tied with Vandy in the rebound category and then plus six in the turnover category?**

COACH TYNDALL: Yeah, we just at times don't play with a lot of discipline in our close outs and that leads to fouls. But a lot of times, it's the guy that is Willie, who is 40 pounds too light, or Derek who is three inches too short, or Armani, who is five inches too short, and they're fighting their tail off. They're just not quite big enough or

strong enough, and so it puts you in bad position and you draw fouls.

That's why we tried to double down with the forward in our zone and help the bigs as much as we can, because certainly guarding guys one-on-one with our post just isn't an option.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

COACH TYNDALL: Thank you.

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