

March 13, 2015



Arkansas - 80
Tennessee - 72

AN INTERVIEW WITH:

ARKANSAS

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

COACH ANDERSON: In this new season, games are going to go down to the wire. There's a thin line between winning and losing. Our guys had the resiliency to finish that game off.

I tell you what, Donnie Tyndall has had Tennessee primed to play. They had a game up under their belt, but we came out shooting the basketball well.

But they showed signs that they were a second half team, and sure enough that lead we had, it just kind of dissipated over the period of the second half.

But I was so proud of our guys. I looked at the stats and the stat I'm most proud of, we were 32 for 39 from the free-throw line. Big difference in the game.

Our defense was good and we found a way to ride these two guys, and other guys kind of pitched in. I couldn't be more proud of our guys.

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

Q. You guys had a high five there before the back-ups came in with six seconds left. It seemed more like relief. I saw your face, Michael. Was that what it was, just, All right, we're out of here, let's move on, next day?

MICHAEL QUALLS: Yeah, it was a relief. It was just a tough battle tonight. We stayed diligent. Shout out to Tennessee. They came to play. They didn't give up. They came, they gave us their best shot.

BP, we road him, and everybody else contributed and stepped up and played big.

Q. Bobby, we've asked you guys about this SEC tournament losing streak, and now we don't have to ask you about it anymore. How good did it feel to break that and get that monkey off ya'll's back?

BOBBY PORTIS: It feels great because now I don't have to hear you asking any more questions about it.

(Laughter.)

So that's cool just to come here just to win our first game and to come in tomorrow at 2:30, and just get after it again.

Q. Bobby, obviously you guys are focused on tomorrow's game. But how do you avoid not getting caught up in what could happen Sunday with a potential matchup against Kentucky, depending upon what happens?

BOBBY PORTIS: Just one game at a time, just taking our time with the game. We still haven't won our game plan Saturday to even play Kentucky. And Like Kentucky hasn't even won their game against Auburn yet.

So in due time everything will play out. But we have to just come in tomorrow just ready to play.

Q. For both you guys, Alandise had a pretty big game, hit some big free throws, he had nine rebounds, four blocks, what did ya'll think of or Alandise's game and his contributions?

BOBBY PORTIS: He brought the energy today. That's something that we need. Just because he brings a toughness to our basketball team and he always just goes hard for us each and every play, even on defense.

MICHAEL QUALLS: It just goes to show you that we're a very deep team. This team just

ASAP sports

...when all is said, we're done.®

visit our archives at asapsports.com

Arkansas - 03.13.15.doc

isn't built around us. At any given point any of our players can step up and play big minutes and do big things. That's what is so key to us and this late season play.

Q. Obviously y'all jumped out 13-0 and 18-3. What allowed y'all to come out of the locker room and play so well early on?

BOBBY PORTIS: Just coming ready to play, because last Saturday, it was a heartbreaker for us. So today I feel like all our guys wanted to come out and just make a statement.

MICHAEL QUALLS: Like he said, just bad taste in our mouths from the end of SEC conference play. We just wanted to come out and show everybody Arkansas brand basketball, that we can really get up, we can really defend.

For the most part, in the first half I felt like we sped them up. Tennessee does a great job of the possession game, holding the ball down to the last couple seconds of the side. We sped them up pretty much. I feel like our whole team was hungry and we're ready.

Q. For both you guys, a lot of the higher seeds have been getting beat. LSU, Ole Miss. Is that something you guys noticed and did you say, Well, that's not going to happen to us?

BOBBY PORTIS: That had nothing to do with us. We just tried to control what we can control, what we can control. Just go out there and play as hard as we can and just ball up.

MICHAEL QUALLS: Yeah, coach always tells us we just see it through his eyes and give everything we got and then we're going to be satisfied with the results.

We don't get caught up in what other teams are doing. We just focus on Arkansas basketball. Let's focus on how we can get better. So that's what we're going to do. We're going to just watch this game, see what we did good and see what we can do better and just try and build on that for tomorrow's game.

THE MODERATOR: All right. We'll excuse you to the locker room and take questions for coach.

Q. You talked about your free-throw shooting. You didn't make a field goal the last seven minutes 18 seconds. Did you realize that as it was happening? What were you trying to get going there at the end that allowed to you win the game?

COACH ANDERSON: We actually were trying to get the ball inside. I thought we did a great job of attacking early on. We got the ball into Bobby and he was pinned in there and we attacked their zone. The second half, I didn't feel we attacked with that same mindset.

But they were fouling as well. So you got to go ahead and knock free throws down. So it was a game of runs. But I didn't know it was seven minutes we didn't score a field goal. They had something to do with that. We had something to do with it.

But we turned the ball over. We had multiple turnovers at critical times that enabled them to get some offense off of our turnovers. But more importantly, I think that we had the ball in the right hands at the right guys going down the stretch. Ky made some big free throws. Bobby we got it into him a few times.

Tennessee, they do a good job with their defense. But as Michael alluded to, I thought we sped them up. I thought that was the difference in the game. Fatigue became a factor. You don't see Josh Richardson miss many free throws. He missed a couple right going down the stretch.

They played last night and we wanted to make them use a lot of energy. So our mindset today was energy and attack. And I thought we did a good job of that.

Q. Alandise had nine rebounds and he hasn't always been the greatest rebounder and he hit some big free throws. What did you think of his game?

COACH ANDERSON: Motivation was you get rebounds, you get a chance to play. He played over 30-some odd minutes. So he did a good job of going to the glass. He played athletic for us. He gives us that toughness that you got to have. Bobby is in the help position where he's going to try to block a shot, so we got to have that off-side rebounding.

And Alandise was that guy today. I thought he played well. Got up and made his free throws. Just made tough plays for us and we're going to need that third guy. We always going to need that third guy. We know what Mike and Bobby bring to the table, but you got to have some other guys to step in.

We scored 80 points against a team that only gives up 60-some odd points. That's a pretty good statement for the first game in the

tournament.

As a coach, you worry just recklessly because you never know how you're going to come out in that first game. But our guys came out, we made some shots early on, but more importantly, I thought we did a good job of defending. They only had four field goals in the first half. They had like 17 free throws. But as the game went on, they made their runs. You know they had a run in them, but Alandise it was good to see him step up.

Q. You said the other day you wanted to flip the script on this SEC tournament stuff. How good does it feel to break that losing streak and flip the script like you talked about?

COACH ANDERSON: I'm just so dialed into winning. I'm so dialed into this team getting better. As Mike alluded to, one game at a time. Our focus was to come in here and play a team that we had a rubber match with them. We won at our place. They won at their place. We know their defense is what they hang their hats on.

They have got a tremendous player in Josh Richardson. So to me that was the focus. As you get to this time of the year, post-season play, it's about surviving and advance. So that was the focus of this basketball team. This team has done a lot of firsts that haven't been done in a while. So that doesn't surprise me. They're hungry, they're humble, they're a hard working group.

Q. Can you talk about how physical the game was. I think there were 72 free throws and maybe 57 fouls called.

COACH ANDERSON: It's funny because one of the officials, I asked him, I said, How was the last two games? He said, Just like this one here. It was like it was just a mugging it seemed like. But that's part of it.

We wanted to speed them up. I thought we got after them a little bit. They tend to let you play a little bit. But at the same time, we attacked. The thing I was more proud of is that we got to the free-throw line just as much as they did. We attacked them.

They ended up with 20 offensive rebounds, and if you get 20 offensive rebounds, there are going to be some fouls in that.

But hopefully we'll clean it up tomorrow and play a much better game. The first half we shot the ball well. Second half we shot free throws well. We had some bad turnovers at the wrong time, but overall I thought our defense was pretty

good. I thought it was really good. We can play better.

THE MODERATOR: All right. Thank you.

COACH ANDERSON: All right. Thank

y'all.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports....



visit our archives at asapsports.com