

**March 13, 2015**



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AN INTERVIEW WITH:

## GEORGIA

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

COACH FOX: A really hard fought game. A game in which I thought we played fairly consistently on both ends. I didn't think we started the second half very well defensively.

But our goal was really to be more complete tonight than we have been in our previous games against South Carolina. And we felt like we played pretty sound basketball at both ends, which allowed us to play most of the night with the lead.

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

**Q. How big was Yante's contribution with Thornton fouling out? Can you talk about how big that was for him to come in there?**

COACH FOX: He's really grown throughout the year -- and I think that the questions were supposed to know to be for the student-athletes and Claude is mad at me.

So let me give you the answer and then we'll go to the student-athletes.

THE MODERATOR: Go ahead.

COACH FOX: But Yante has really grown throughout the season. I think the one thing that really our entire team, when Marcus fouled out, they didn't want to disappoint him. He had been playing well and some of those guys maybe had a couple burps in the second half. I really felt like Yante finished the game really in fine fashion.

THE MODERATOR: Okay.  
Student-athlete questions, please.

**Q. Neme, you hit the three-pointer there where y'all didn't score any field goals. Talk about how big that was. How y'all kept ya'll's composure through that little skid you had.**

NEMANJA DJURISIC: Well, we went through the period in the second half where we struggled a little bit to score. I wasn't a good leader, to be honest, and I had a little tentativeness which messed up our tempo. That three kind of put us back in rhythm.

Then when Marcus fouled out especially, we wanted to pull ourselves together and play as hard as we can and get the win.

**Q. Marcus, did the game kind of slow down a little bit in the second half, and is that not what y'all wanted? It seemed like in the first half y'all were really pushing the ball and going up-tempo a lot.**

MARCUS THORNTON: Yeah, I think we got out of rhythm a little bit and allowed ourselves to get away from what we were doing well to begin with.

So that's part of the game, you got to fight through the little rocky stretches. Eventually we were able to get ourselves back out there and get some stops and put some buckets together and hit some free throws and win the game.

**Q. Going off of that, did something change with the South Carolina zone there that was kind of thwarting you guys in the second half or was it just the way the ball was bouncing?**

MARCUS THORNTON: No, it was very disciplined zone, and they did a very good job of matching up with us. It was all about how we were going to be assertive offensively. I think eventually down the stretch we were able to assert ourselves and have some success.

**Q. Marcus, what can you say about what Yante did. I know he started that run when you were still in the game, but especially after you fouled out, he stepped up in the post.**

MARCUS THORNTON: Yeah, Yante stepped up big time today. It was great to get those contributions from him. He was very physical, very assertive, and provided not just offense, but defense and rebounded the ball well. Yante was great for us, and we wouldn't have won the game without him.

**Q. How much motivation was there given what they did to you guys the first two games, and are they a particularly tough matchup for you guys usually?**

NEMANJA DJURISIC: Well, definitely we wanted to come out strong. We know each other very well, playing already twice in this season. They're a very good team. They pressure the ball very well. It's hard. It's a hard matchup.

But tonight we wanted to come out strong and find ways to win and that's what we did.

**Q. Marcus, again, I just want to talk about Kenny Gaines, the way he played tonight and not playing against Auburn and how effective he was tonight.**

MARCUS THORNTON: Yeah, I think with Kenny, it was great to have him there. He absolutely had to tough it out and play for us today. That's great. It's a great testament to not just him, but our team. We have got a team with a bunch of fighters. That was just another testament to it.

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

**Q. How much concern was there when Charles came to the bench and then Kenny joined him pretty soon after?**

COACH FOX: Yeah, there was a lot of concern. They both had small injuries. Kenny just was stepped on that foot and had a lot of pain. So I was quite concerned, to be honest with you, because Juwan was unable to go today, so we're just thin. We can't afford too many more.

But fortunately those kids both dug in and fought through it.

**Q. One more question about Kenny. At what point in time did you know he was going to be able to play and how do you think he**

**made it through playing the 27 minutes that he did?**

COACH FOX: Coach Pearson, I had him ask him during the warmups if he felt like he could go. So we waited as long as we could because we had to turn the starting lineup in. So right before we had to turn the starting lineup in is when we asked Kenny if he wanted to go for it and he did. So that's when we made that decision.

What was your second question?

**Q. For 27 minutes. Is he good to go tomorrow?**

COACH FOX: I don't know if he'll be able to go tomorrow or not. He has not practiced. So for him to play as well as he did play, not having practiced, I was really proud of him for that.

Will he be able to bounce back after playing 27 minutes and play tomorrow afternoon? He's a tough rascal now, but I'm not sure. We'll just have to see how much he swells and how he feels in the morning.

**Q. Was it a concerted effort to go up-tempo in the first half playing a team three games in three nights? And then did they kind of slow it down or did the officials slow it down in the second half?**

COACH FOX: Well, we wanted to play fast because we have been sitting around. We had energy.

Then in the second half, obviously, there's lots of trips to the foul line and we didn't score a basket for a good bit, but we got to the foul line.

There was certainly a much better flow to the game in the first half. But we were trying to play quick.

**Q. When Charles and Kenny went down, J.J. sort of had the calming influence. He hit a layup and then at the end of the game he hit that big three. How important was he for you guys tonight with all the injuries you guys had?**

COACH FOX: Well, I didn't think he was playing particularly well. We had a timeout where I kind of challenged him and said, You got to get back to being the J.J. we know.

Still, when we needed him, he showed up. The out-of-bound play, the steal and the layup, I give my staff credit. Those guys kind of saw some out-of-bounds plays coming and we had time to tell

them what to look for.

So we got a steal out of it, but the big three was the deep one. Obviously it was a deep one and obviously a desperation shot, but it's not the first one that J.J.'s made from there. So it wasn't a surprise that it went in, but it was a big basket.

**Q. Every time you guys made a run, they would kind of come back and cut it to three or four. What do you attribute that last run, I think it was 17-5, kind of the timing of it of putting them away like you did?**

COACH FOX: They have a good team. They have a winning record. They have defeated some really good teams. We didn't think this game would be easy by any stretch.

Our guys were able to watch Auburn today and all the energy they had. So we didn't feel like that South Carolina would be tired. They have strong, older guys who we felt like would have great energy.

But I just felt like that our team, I think we were a little disappointed with ourselves. I didn't have to get on them a lot in timeouts because they were getting on each other. We just decided to close the game. It was really encouraging.

**Q. What do you think about Arkansas tomorrow with the turnaround time. I know it's been a couple months since you played them.**

COACH FOX: We have been through so much since we played Arkansas I can't barely remember it. I remember Kenny broke his wrist. We were up eight and -- but the hardest thing about tomorrow will be the quick turnaround. I don't know what time it is, 11:30 or something?

You know, it's a challenge. We did it a year ago and played Kentucky pretty close until midway through the second half. So we'll have to do a few things different to try and stay physically ready to go.

But they got a great basketball team. They got a nationally ranked team. They got the best player in the conference leading them and it will be a big challenge for our boys.

THE MODERATOR: All right. Thanks.

COACH FOX: Thank you.

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