

THE MODERATOR: We're ready to continue on with Florida.

COACH WHITE: First off, I guess, just an honor to be here at the SEC Tournament and be able to compete in this thing. It was a good win for us. Arkansas is a terrific team, a terrific program.

I thought the first 20 minutes we really defended at a high level. If you take away a couple transition baskets, a couple possessions where our communication just wasn't on point, a couple turnovers, which I think led to baskets or at least good looks. Other than that, defensively, we were as good as we've been, and that's a big challenge.

I guess a team like Arkansas, who's as potent -- who's as explosive as they are with two elite shooters, an all league center, Jabril Durham does a terrific job with making decisions with his assist to turnover ratio and his accomplishments he brings to the table. So Arkansas having won 4 of 5 coming in is one of the hotter teams in our league, it was a good win for us.

We did enough the second half defensively, stepped up and made a few big shots to get us that first win. You can't do something special in a tournament like this, obviously, unless you win the first one, and we took care of business.

Q. John, could you just talk about the level of pain you were in with the thumb and what it was like for you to go out there and play with that when obviously nobody knew how much you were going to be able to play.

JOHN EGBUNU: Yeah, throughout the course of the game, the pain was mild. Apart from a few times when I dove on the floor and kind of hit it pretty bad. But apart from that, the pain was pretty mild. It was bearable.

I just wanted to go out there and help my team the best way I could, and I'm just happy we got a win today.

Q. John, did you have to resist the urge to jam a couple times? Because a couple of those dunk opportunities, you just kind of let the ball just to be sure, just to kind of favor the hand a little bit?

JOHN EGBUNU: Yeah, definitely. I wasn't trying to do anything to increase the pain or hurt it any more.

Q. A question for Kasey. Could you just talk a little bit about the second half and down the stretch, your assertiveness. It seemed like, when the team needed some shots or some assistance down the stretch, you were making them.

KASEY HILL: I was just trying to play, play aggressive, and doing whatever I had to do to help the team.

Q. Kasey, what Hannahs was able to do, he didn't kill you guys with three-pointers like he's capable of doing. Was that the whole plan, to run him off the line and try to make him make those hard twos that he made?

KASEY HILL: I mean, he's a good player, and he's going to get his shots. He's going to make his shots. Yeah, of course we're going to run him off the line, but at the end of the day, he got it going a little bit in the second half, and somebody had to step up and try to slow him down a little bit.

Q. John, could you just talk about, when you did dive on the ground, when you got up, did you say, why did I do that?

JOHN EGBUNU: It's more of an instinct. I saw the ball on the floor, and I just wanted to dive and try to save a possession and give us an extra possession. So I wasn't really thinking, but after I dove on the floor, I thought about it because it did hurt pretty bad.

Q. Mike, could you just talk about John. Obviously, you didn't know what his availability was going to be and how much he was going to be able to play and the performance he turned in.

COACH WHITE: Unbelievable. I'm not shocked, but I'm really surprised that he played that well. He's still young in his career. He's a sophomore. He's come a long way with his maturity and his toughness. After the injury, a couple nights ago in practice, Duke, who we all know does a phenomenal job and prepared him to give us something today. Duke and I thought, I don't know what he can give us. Maybe he can give us five minutes. Maybe he can be in there for a few defensive possessions and then we sub him out offensively because Mike was saying, I didn't know if he was going to be able to catch the ball. That was kind of his stance.

I called John that night just to express, after he saw the doctor, sorrow, and told him to keep his head up. I said, John, it's

only been two or three weeks. You've come a long way. This is part of basketball. I hate it for you, but you'll find other ways where you can help your teammates, ala Alex Murphy this year. And who knows? You might be able to play a few minutes. Who knows? He said, no, Coach, I'm playing. I'm fine. I'll find a way.

So he didn't bat an eye from day one, from hour one really. To be that productive, to go get six offensive rebounds, to ball screen defend the way that he did was -- it was a pretty courageous performance. Very proud of Johnny Egbunu.

Q. Your thoughts of seeing Texas A&M for the second time this season? Is obviously, it was a long time ago in College Station. What kind of adjustments do you guys think you can make the second time around?

COACH WHITE: It's funny. As you're coming into these type deals, especially with the adjustment that we made in terms of trying to avoid the bubble talk and the NCAA Tournament and bracketology, this and that, over the last couple of weeks, 100 percent of our focus was on the Hogs. It seems like a year ago since I've watched Texas A&M. So this is literally coming off the top of my head.

I can't give you adjustments. I can -- that game, it just seemed so long ago, but I can tell you, remembering the end of the game, we obviously were in there. We had our chances. I think Texas A&M, obviously, they've had a tremendous year. They've done a great job. They have incredible balance and role definition on their team. They're a team.

I don't think there's a lot of teams in the country you can say this about that don't have a glaring weakness. They defend at a high level. They have a bunch of veterans. They make great decisions. They have some guys that can really, really shoot it. They've got depth. They can throw it to the interior and score. They can score their back to the basket. Their backup big guy can score from beyond the arc. So it gives you a couple different looks there. And then they have two veteran guards who are as good as there is in the league in assist-turnover ratio like Jabril Durham, just intelligent, tough nosed, solid guards that play well with one another, and they both can make shots as well.

So just presents all kinds of challenges for you. We've got, I know relative to today's performance, we've got to shoot the free throw at a higher rate. We've got to convert from three. We had some costly turnovers today. I just think we're capable of making better decisions because we've done it here recently. And then, of course, we've got to defend it as well as we've defended all year.

Q. Mike, can you just talk about the play Kasey made there after they cut it to one. The game is slipping away a little bit, and then to go underneath in the reverse layup.

COACH WHITE: Yeah, I thought he did a really good job in spread pick-and-roll and using ball screens and getting a head of steam. He's got terrific speed, as we know. And John and Kevarrius did a good job of setting those ball screens. That was a big basket, using the other side of the rim, using the rim as another defender because Kingsley is so good at protecting the rim.

But Kasey was in a really good rhythm offensively, getting downhill, getting to the basket and making pretty good decisions. Finishing. Finishing. For him to score 18 is big for us.

Q. Mike, you guys started 1 of 10 from the floor, you were 0 for 4 from three, and then you made 8 of the next 10 three-point shots. You haven't shot like that in a while. What does that do confidence-wise?

COACH WHITE: To see a few go in, I know it's got to feel better for our guys. That's every team, but this team at times, we've -- unfortunately, we've let up with our defensive intensity, and we don't have a huge margin for error. We've got to be really, really good defensively, and to drop in intensity level and to play ten minutes where we're just somewhat engaged defensively isn't a good recipe for us.

If you are falling, it helps keep us energized. It helps our communication and intensity levels stay where they need to be, remain at that high level. Overall, if you look at it, Arkansas again, offensively, they are just really, really good. This was 40 pretty good minutes against a good offensive team. So I'm pleased.

Q. Mike, just talk about the shot Kasey hit at the end of the half to give you guys a lift going in at halftime.

COACH WHITE: That was big. Just another good ball screen. I thought it was a good decision. I thought they did a good

job, especially in the first 10, 15 minutes of the game, of stunting at our ball handlers. They played extremely hard. Of course, they have a lot of pressure on the basketball. Kingsley did a really good job in ball screen defense. And then as we're driving it towards wings and corners, those defenders of those wings and corners, we called stunning and staying. They just kind of had our ball handlers guessing.

So we talked in a couple time-outs, get downhill until someone gets in front of you. Let's not overcomplicate it. Make someone stop the basketball. And Kasey, I thought, made a really good adjustment there. Got deep, came to a jump stop, and made a little eight-foot floater. Made it look easy. That was a big shot for us.