

THE MODERATOR: We're ready to continue on with Texas A&M.

COACH KENNEDY: Just thankful to get a win. It was a good team win. It was an ugly game. I think we didn't play well offensively, but we gutted it out. I was really proud of our bench. I thought our bench came in, Admon Gilder, Tonny Trocha, and Tavario Miller, with just the minutes they played, they were really efficient.

And these two guys and Tyler Davis as well as our other guys, stepped up and made big plays when we needed to -- big shots, big rebounds -- and we found a way to get a win.

Q. Danuel, you were struggling with your shot somewhat in the second half, and then you hit that big three. Was there ever a point where you maybe were thinking you were going to be looking to pass off instead of shoot? Or did you just still feel confident?

DANUEL HOUSE: I still felt confident. My teammates and Coach Kennedy and the other staff members believed in me, and they just told me every shot that I took was a good shot. Just keep shooting, don't worry about it. Let's just focus on getting stops. So that was the key.

I wasn't too much worried about shots rolling in and out. I just wanted to stay aggressive on both ends of the floor.

Q. Jalen, you got the basket that put them up 63-61. Can you walk us through that play because it was kind of wild. It was almost like you were trying to get the ball to Tyler. And finally, it just ended up being in your hands.

JALEN JONES: From what I can remember, I just remember Admon getting a loose ball. I was kind of close to the basket. He looked up, threw it to me, and I think two guys collapsed, and I just went up strong and tried to finish it as strong as possible, and I was able to make the layup.

But I've got to give a lot of credit to Admon for hustling and finding me by the basket.

Q. For either player, both of you guys struggled shooting the ball until there toward the end of the game. The bench kind of had that run there middle of the second half that carried you guys. What's your level of belief that they could get that done, that the bench could carry you guys if you guys are struggling?

DANUEL HOUSE: Like I said earlier in our previous games, our bench can easily start at another school or even here. So we don't look at it as bench players. We just got two sets, a group of first foul teams. So them coming in and giving us that boost, that was huge because we needed it. We're going to need that even sometimes when we compete in the tourney.

So it's always good to see your teammates doing real great, especially with the freshmen. They showed a lot of growth and maturity. So that's the most important part for us to compete in an NCAA Tournament.

Q. Danuel, you guys were up real late in the game, and you took a shot in the paint a little early in the shot clock. Did you think about that at all, like winding the clock down at all, or were you just trying to build a lead?

DANUEL HOUSE: I was just trying to stay aggressive and build a lead, but I could have got it balanced a little bit more. So I told my teammates that was my bad. I should have got balanced a little bit more and take a better shot and run some more time off.

Q. Danuel, how big was it to get this when you had talked earlier in the week about how, when you get a double bye, there may not be the familiarity with the court that the other team has? So how big was it for you all to get this first one?

DANUEL HOUSE: It was huge. Florida came out. They played yesterday. They got familiarized with the floors and how hard the balls were, but we came out -- we executed. Like Coach Kennedy said, it was an ugly game. Both teams played hard. We played scrappy, and I'm just grateful that we got the victory.

Q. Jalen, Coach talks about winning ugly, kind of. But, again, you guys held it to less than double-digit turnovers. That's the pretty part of the game. Can you just talk about that a little bit?

JALEN JONES: It shows you the type of ball handling we have on the court, and it shows you that our guards do a great

job of taking care of the ball. Both of the A.C.'s do a great job of leading us out there, and we follow their lead and they're always getting us in the on offense and always setting the tone on defense. And they always take care of the ball. So we just try to follow in their lead and try to run through offense efficiently.

Q. Coach, can you talk about that with the turnovers? I know we've kind of addressed that the last few games because they've been so few.

COACH KENNEDY: That was big, and getting 17 offensive rebounds were big. That's what's kind of won us games the last few games because we have not shot the ball really well. We've got to do a better job of moving the ball. Extra pass and shot selection, I think, at times can be better.

Our bench was really good, though. I thought Tonny -- he plays 13 minutes and gets 9 points and 7 rebounds. And without his production -- and Tavario came in and gave us some positive minutes. I thought they were huge.

Q. Coach, can you talk about Alex Caruso's -- he seems to get just those steals at key times, and just what he meant to you today with those steals?

COACH KENNEDY: Yeah, Alex, he's just a winner. He makes winning plays. I think he felt a little bad about throwing the ball out of bounds there in the corner. Defensively, you could tell he was really tuned in at the end. It was a big-time steal.

Q. Coach White said he finds it hard to believe that Tyler Davis is a freshman. Do you find it hard to believe that he's a freshman?

COACH KENNEDY: No question. His maturity on the floor is beyond a freshman. Just a pace that he plays with, the decision making. And I thought and I planned all week in the game-type atmosphere, maybe hurt him a little bit just because he got winded quick. But if you look at it, he played 29 minutes. That's probably a few more minutes than he usually plays. He has 15 points, 8 rebounds. He's a special freshman for sure.

Q. Coach, 44 points in the paint, that's the most Florida's given up in the last five seasons. Knowing that Egbunu had a bum hand, did you guys talk about going inside any more than you guys do usually?

COACH KENNEDY: No, not really because of his hand, but we were struggling shooting the ball. I didn't recognize that. So that 44 points in the paint, we shot 16 threes, and we're 4 for 16. So that's huge. Our ability to get to the paint, our ability to finish, obviously, helped us win.

Q. Billy, can you tell us why you decided to put Admon out on the floor late in the game, put that freshman out there? I think he might have been in there instead of one of your senior starters.

COACH KENNEDY: I saw him win two State championships, one as a sophomore, one as a junior, and his senior year, when it was basically him without a lot of help, get to The Finals. So he's won games for us. He's made big free throws at Mississippi State to win the game for us. I'm very comfortable with having him on the floor.

Q. Billy, your last two wins have been against potential bubble teams, Vanderbilt and Florida. There's a possibility the SEC could only get three bids. Does this seem like a three-bid lead to you?

COACH KENNEDY: I don't think we should be penalized for beating each other up. You look across the country, very few leagues this year have teams that have only two losses or three losses. Florida and Vandy are both in position to be good tournament teams, in my opinion. I thought we should have gotten in last year, and we got knocked off the bubble. So, obviously, I'm not probably qualified to make that call.

I really think we've got five to six teams for sure that are capable of winning in a tournament and capable of being in the Tournament.

Q. Coach, your point guard, Anthony Collins, went out of the game last week against Vanderbilt with a leg injury, didn't return. He went out a little bit in this game as well. How close is he to 100 percent in this tournament?

COACH KENNEDY: You know, I thought he was 100 percent coming in, and so he had a sprained neck or something from getting hit last week. He went down pretty good. His leg -- I'll know really more after the game.

But he wasn't as aggressive getting the ball in the paint, but defensively, he was able to get out on the floor and help us. He handled the press at the end. We've got to have him on the floor. Hopefully, he's healthy.

But coming into this game, I thought he was close to 100 percent or 100 percent.

Q. The double bye was kind of a new deal for A&M, and obviously, you would love to have that, but also is there some sort of you get a little antsy while you're waiting? You see all these other teams playing, and you finally play on Friday.

COACH KENNEDY: Yes, especially when you look at our team. Last year we played Auburn and lost. We haven't had a lot of experience in the SEC Tournament with our young guys, and even our older guys haven't had a lot of success.

So the first game in any tournament is the hardest game to win. Having coached in conference tournaments everywhere, all the places I've been coaching, you've got to get past an ugly first round game. Very few teams come out and just light it up. Now, LSU might, Kentucky might, but very few teams. It usually takes you a little bit to settle in and adjust to the atmosphere, the balls.

And we didn't play all week. We've been playing two to three games every week, and then we basically didn't play for seven days. So that's an adjustment. Hopefully, we got that ugliness out of us.

Q. Billy, were you ever -- or were you frustrated with Danuel, and did you ever think about taking him off the court?

COACH KENNEDY: I took him out early in the second half. I usually play him a little bit more. We went with D.J. Hogg, and D.J. struggled a little bit, so we went back with the senior.

The thing about Danuel, he always thinks he's going to make the next shot. He's done it for us, and he puts in a lot of time, probably too much time recently, trying to get his shot back to where it was. I really expect him to break out soon. I keep saying that. I keep telling everybody that. So I hope I'm right.