

THE MODERATOR: We're ready to begin with Tennessee.

COACH BARNES: First of all, I'm really -- I can't tell you how proud I am of our seniors. They've been through a lot the last three years with three different coaching changes. And for them to really buy into what we asked them to do this year and we've had to deal with obviously losing a key player to our team and some injuries along the way, but I can't say enough of what I feel for these guys right now because they've given us everything they could possibly give us.

We knew, and as time goes on, we're a team that I do think these guys have played really, really hard all year, but we get in the games against certain teams, we've got to be on. We don't have a very big margin of errors. We've got to hope the officials are on and they have a great day, and if either of those two things aren't falling in place, we struggle at times.

Big swing in the game. We fouled a three-point shooter and then come down and missed two free throws, and that was really a five-point swing right there. We turned it over a couple times at the end where we still had some chances, but we just were a little frazzled and trying to play really out of character a little bit.

Q. Does it get to be a factor of running out of gas at this point with three games in three days? Was legs a factor in the first half or second half?

ARMANI MOORE: I mean, I don't necessarily think it was that. I just think it was, like Coach said, we had a lot of crucial turnovers at night, a couple times where we didn't execute on offense. We were kind of lackadaisical on defense as well.

DEREK REESE: Yeah, I say the same thing. We didn't execute as well as we thought we should, especially on defense and offense. Then we didn't win that battle inside. So, yeah, I agree with what Armani said.

Q. Can you talk about what you learned this year playing under Coach Barnes, just how much, in spite of all of it, what you gained from him and his experience.

ARMANI MOORE: I think, what I learned from this coaching staff, they just showed us how much effort we're supposed to put into it each and every day. I know, as an individual, I really think they pushed me a lot this year to really be in the gym during the off-season as well as during the season. I think they taught me a lot. And especially Coach Barnes, he gave me a lot of confidence this year just to come out and play as hard as I can each and every game.

DEREK REESE: IQ of the game. Coach Barnes always says, mental always beats strong. You guys can play this game, and you've got to be smart if you want to make it to the next level. He taught us, basically, how to be a pro and just the work ethic you need to be a pro. I can't thank this coaching staff enough.

Q. Coach, when you see the box where you see box where you see Detrick and Robert 19 each, do you wonder a little bit how things might have been different this year if you had consistently gotten that from them?

COACH BARNES: Yeah, and, again, you've seen us play. That's been the word, consistency. But I think we do have a foundation in place moving forward that we can build on. But I've said before, I've always thought that Robert Hubbs should be our leading scorer this year. He's missed a lot of time in practice with injuries, but going forward, he's got something to build on.

Detrick has gotten better. He really has. He's still learning how to play. He still gets himself in some situations, but you've got to love his desire and his competitiveness. Yeah, you add K.P. -- I mean, these guys really have been a fun team to coach.

I'm really proud of them coming here because, as you guys know, we struggled coming in here. I think it shows great character the way we came in and played great the first night, and then yesterday.

Believe it or not, today was the first day that I thought that, not everyone, but the younger guys were nervous because, I guess, this time of year, the more you win, the more you want to win, and you start putting a little bit more pressure on yourself. We didn't get off to a great start, but they fought, like they have all year, but we just didn't have enough.

Again, we don't have a big margin of error, and I don't think we got to the bonus until, what, under four minutes, and they were there early. We played zone the entire second half for the most part.

Again, I'm just proud that these guys have stayed with it. It's not easy when you've lost 19 games. But there's some highlights.

Q. Rick, you kind of just touched on it, but what is the way this team has played this week, has that changed maybe the tenor of the season at all in your mind?

COACH BARNES: I'm not sure --

Q. Has the way this team played all week, has it maybe changed the tone or the tenor of the season so far, just the effort and how the team played?

COACH BARNES: Yeah. I think, as much as anything, it's hard at the end of the year to ask a guy like Armani Moore to just try to lock in. And, again, we know he's been better when he's played at the step out four position. We were trying to get Shembari there, but he's really struggled for the last four games really where he hasn't -- at one time, he was averaging, I think, over a four-game period, like 16 points, 5 rebounds, and then he just has lost his confidence a little bit.

But the fact that the way we were struggling in the last two weeks, but the schedule, you look at our last two weeks, we were playing against teams minus a key figure on our team, and Robert missed, I think, two of those games. Teams that were playing for an NCAA or playing for postseason, and we were just trying to keep our guys, challenging them with, hey, we've just got to stay in it, and who knows what might happen.

For them to come here with the attitude -- I mean, getting ready a couple days in Knoxville before we got here, again, I think it speaks a lot about their character and the fact that we've told them they're going to look back one day, these seniors, and even though they look at this record, it's not something we wanted, but they'll look back and know that they were a part of really trying to build what we're going to do going forward.

Q. A couple weeks from now and when the emotion wears off, what's going to be the biggest thing that sticks out from the time you took over this roster in the spring until all the way till now?

COACH BARNES: I think a number of things. One, three coaches in three years, that's not easy for anybody. And the things we've asked them to do. And Derek talked about it, the time that we put in with them, and we've gotten to know them, not just as students, but the fact that they're great kids.

I'll tell you another major thing will be our fans. For them to support us the way they did this year and get excited, I think it just goes to show that the University of Tennessee fan base, they love effort. They love a group of guys that are going to lay it out there every night. As a coaching staff, you always are picking at your team and knowing it can be better and playing the what if game.

But the fact is our fans were -- I can't tell you how many games we sat there, and Rob Lanier said to me, Coach, we have great fans. We have great fans.

But going forward, there are some things we can build on. We're excited about our incoming class. And you look at the minutes that these young guys got, probably more than we thought because of injuries and things. It's been -- we'll have a good off-season, and we'll be back and want to do more.

We want to come here, we want to win this tournament, and we want to obviously get to the NCAA Tournament, and that's something that you don't ever take any of that for granted, but you've got to work to get there. We're going to work hard to make that happen.

Q. Coach, the sequence where Robert gets called for the offensive foul, Blakeney gets fouled shooting the three on the other end and makes all three. How big was that swing right there?

COACH BARNES: I thought that was a big swing. I think Simmons, they gave him -- when we charged, I thought that was

a big call. And it's a fine line. That's what I said.

It's knowing your team has to be on top of their games. Officials have to be on top of their games too. But those are -- they're game changers. That was a huge sequence right there. It was a really big one. And, again, the three -- and Robert's two missed free throws were big at that time. It's just really -- you talk about it, it's a three-possession game. I could pick a couple of them.

Again, I don't think we got to the bonus until, what, the last minute maybe or something? It was late before we got there, and they were in early. We played zone a lot trying to protect our guys in foul trouble, but we did want to drive the ball a little bit more and try to create contact.

You know, our team, we can't throw the ball inside. We don't have that kind of presence. We have to rely on the freedom of movement, cutting, and hope that we get cuts, calls when guys are cutting. We've got to rely on driving the ball, getting the hand checks and those type things. If we don't get that, we're going to struggle if we don't get to the free-throw line, and we got there -- we were 20 for 26, but we missed a couple of them that, again, Robert's two was big ones.