

Southeastern Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Wednesday March 8, 2017

Ben Howland Tyson Carter Xavian Stapleton Quinndary Weatherspoon

Miss. State

Mississippi State - 79, LSU - 52

COACH HOWLAND: Yeah, I thought we did a good job digging ourselves out of two slow starts of each half. We started out slow to start the first half, got down, 8-2. I thought that our bench, especially Tyson and that first half came off, gave us a big lift, knocked down a couple big shots, got us some momentum going offensively. Was really important for us. I thought in the second half I thought Stapleton did an outstanding job giving us big minutes off the bench. Hit a couple of big 3s. One late in the possession. Was active on the glass. Good overall team effort in terms of our field goal percentage, I think they shot 33 percent. You know, obviously we can't take all the credit for their 3-point shooting but that's a heck of a percentage to hold a team 1 for 22 from 3.

That was obviously played to our favor.

I thought that everybody got in the game tonight did a good job for us especially the guys coming off the bench. Showed our depth. E.J. Datcher gave us great minutes. Q is very, very steady. Q is very, very consistent and played very good defense on Blakeney. I thought we played great team defense. Blakeney was 3-10 tonight. I hope Q takes a lot of pride in that.

THE MODERATOR: We'll take questions just for the student-athletes.

Q Q, during the first half of that game it was a one point game and things were looking a little bleak for you guys. You come away with that steal at the top of the key, go with the lay down with one hand dunk.



Did you realize how much of a lift that could provide you guys at that time?

QUINNDARY WEATHERSPOON: Not really. I was trying to come out and play hard. It happened like that. Gave us a spark. Now we got like a 6-0. Gave us the spark we needed to get over the hump to get this game.

Q Tyson, you kind of -- what got into you in the first half?

TYSON CARTER: Just coming off the bench, we started out a little slow. First five minutes we started off a little slow and we needed a little spark offensively, and I felt like we did a pretty good job after that.

Q Tyson, it seemed like you played with a lot more confidence today as far as, you know, not hesitating with your shot and also driving to the basket. How much of a factor was your confidence level today?

TYSON CARTER: I felt like my confidence was pretty high because I know we didn't want to go home from this tournament that early, so I didn't -- I wanted to do whatever just to help the team.

Q For any of the three players or all three, you played Alabama twice in January. So it's been five, six weeks. How are you a different team and what do you look for in tomorrow's game?

THE MODERATOR: Tyson take that first.

TYSON CARTER: We just looking to come out hard and we know they're a physical team. Try to play physical with them and hopefully we come out with a win.

THE MODERATOR: Same question for Xavian.

XAVIAN STAPLETON: Like he said, they're physical so we got to come out and throw the first punch and be the aggressor.

THE MODERATOR: Q, anything to add?

QUINNDARY WEATHERSPOON: I'm good.

COACH HOWLAND: One thing I wanted to point out looking at the stats, Lamar Peters had a great game: Six assists, zero turnovers, three steals, four rebounds, did a lot of really important things for us.

So, I was really proud of these youngsters because, you know, it's good to get a win in this tournament play and we're playing a great Alabama team. I think Alabama is really physical, really tough, so this will be a big time challenge for us.

THE MODERATOR: One or two more for either of the student-athletes?

Q LSU was able to cut the lead to 4 right there at the start of the second half. What did y'all do to kind of extend things back out?

THE MODERATOR: Who?

Q Xavian.

XAVIAN STAPLETON: I think the second half we came out a little lackadaisical. We weren't playing defense as hard as we was in the first half so they came up, and even on the sideline we were being lackadaisical. Really my job is to bring energy. That's what happened. When I brought energy all the other guys, they fed off it and we took off.

THE MODERATOR: One more for the student-athletes. Anyone? Okay. We'll excuse you back to the locker room. Thank you. We'll continue on with Coach Howland. If you have a question for Coach Howland, raise your hand and we'll get a floor mike to you.

Q Ben, you mentioned the slow starts in each half. What do you see that causes those, do you think?

COACH HOWLAND: You know, tonight we got a slow start in terms of trying to go inside, they were doubling the post so they had a couple quick turnovers they forced. It's something they hadn't done in either game that we had played them.

So, Schnider, a couple problems, we had to adjust to that. They played our ball screens a little differently in the first half. Second half I thought we got off to a slow start because of our defense. They came out and scored multiple baskets in a row without getting stops and, you know, we finally got settled and I thought that Xav gave us great minutes.

When they cut it to four, Stapleton stepped up for us and gave us good minutes off the bench, made some big plays. He only had credit here as I look for it, how many offensive rebounds? Only gave him one. I felt he had more than one because he was all over the

offensive glass tonight. I won't get a chance to watch film until after the season is over because we're on to the Alabama film now.

Q As far as Schnider's production didn't seem to get too much out of him tonight. How do you kind of get him going?

COACH HOWLAND: You know what, he's got to come back. It's a new night tomorrow. Other teammates stepped up. He's got to come out and just be aggressive and play as hard as you can and good things will happen.

Tonight I felt like he was a step slow defensively and I felt EJ had such a good first half, we went with him. They're not a true post player. Tomorrow now against Alabama, they have two true five men post players back to the basket guys in Taylor and Hall, which is a better matchup for Schnider.

Q Ben, you mentioned also that Q, how consistent he is. What does that mean for a coach to know what he's going to get from a player?

COACH HOWLAND: Well, you know what? He gives us great effort at both ends of the floor. I think his defense is really, really coming on here the last half of the league. You know, he's taking great pride in it.

He's a very, very good player and, again remember, he's playing through injury, his hand has been bothering him. He had a foot that was sprained so he missed the second to the last game of the season. He's played through a lot and you got to give him a lot of credit for what he's doing to help his team.

Q Ben, also with Quindary, that first play I asked him about, that first half play that I asked him about, I really thought that was an example of him sort of leading by example, something this team could use in him going forward even into next season.

How critical is that for this team?

COACH HOWLAND: Yeah, his leadership is important. Losing Dante, we need other guys to step up and Q obviously is the obvious choice because of his experience and the fact that he is one of our best players.

Q Three starters without a field goal in this ballgame. Any thoughts of making a change in the starting lineup, any concern with not making a field goal?

COACH HOWLAND: No. I thought that -- the other guys stepped up and other guys didn't score a field goal tonight they got to step up and take up the slack to

the form. Tomorrow will be a different game.

Tomorrow is going to be -- they're a very physical, they pound you inside, they try to post you up. They play through some different things defensively.

So, you know, we've got to really be ready for them and do a good job battling on the glass and getting ready for a really knock down, drag out.

Q Coach, just a follow-up to that, you had I think it was ten different players who played at least ten minutes in this game. With a quick turn, with the tournament setting, how does that help you?

COACH HOWLAND: We did that kind of on Saturday, too, when we played everybody and the only one that played extended minutes today, meaning over 30, was Q at 31, and so I think it really helps us with it, with our opportunity tomorrow to be a little more rested than if we were playing 7 guys and they all played 30 minutes tonight or 28, whatever.

Q Having played Alabama twice already this season, does it make it scout any easier for you?

COACH HOWLAND: Really doesn't from the standpoint we haven't seen them in awhile. I think we played them the first came in the conference and maybe about the 7th game of the conference or 8th, something like that and that game E.J. didn't play and we had a chance, four point -- or about five minutes to go, Q hit a shot, a 3, put us up one, 56-55. They kind of took over from there. So, we're usually -- you know, our bench more, I think our guys have more experience and so, you know, hopefully that's going to help us here this third time around. They're a good team. They've got good players and they're very well coached.

THE MODERATOR: One or two more. Anyone? All right. Thank you very much.

COACH HOWLAND: Thank you.