

Southeastern Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Thursday March 9, 2017

Mark Fox Yante Maten J.J. Frazier Georgia

Georgia - 59, Tennessee - 57

THE MODERATOR: Ready to begin with Georgia. We'll ask Coach Fox to begin with some general thoughts on the game. And we'll take your questions for the two student-athletes, excuse them to the locker room, and then finish with Coach Fox. Coach, would you begin.

COACH FOX: Probably the kind of game that we anticipated it would be. You know, Tennessee is a hard-nosed, very complete team. I thought that, you know, coming in it would be, you know, a real battle. I thought when you look back at the first game, they make some adjustments and be better.

We knew we might have a little bit of issue with our rhythm trying to bring Yante back. I think that was evident in how we turned it over early. But eventually we kind of settled down and were more complete in the second half and found a way to win.

THE MODERATOR: If you have a question for either of the student-athletes, raise your hand and we'll get a floor mike to you.

Q Yante, you played 26 minutes tonight. How is the knee feeling? Are you excited about getting ready to play Kentucky again?

YANTE MATEN: Yeah, I'm pretty excited. No more injuries, though, for the next game. But no, I'm pretty excited. It didn't click or any pain at all during this game, so I'm just thanking God.

Q J.J. is this the first time you've led Georgia in rebounding and how did you make that happen?

J.J. FRAZIER: No, it's not. Sophomore year, I had 11 against Seton Hall, but Coach challenged me couple days ago on film. I got a tough rebound and he said he



wanted to see a little more of me rebounding. I didn't know I had that many, but I wanted to do the best I could to help my teammates.

Q J.J, I guess 4 for 13 from the field, 8 for 8 from the line. What was happening for you out there today?

J.J. FRAZIER: The ball wasn't going in, so I just had to make plays other way. I started just trying to get to the line and trying to see the ball go in and make different type of plays and, you know, give credit to my teammates. They played a really good game.

Q J.J. and Yante, you played Kentucky twice this year close, took them to overtime in Lexington. What sort of confidence does that give you going into tomorrow's game against Kentucky?

J.J. FRAZIER: The previous matchups are totally different from now. We got to go back and watch them and prepare, you know, because we have a different team since Yante been out a couple games. Got to go back and prepare and see what we got to do.

YANTE MATEN: Just treat it like the next game. We have to win the next game and, you know, we got to come out and play strong, play to our advantages, and play good basketball throughout the whole game, because we came out strong the past couple of times, and we didn't finish the best, but we're going to come out.

Q Yante, was there any rust you feel like you had to knock off early in the game, and how did you feel when you went through the motions?

YANTE MATEN: A little bit. Not so much for my teammates. I still know their tendencies. My rust personally I did have to knock off a little bit, yeah.

Q J.J, 8 of your points came down the stretch after Tennessee took the lead with about seven minutes to go. What was your mindset when -- after you saw Tennessee take that lead there?

J.J. FRAZIER: What was my mindset? Not to lose. Do what I can to get a win. There was crowding me a little bit, trying to take away from my jumper. So had to make an adjustment and try to get to the rim a little

more in the second half, especially late in the game.

Q Yante, how important did you feel that it was to be able to produce early on and continue that throughout the game?

YANTE MATEN: I think it was pretty important. I always try to do my best to play within myself, not try to do too much that I don't normally do. So I just try to stick to the paint in this game.

THE MODERATOR: We'll excuse the student-athletes. You can return to the locker room. We'll continue on with questions for Coach Fox.

Q Mark, on the last play of the game, Tennessee had such a difficult time getting a shot off. What did you tell the team in the huddle beforehand in terms of setting up defensively for that play?

COACH FOX: You know, we have -- we have been a very good defensive team in this league. And I think before when Yante got hurt, I think in conference games we were number one in field goal percentage defense. And our defense took a real tumble the last two weeks. And it was nice today for us to be able to win essentially because our defensive rebounding was very consistent.

But we really at the end wanted to make sure that there was no 3-point shots and no baskets and 1's and just try to cover them up and keep them out of rhythm. Our kids did a nice job.

Q Coach, in the first matchup Grant Williams had 30 points on you guys. You pretty much shut him down tonight. What was the game plan for him?

COACH FOX: Well, he wore us out the first game and he -- their bigs did such a nice job in Knoxville that the next day that we practiced, Marcus Thornton walked in, who was a terrific defender for us, and he was upset with how these guys had played.

So I think our players had a mindset tonight we needed to do a better job. There wasn't a specific plan. We needed to do some better things individually.

Q Coach, was there any strategy in terms of how many minutes Yante would play, and how did you feel like he contributed to the whole makeup of the team in this game?

COACH FOX: You know, I felt like we could get 22 or 24 minutes out of Yante. I knew with about three minutes to go, he was just over that. And we were worried about his conditioning, but there were enough stops in the game that he looked fresh. And I asked

him if he needed a blow. He said, "No, I'm good." I don't think -- I don't think I managed his reentry into our team as well as I hoped. I thought we were very out of rhythm and had more turnovers at the half than we've been averaging the last couple games. We got to bridge that gap a little better than we did tonight.

Q Follow up on the first question. As you get pressure on the perimeter, Schofield still got an open look. What happened there at the end for him to get that open of a look and how relieved were you when it didn't go in?

COACH FOX: I would have to see it again to tell you exactly what happened. You know, you can have an open shot, but it's not nearly as good of a shot if you're not in rhythm. And we had the possession blown up to where no one was catching it in a rhythm to shoot the ball. So, you know, he may have been open. I don't think he was in a great rhythm because he's a good 3-point shooter. You know, I thought our defense, we did enough to disrupt the possession to get the stop.

Q Mark, the first two games with Kentucky, how well you guys played or how close the games were, how does that factor in in terms of team's mindset with this matchup, and have you had a chance to watch Kentucky down the stretch of the regular season much?

COACH FOX: I don't think I've seen Kentucky play since we played them. I don't think I've watched them since. The first two games will have obviously nothing to do with tomorrow. They're terrific. I mean, they have low post scoring. They have 3-point shooting, guys that can get to the rim. They're very organized. They're a team that, you know, if they get the right matchups they can win the whole thing.

We're going to have to play -- we've had a couple games in row with Kentucky that have been great games, but we didn't -- we haven't been over the hump. We have to do some difficult things. Our team is way different right now, too. We'll have to come up with a obviously a new plan.

Q Mark, did you have to make any kind of conscious effort to get the kids to shut them off from the clutter for the past couple days, or do you have enough senior leadership that they're pretty good about that on their own about blocking off the court stuff out?

COACH FOX: No. I made no attempt. As a matter of fact, we -- we're a family and we talk about it, and this is about our players' chance this year as a team. That's what this is about. I told -- that's what we're going to keep our focus on. But, you know, we talk about things within our family of our team. And so we didn't try and shield them from it. I think that's probably

impossible anyway.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

Q Coach, just having Yante back, what does that do for what you want to call offense for you? How much your playbook comes back into play with him back in the lineup?

COACH FOX: I wish more of it would. We haven't -- we haven't even practiced for a couple weeks. It's hard -- I was well pleased with Yante. He was able to finish some plays. It's hard to practice -- hard to play well with no practice and rhythm.

Obviously, we had to totally reinvent our team without him. We played completely different. How quickly we can get back to playing a little bit like we did before and still, you know, little bit like we did the last two weeks, that's going to be the challenge. Obviously with him coming back, it gives us more opportunities, more possibilities.

Q Mark, playing without Yante for two, three weeks now, reintroducing him, you said you're a different team. Do you think you're possibly a better team?

COACH FOX: I think, you know, couple years ago, we lost Trey Hawkins for a couple games early and played at St. Louis. Rick Majerus told me before the game, he says, "When the big kid comes back and is healthy, you're going to be a better team."

So I would say that when Yante is back to being Yante, we'll end up being a better team because of this. How quickly that happens, I'm not sure. I do think we had some guys grow up when he was injured. I think we had some guys make some progress. I thought Crump got a lot better. E'Torrion certainly made a great progress. Hopefully, we will be a better team. I'm not sure we are yet.

Q With Yante kind of getting reacclimated to the lineup, how much did you ask of J.J. to really kind of take on specifically down the stretch?

COACH FOX: I thought J.J. played very poorly early in the game and just -- he just didn't seem like himself and then our rotation with Yante coming back. I don't think I as a coach managed that probably as like -- I'm not sure I could have done it a lot differently. It's just hard to bring your guy back and your substitution pattern changes, your minutes change.

J.J. was a little bit out of sorts in the first half. He's been a great player for us, and he's earned the right to play through some tough minutes. And late in the game he was great and he was able to manage the possessions and the team like we wanted a senior point guard to do.