

Southeastern Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Thursday March 9, 2017

Avery Johnson Corban Collins Dazon Ingram

Alabama

Alabama - 75, Mississippi State - 55

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

COACH JOHNSON: Okay. Pretty good performance for us on both ends of the floor. We've been pretty consistent defensive team all year. Fortunately tonight we had little bit of a combined effort both on the defensive and the offensive end. We got off to a good start. We thought we set a great tune for type of pace we wanted the play this game, and fortunately some shots went down for us.

We were patient on offense, very physical on defense. We didn't foul as much as we had been fouling in the past. So we did a great job of moving our feet. Coach Howland does a great job with his team. Team with a bright future. We're going to be battling them for years and years to come. Fortunately for us, unfortunately for them, they just didn't have their best night.

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

Q Corban, I just wanted to ask you, man, you really seemed like you were in a good rhythm from the time you came off the bench. What was the key for you tonight?

CORBAN COLLINS: I got to credit my teammates. They were getting down the lane. They attracted a lot of attention on the offensive end. Opened up shooting lanes for me and the other shooters on the team. Man, I was open, just take my time. Joking with the coaches, they tell me to keep shooting. Shooters shoot. So got out there, had a lot of confidence, and



just let it fly.

Q For either player, for a game like this to come out and shoot that well, what were y'all really expecting in a game like this?

DAZON INGRAM: Could you repeat it?

Q The question was, whether you really expected to come out and shoot that well for a tournament opener, especially playing a team that was desperate after playing less than 24 hours ago.

DAZON INGRAM: I just felt like we came out. We got warmed up. That was the big key for us. Stay focused when we were in the warmups. We came out. You could see it carried over.

THE MODERATOR: Other questions for either? Raise your hand.

Q Dazon, talk about you really seemed like you were patient offensively, especially when you were looking to drive the ball. Was that the kind of message from Coach? When you got into a really good rhythm, were you able to kind of add the jump shot later? Talk about your game and the rhythm you were in.

DAZON INGRAM: Yes. Offense we want to just be patient. If we got anything, like a fast break, we want to be able to pull it off and set up our offense. That's what we were able to do. We got good quality shots at the basket.

Q For Corban, Coach has been talking probably two, three weeks about having two good halves. How were y'all able to do that tonight?

CORBAN COLLINS: Coach and the coaching staff really talked about this week how we wanted to learn from the things that happened to us in the regular season so we didn't want the same mistakes to come and hurt us here in the SEC Tournament. Really focused, locked in coming into the second half, and really worked on putting a full game together. We were able to come out and do that today.

THE MODERATOR: Any questions for either? Okay. We'll excuse you to the locker room. We'll continue on

with questions for Coach Johnson. Raise your hand, and we'll get a floor mike to you.

Q Coach, first of all, talk about the team's overall offensive rhythm. I thought they did a really nice job of sharing the ball. There was no hurried possessions, no bad 3s. They really seemed to get good looks both halves. I know you've probably been emphasizing two good halves of basketball on the offensive end.

COACH JOHNSON: We've been talking about how we got geared up in the second half in Tennessee. How methodical and slow we played against Texas A&M. I could keep going on and on. We put a long video together about different situations that happened to us offensively. We went out and practiced those situations, that if we come up empty two possessions in a row, it's not time for a bad contested 3. I can go over it, it will probably an hour for me to explain what we've been doing the last three days in practice, but they seem to have responded. We scored. We didn't score early.

You saw the ball probably move as much as you've seen it move in the last three weeks. We put something new in our offense to force the ball to move, and fortunately we set right great screens, had great passes. Really only had two turnovers at halftime. That was huge for us, the way we took care of the ball.

Q Coach, just to follow up on that, obviously been following Dazon over the course of the season as he's sort of grown, but no missed shots, no turnovers today out of your point guard. What does that do for you offensively?

COACH JOHNSON: We ran the first game play of the game for it. He passed up a couple of shots in our last game, and I just wanted to figure out what his rationale was for passing up the shots. And it wasn't good, by the way.

So, we just told him we needed him to be aggressive. He's very, very good on or off the ball. He's playing really good defense. So I just told him we trust him and we want him to be aggressive. Even if he's a little bit overly aggressive at times, that's okay. I told him that's something we need him to do because we feel good about how good he can be offensively.

Q Coach, lot of times what happens in the last minute of the half can kind of set the tone for the second half. Talk about the effect in the locker room and the team, the last second 3.

COACH JOHNSON: That's another issue we had, small detail, part of our game. We don't finish halves strong. Again we ran something we had been working

on. Junior wasn't hesitant. He caught it and shot it. The pass was on time. We didn't kick the ball out of bounds and we got a good look and it went in. That was a little bit of a momentum boost. Only talked to them for about two and a half minutes at halftime instead of seven minutes, and, you know, we wanted to get them back out on the floor as much as we could. But that momentum swing right there is a small detail area that we needed to improve in, and hopefully we'll continue to do so.

THE MODERATOR: Hands up. Other questions for Coach Johnson?

Q I wanted to talk about Braxton Key. He didn't have a great stat line. He had five assists. Did a really good job as a point forward. How much confidence does that give the rest of the team when he's been the closest to a go-to guy you've had? The rest of the team played so well around him.

COACH JOHNSON: One of his best floor games this year. Other people say, Coach, he only had what, 3 points. But he quarterbacked our team a lot during that stretch when Dazon was rolling, hitting some big guys for rolls to the basket.

Again, it's something we've been working on. We've been prepared. I wanted to see some improvement and growth, and he did a great job with a lot of his decisions tonight. I keep saying "tonight." Today.

Q Coach, South Carolina had a great game with them in the regular season. What do you expect tomorrow in particular facing Thornwell again?

COACH JOHNSON: We take pride in being a physical team all year. But they are a physical team. They are a team that you better be ready to play, and, you know, we got to play the game physically but smart. Sometime when you're too physical, you get in the bonus too early. I thought we were physical in this game but smart. We played defense with our feet and not with our hands. But, you know, talking about Thornwell, he's an SEC Player of the Year for a reason. He is sometimes unguardable. And I had a front row seat in the Florida overtime game and he gives you nightmares.

So, Frank does a great job with his team. Talking about a team that's gotten better and better since he's been coaching there. They are an NCAA tournament team. So they're going to want to try to get back on the winning side against us. We're going to have to be ready to play.

THE MODERATOR: Hands up, any other questions for Coach Johnson? Raise your hand. Thank you.

COACH JONES: Thank you.