

Southeastern Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Thursday March 9, 2017

Bryce Drew Riley LaChance Joe Toye Vanderbilt

Vanderbilt - 66, Texas A&M - 41

THE MODERATOR: We'll ask Coach Drew some general thoughts on the game. Then we'll take your questions just for the two student-athletes and then excuse them back to the locker room and finish up with Coach Drew.

Coach?

COACH DREW: Really proud of our guys. Texas A&M has been playing really good basketball, very physical. Probably the biggest team in the league, and we're undersized at a lot of positions. Thought our post defense was terrific tonight, as good as we played all year and couldn't get shots to go down the first half. But Riley, I thought, really kept us in with some big 3s in the first half, and Joe was extraordinary that second half. I think when he started to make some 3s, it gave our team a lot of confidence and a lot more guys started to make shots.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for either Riley or Joe, please raise your hand.

Q. This is for Joe. In the second half when you got hot there, how much of that was called for you those shots, how much did you take it upon yourself within the offense?

JOE TOYE: Some of them were called for me. Some I just found in the offense. My teammates kept passing to it me, so I'm just happy my shots were going in today.

Q. Riley, just talk about your overall team execution offensively the second half, what was the key for you guys shot over 55 percent?

RILEY LACHANCE: I think the first we got stops in defensive end and able to get out in transition. Got some easy looks. I see Joe got hot quick, and I was able to feed some other guys, too. When he was



shooting like that, we try to get him the ball and hit some great shots for us.

Q. What was the issue shooting in the first half compared to the second? Was it tight rims or getting used to the arena? What was the deal there, because it was just so different in the second?

RILEY LACHANCE: Yeah. I don't know, it's kind of hard to say. They were playing good defense. They were really packing it in, hard to get inside a little bit. It's hard to point out one thing.

Q. Yeah, both players. Obviously you got Florida tomorrow. You beat them twice. Does that give you more confidence or everybody says it's hard to beat a team three times?

THE MODERATOR: Riley, go first.

RILEY LACHANCE: Yeah. I think we're a confident basketball team right now. We've been playing some good games recently. So, you know, we obviously played them not too long ago. We're real familiar with them. Excited going into tomorrow.

JOE TOYE: A good opportunity to play another ranked opponent. We're just really excited and ready to go.

Q. Riley, I think there was a spin in the first half where they didn't score for something like 10 minutes. What do you think was key on defense to help keep you guys in the game in that first half, especially the first, you know, 10, 15 minutes?

RILEY LACHANCE: The guys were playing really hard. We were able to keep them off the boards. They're a really good offensive team. We double-teamed in the post. Our guys did a good job of shutting those guys down. We were keeping them off the offensive glass.

Q. Riley, you had said they were packing it in the first half. You guys weren't getting a lot of layups and close looks. When Joe started hitting the 3s, did that really open up the driving lanes for you guys?

RILEY LACHANCE: Definitely. They had to close it out. Nolan did a good job for us. He made some plays for other people. Really getting out in transition, that helped us a lot and helped us to flow into our offense a

little bit better.

THE MODERATOR: One more question. Anyone? We'll excuse you back to the locker room. Thank you. We'll continue with questions for Coach Drew if your raise your hand.

Q. I was going to ask you this after every game, Bryce. Where do you think you are now after this win in terms of the NCAA Tournament?

COACH DREW: I would like to think that we're in. I would like to think we were in coming into this game with how we finished the season, our strength of schedule, and with the quality wins that we have. You know, really I'm proud of these guys last couple weeks. There was even a lot of talk about the bubble and things like that. They've really played some of their best being under some of these conditions.

Q. Coach, you mentioned the interior defense, but with just specifically defending Robert Williams, who is almost certainly a first round draft pick and giving up like 4 inches maybe on him, what type of job did he do tonight, especially considering how difficult of a guy you had to defend?

COACH DREW: Williams is Defensive Player of the Year. Not only is he tough to guard, he gets within 5 feet going to dunk it. Defensively he has great length and takes away so many different things on the defensive end. I think Jeff, some of his shooting was because of some of that length. His 5 offensive rebounds helped change the game for us offensively. We were doing a lot of 1-and-dones in the first half. He started to get in there and gave our guys some aggressiveness to drive off the rebounds and get some scores, which gave us some energy.

Q. Bryce, how big of a wave of momentum do you think you guys are riding right now?

COACH DREW: You know, basketball is a game of emotion. It's a game of momentum. It can change really, really quickly one way or the other. It's been the last couple weeks, you know, we played really good basketball. And, you know, I've said this before, but as a coach, you just don't want to mess it up, get in the player's way. Hopefully, the guys can stay in this groove and keep it going.

Q. Coach, kind along the same lines, how big of an advantage is it to play here in Nashville with the crowd that kind of seemed to get behind you guys pretty thoroughly in the second half?

COACH DREW: It's definitely nice to have people behind us. My first time being at Bridgestone for a basketball game. I've been here for hockey. It's a great basketball venue. With the crowd getting into it like that, no question our players feed off of that and I

think it helped us in the second half.

Q. Coach, I wanted to ask you from the time you've taken this job and had to kind of put your imprint on this team, how much have they improved defensively? You guys were tremendous for all 40 minutes tonight.

COACH DREW: Several factors. The health. We were injured a lot when we first took the job. Luke Kornet was injured for the first part of the season. He's such a presence on defense, kind of what William does for A&M. He covers so much ground. As he got healthy and started moving better, I think that really helped our defense. Principles, just little things that we taught that now have become instinctual and become a habit that they do it how our defense is set up to execute.

Q. Bryce, you played Florida twice now. They tried to attack you defensively two different ways.

Neither one has really worked. Do you have any clue what to expect tomorrow, just wait and see?

COACH DREW: I got kind of asked a similar question. And really the only thing separating both those games is 13-point shot. They had one of those each the last 15 seconds and take the lead or win it. They've been really, really close games, both of them. Mike has done a terrific job with them, adjusting with the injury they recently had. And they're a tough matchup. So hopefully we're going to be refreshed and be able to give our best to them tomorrow.

Q. Bryce, what did you think of Matthew tonight? Only 3 shots but he got a block, got on the floor. Did you see, I guess, some more signs of life?

COACH DREW: Matt was terrific. We talked before the game a little bit. And when that ball went through for him, I think our whole team got excited. I think our crowd got excited and seeing him dive on the floor, got a big steal, got a big offensive rebound.

Again, we fed off of his energy in the final 12 minutes. It's a great sign for our team, because when he plays well is when our team can play our best.

Q. Can you speak to your effectiveness in double teaming the post tonight, particularly in the first half?

COACH DREW: Our four bigs were terrific with getting there. Our guards were really good covering behind them on passes out. It's tiring. I saw Luke breathing hard out there. Jeff was breathing hard. It's a lot of work. So I think one of the things I'm really excited is it was consistent throughout the game. We didn't let tired come into play. We still got to our double teams very quickly in the second half.

THE MODERATOR: Hands up. Any other questions for

Coach Drew? Rise your hand.

Q. I thought one of the keys was that you guys were able to play that kind of defense without fouling. How important is that, especially playing against a team like Florida that has -- also has a big presence in there?

COACH DREW: We're not very deep with nine players, so getting in foul trouble is a concern. When Jeff picked up his second one in the first half, that was definitely a concern, you know, going through the game and obviously other guys with fouls because we don't have much depth as other teams.

THE MODERATOR: One more question. Anyone? Hands up. Last question. All right. Thank you.

COACH DREW: Thank you.