

Southeastern Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Saturday March 11, 2017

Andy Kennedy Terence Davis Sebastian Saiz Ole Miss Rebels

Arkansas - 73, Ole Miss - 72

THE MODERATOR: We'll continue on with Ole Miss. We'll ask Coach Kennedy for some general thoughts on the game. Take some questions for the two student-athletes and finish up with Coach. Coach Kennedy, could you begin.

COACH KENNEDY: Hard fought game. Disappointed obviously we weren't able to advance. Arkansas made the plays down the stretch. We had opportunities, really proud of our effort. I thought our guys played extremely hard, battled. Put ourselves in position. We couldn't quite make enough plays.

THE MODERATOR: Take the questions for Terence or Sebastian. Hands up.

Q. I guess for both players, you guys obviously had some shots there on the last possession and Moses Kingsley made a block. What was that last possession like from y'all's perspective?

SEBASTIAN SAIZ: We're trying to make a play at the end. He made some good defensive play. We couldn't score to put ourselves in front.

TERENCE DAVIS: Yeah, like he said, we're trying to make a play. Just made a great play.

THE MODERATOR: Any questions for either of the student-athletes, raise your hand.

Q. Terence, this is for you. I know you guys are still hoping to get in the NIT and continue to play. You had a lot of games like this this year, you couldn't quite finish a game. What can you take from that going into next season to get over that hump?

TERENCE DAVIS: Take advantage of the opportunity in front of you. We let a lot of -- lot of things get out of hand during the season.



THE MODERATOR: Hands up, other questions.

Q. Sebastian, what were they doing to frustrate you early with your shots?

SEBASTIAN SAIZ: I just couldn't make it. They weren't doing anything special. I couldn't put the ball inside the basket. I don't know if I was trying to rush it or make all the plays. I couldn't get the ball in.

Q. Terence, I know you got post-season games to play potentially, but for this team moving forward, knowing you're going to be a big part of it, what is the optimism regarding this team that you'll have coming back? What do you see in terms of y'all's makeup?

TERENCE DAVIS: Just grind it out. NIT, not a bad thing. Still get to play basketball. That's the part I get out of it.

Q. Terence, if you guys do get to play in the NIT, how does that benefit especially some of the younger players you have playing those extra post-season games?

TERENCE DAVIS: It helps a lot, you know. Again, to play in the post-season is big, so it helps out a lot.

Q. You guys really played kind of their style up and down and pretty fast. Was that hard to do tonight after playing last night, Sebastian?

SEBASTIAN SAIZ: You know, there's not an excuse. We got to go out and play. It wasn't an excuse. I feel our guys fought really good the whole game. I think that yesterday's game wasn't a problem for today.

THE MODERATOR: Hands up, other questions for either? All right. Thank you. You can return to the locker room. We'll continue on with questions for Coach Kennedy.

Q. Andy, kind of the same thing I asked Terence, you got post-season games to play. When you think about this team and where it started and what can you project next year in terms of experience, do you like the makeup? What do you like about the team?

COACH KENNEDY: I hope we have a post-season. We won 20 games last year and we didn't, we didn't

make the NIT. I think I feel pretty confident just based on the way that the numbers are a little different from an RPI standpoint this year. I think we'll have this opportunity. I think this team deserves that. I think we won 8 of our last 11 heading into today. I think that's right. We put ourselves into position to get to 20 wins and finish 5th in the league. You could tell Saiz by his tone was certainly disappointed that he didn't play better. He played so hard, seventeen rebounds, but he just really had a difficult time finishing over their size up-front really for both games. I think the first game in Fayetteville, his numbers were pretty similar.

I think we've seen a lot from this group. Obviously Terence Davis goes from a guy that didn't play very much as a freshman to I think arguably the most improved player in the SEC and one of the most improved in college basketball. He's a sophomore. He understands the standard by which he's going to be judged moving forward. Tyree goes from a guy who we didn't even know was going to be able to play this year to a guy that made huge plays for us and shows bursts. I told you guys, this guy is an off-the-chart athlete. You still haven't seen anything. The dunk that he had in the first half, wow. He usually does that four, five times a game. That's going to come back.

You know, I'm pleased that we got production out of a number of our returners. I hope that we can continue to play just in the future.

Q. Andy, I think you guys got off like three 3s in the last ten seconds. Just reflect the putback at the end, what did you see in that final sequence?

COACH KENNEDY: We chart 50/50 balls and this team it's really amazing that we're sitting at 20-13. We've been under, terribly under. 50/50 ball means if a ball bounces right here and me and you, Bob, and you're for Arkansas and I'm for Ole Miss -- I know you're impartial with your Arkansas shirt. If the ball is between us and you get it just based off of effort, that's a possession that you've wanted more than I wanted.

I'm sitting here looking at and it's 14-5, them over us. I thought a huge play -- I thought our kids played hard. A huge play at the end. Manny Watkins after the 3 was hit. Manny Watkins' basket cuts us -- I'll have to see the tape, somebody is watching -- and we give up a basket cut. Then at the end they take a shot, it's a 50/50 ball. Barford gets downhill as the point guard. If we could have come up with that ball then, not only do we have an opportunity to score and -- but the point guard, the guy that's supposed to be back for floor balance, is laying on the floor in the lane. They came up with it.

Then, you know, came down, took a couple of quick ones, I thought, got a lucky bounce. Burnett, close to

our leading scorer, had a pretty clean look in the corner. Chris Warren in Bud Walton Arena, many years ago very similar set of circumstances, the ball gets battered around. Picks it up and shoots it in. It's unfortunate it's on this stage because it ends our run here.

That it was a long-winded answer. Did you get all that? You got to understand this lighting. Me and Claude see everything in purple up here.

Q. Coach, at the pace this game was played, did you notice your guys losing their legs a little bit?

COACH KENNEDY: No. I thought we played extremely hard. Honestly harder than last night. All effort, energy stuff. I look at the numbers, you know, we held them under 37 percent from the field. We outrebounded them by 11.

One thing that's a little bit peculiar, last night it worked in our favor, we haven't shot free throws very good. We lead the nation in free throws made. Tonight we hit 8 for 14 and they go 20 for 23. Not only are we not getting there like we normally do, but we're not making them.

We were about 76 percent coming into this tournament. Last night we shot a lot of them, but we only shot 66 percent and then tonight 57 percent. I think those are the things again when you're dealing with a team such as us, for those of you who are familiar with us, we don't have a very big margin for error. We can't leave those points on the table.

Q. Andy, Macon didn't get 30, but he got 17 with the big free throws. What did you think of his play?

COACH KENNEDY: Terrific scorer. I thought when you look at Dusty Hannahs' line, it doesn't jump off the page but he made timely shots down the stretch. That's what you want your veteran guards to do. Our guys made plays. Terence Davis, again you look at his line, 26 and 9. He made big plays for us. We struggled in some other areas. I thought Breein came out great with energy, not based on anything other than he's trying to win. Kind of reverted back to high school mode. Made some poor decisions.

I felt we weren't as effective in the second half as we needed to be.

Q. You talked about post-season. Is there any benefit to playing post-season games in the NIT, do you think?

COACH KENNEDY: I think it's a huge benefit. I've said this before, it's been a while since we played in the NIT and I think it has merit. I think sometimes it gets -- you know, people look at it like, oh, it's the old days. It's

really not. It's difficult to get in the NIT. Last year we went 20-12 and the couldn't get in. We didn't play in the other tournaments. No disrespect intended. There's 351 Division I basketball teams. There's 68 that go to the NCAA, 32 that go to the NIT. You finish in the top half of college basketball, you're good. It's not easy. Since I've been following, I've grown up in SEC country. I never seen a football team turn down a Bowl. There's so many Bowls you're looking for teams to fill them. We had one pretty close to our situation that gets in at 5-7.

So, it's not easy. So, this team put itself in a position. My hope they get an opportunity to play.

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