

Southeastern Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Friday March 10, 2017

Mark Fox
Yante Maten
J.J. Frazier
Georgia

Kentucky - 71, Georgia - 60

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

COACH FOX: You know, hard fought game, which we anticipated that it would be. I felt like that we made a couple defensive errors in the beginning of the game, which put us in position where we had to play from behind the entire night and just hard to play uphill in this situation. But then our defense stabilized. I thought we rebounded it okay, but you have to credit Kentucky's defense. They got a terrific team and their defense was outstanding on us and give them credit for the win.

THE MODERATOR: We'll take your questions for either J.J. or Yante.

Q. J.J., in the last Kentucky game you were pretty much able to score at will. A little bit more difficult today. Were they giving you difficult looks, or were your shots not falling?

J.J. FRAZIER: Earlier in the game they loaded up on the ball screens and loaded up when I had the ball. So it made it a lot difficult. When I got the clean looks, I just didn't knock them down. You got to give their defense a lot of credit.

Q. Yante, now that your teammates -- in the locker room you seemed to be taking this kind of hard. Basically what's kind of going through your head now?

YANTE MATEN: I just think I could have played a lot better, not turn the ball over, made some more shots. But I mean, that's pretty much it.

Q. Yante, Kentucky was able to have success



scoring in the paint tonight. What were they doing to be able to have that offensive success down low?

YANTE MATEN: They were just making strong moves. They kept backing down until they got to where they wanted to be or they just ran in transition and -- or they were in the post and didn't move.

THE MODERATOR: Other questions for either of the student-athletes in anything? All right. Fellas, we'll excuse you back to the locker room. Thank you.

We'll continue with questions for Coach Fox.

Q. Coach Fox, I know this might be a little early trying to digest the game, but are you thinking much about your NCAA Tournament prospects? Calipari was saying that y'all are a tournament team. Do feel like y'all belong in the field?

COACH FOX: Certainly I've thought a lot about that. And if you look at the metrics, you know, first of all, you never are sure what each individual committee member is looking for, and I doubt they're really listening to what I have to say today or what you write, because I think they're committed to doing a job based upon some specific criteria.

But every year those are weighted a little bit differently. If you look at RPI or KPI, we'd be inside the bubble in both those metrics. We've got more than our share of top 100 wins and wins on the road and strength of schedule. We just didn't beat one of the top 25 teams. So, we have that one, that one blemish. But I think our team has done certainly enough to warrant very significant consideration.

Q. Coach, if your team falls short of that NCAA Tournament, do you think your team with play in the NIT and do you think you can get there?

COACH FOX: I'll tell you what, until we know, I won't deliver a message to them about it, you know. I think that, you know, we got to wait and see what happens. And, again, you never know exactly what -- how we're expecting this league to be. You just don't know. And so until we know, we'll wait to deliver any message to our team.

Q. Coach, was this a better Kentucky defensive team than maybe you saw the last two times, and if

so, how were they maybe better?

COACH FOX: I mean their defense -- because they have so many young players, their defense always gets better throughout the year. I think that like any young player, our young players have gotten better all season. So have theirs. Their team defense today was very good. Obviously, you know, they made a point to slow down J.J. Frazier. We made a point to slow down Malik Monk. I thought both teams were effective in that.

We didn't get as much production from Yante as we were hoping. You have to credit Kentucky's defense for that. But in fairness to Yante, I know he's upset that he -- probably a lot for him not to play for three weeks and then try and come back and play back-to-back nights.

Q. Mark, do y'all always gather for the selection show when you think you're in the mix? Is that something you guys have done year after year?

COACH FOX: We do usually gather. I haven't thought at all about it this year, to be honest with you.

Q. Mark, what was the reason to keep fouling there at the end when maybe it seemed like the game was in hand?

COACH FOX: You know, we didn't get to play till the clock hit zero at Texas A&M. That's why we fouled to the bitter end.

THE MODERATOR: Another question.

COACH FOX: I'm not done. Because, you know, there were a number of things that frustrated everybody at the end of that game, none moreso than our players walking off with 5.6 on the clock. We're going to play till zero. That's why I did it.

Q. Coach, you thought that -- you said yesterday you didn't think you handled the reinsertion of Yante into the lineup very well. Do you think you did a better job today?

COACH FOX: I thought we were better today, but Yante wasn't nearly as effective today so we had to sit him a little bit early. But I thought we probably were better there.

THE MODERATOR: Other questions?

Q. Mark, you mentioned Texas A&M. Is it your understanding or have y'all said something to the Selection Committee to make sure that they're aware of that, and do you think they should consider that when they consider y'all?

COACH FOX: That's probably above my pay grade, to be honest with you. But I'm sure that the Selection Committee does their due diligence and I'm sure that the SEC hopefully has done their part to assist in the

process of trying to educate the committee on our teams.

Q. Coach, both halves kind of started with a good run from Kentucky. What impact did those runs have in kind of deciding this game?

COACH FOX: I thought we made a mental mistake early. I thought we made two mental mistakes in the first part of the game that cost us, a 3-point basket and, you know, the start of the second half, you know, give Kentucky credit. Got to give Kentucky credit in both areas. They're a very good team. We made a couple errors to state the game. They made us pay. This wasn't going to be a game where you could trade baskets. It really wasn't, you know. We dug ourselves an early hole.

Q. Did you say to your team, if you beat Kentucky, you're probably in the tournament? And do you think the top 50 record, you mentioned the top 25, is that ultimately going to be very difficult to overcome?

COACH FOX: You know, you don't know, to be honest with you. Two years ago we were in the tournament and didn't have a top 50 win. I think we've checked every other box and -- but you just don't know what's most important to the committee. And, unfortunately, you know, most of the talking heads don't talk about us because historically maybe we haven't been on the tip of their tongue. If you really look at the metrics, which is what -- they tell us to schedule up and they demand that we schedule up, but they're going to fine us if we don't schedule.

If you rack up a bunch of top 100 wins and road wins and everything else they say is important, then I think we deserve an honest look, but you don't know. At the end of the day, you have no idea what this year's combination of committee members is going to deem is most important.

Q. Another hypothetical. If you don't get in, can you just sort of address the difficult position that you were in of having to beat Kentucky in the second game of the SEC Tournament to try to get in?

COACH FOX: I think what -- we didn't treat it like it was -- if you win the game, you're in. I think the hard thing is that Kentucky has a great team. Essentially it's a road game. So we try to treat it like a road game because we knew the arena would be full of Blue fans. It is certainly a challenge. If we would have won the game, would I be sitting here thinking we were in better shape? Certainly. Certainly I would, Jeff.

But you know, hopefully -- you know, it's a challenge either way to answer your question. Those guys have

had a great program for a long time. They invest a lot in winning and they got a great team.

THE MODERATOR: Last question right here.

Q. Coach, both Yante and J.J. had their struggles today. What kind of adjustments can you make as a coach when your star players aren't performing how they usually do?

COACH FOX: Well, those guys have carried us, and I thought some guys around them had decent nights. You know, we had some guys finish some plays, but those two guys didn't shoot a very good percentage. But, you know, we got to obviously continue to look and see how people are defending them.

I thought Yante had some good looks. He wasn't quite in sync today. Obviously after J.J.'s game in Athens versus them, they made a point to really defend him and give their defense credit.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.