

Southeastern Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Friday March 10, 2017

Frank Martin

PJ Dozier

Sindarius Thornwell

South Carolina

Alabama - 65, South Carolina - 53

THE MODERATOR: We'll continue on and we'll ask Coach Martin for some general comments on the game. And then we'll take your questions just for the two student-athletes. And then we'll finish up with Coach. Would you begin, Coach.

COACH MARTIN: Yeah. Alabama deserved to win today. They beat us, every loose ball, destroyed us on the glass. We were very noncompetitive in the effort plays, guarding the basketball, rebounding. Disappointing because that's some of the things we've been pretty good at all year. But credit to Alabama. They beat us on those plays. And you can't win the game if you can't rebound.

THE MODERATOR: We'll take questions just for P.J. and Sindarius.

Q. If you could each discuss this, what was going on offensively? Was that just Alabama's defense, or is there more of a fundamental incremental problem that this has been happening over the past?

THE MODERATOR: Sindarius, take that first.

SINDARIUS THORNWELL: Just didn't make shots. You know, we got shots -- we got clean looks and didn't make them. We got to the free throw line, we didn't make them. You know, we got a lot of stuff we wanted. We just didn't make shots. Lot of plays we executed, got what we wanted, got open looks and drove and got, you know -- we just didn't make the plays that we needed to make to win the game.

THE MODERATOR: P.J.

PJ DOZIER: Just the sense that we got looks that we wanted, you know, couldn't convert. You know, even before we got to the basket, couldn't convert the



layups. Free throw line, the same thing.

Q. For both players, it hasn't been the best stretch of basketball for you guys over the last few weeks. You've lost of six games since February 7th. What do you have to do over the next couple of days to kind of find that mojo again and get the swag back as you guys look ahead to the NCAA Tournament?

THE MODERATOR: P.J.

PJ DOZIER: We got to get back to our identity. For the last games that we lost, we haven't been playing the same basketball that we played when we went down that winning streak. We got to get back to what we've been doing. I think the coaching staff have been doing a great job to continue to treat us players the way that they've been treating us when we was winning. So it's on us to get back to what we have been doing.

SINDARIUS THORNWELL: What P.J. said. I think, you know, over these next couple days, I think as players we have to get a gut check, check ourselves on, you know, what we're doing wrong, what we need to get better at. Not really much coaches can do or anybody can say or do. I think we all got to look in the mirror and ask ourselves, you know, what do we need to do and check ourselves on playing better, bringing something to the table for the team to get back to playing good.

Q. Sin, do you feel you guys have done enough to be safely in the NCAA and as a senior what will your next two days until the announcement be spent doing?

SINDARIUS THORNWELL: You know, I don't know. I don't really know how the RPI, wins, losses thing goes. All I can do is control what I can control and that's just getting in the gym and making shots and working on my game. Whatever we're playing in or whoever we're playing, I can be better for my team and make better plays and plays being made, and I'll be there, you know, step up for my team.

THE MODERATOR: Two more questions on the far right aisle.

Q. Sin, you've had a great career year and winning Player of the Year, but does it really hurt that the last two years you've come to this tournament and

gone one-and-done?

SINDARIUS THORNWELL: Yeah, it hurts. It hurts bad. We have the team. The last two years we had the team to compete for the championships to play on Sunday. Last few years we finished top in the conference. So last few years we've had stretches in the conference where we was arguably the best team in the conference. And for us to lose in the first round, it's hurting, especially this year, you know, because I feel like I didn't do my job tonight. I feel like I didn't make the plays that was needed to be made for my team to win the game.

THE MODERATOR: One last question.

Q. Sindarius, you had 44, 21 last time against Alabama, really dominated them the entire game. What did they do differently this time against you defensively?

SINDARIUS THORNWELL: They did not -- they denied me a lot, played above, I couldn't make cuts, couldn't get the ball, made my catches harder. On the drives they doubled and kind of forced me to pass the ball out to -- which we was prepared for. We knew it was coming. We try to make open shots and get the ball to the open guys.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you. You can return to the locker room. Thank you. We'll continue on with questions for Coach Martin.

Q. Coach, I know you expected more of your team coming into today to try to get the win. But just for you, is it disappointing to come down here and be one-and-done again, especially the type of team you have?

A No, I'm actually ecstatic, Joe. I feel wonderful that we came here two years in a row and can't make it to Saturday. I'm ecstatic. I'm going to go home and throw a party at my house tonight.

Q. Frank, do you sense a loss of confidence in the kids or still pretty much the same mentally as they have been all year?

COACH MARTIN: Today's game had nothing to do with confidence. Alabama just beat us. They beat us in every physical department. You can't win. You go play Alabama and have a chance to win, you got to have some dog in you. We had a little puppies out there today. Last time we played them, it took a super-human effort by Sindarius to give us the courage to try and win that game. He obviously didn't have that giddy-up today. We couldn't score at the rim. Couldn't get to the foul line. You can't win if you can't -- if you don't win the paint, that means inside 15-foot shots. That means free throw attempts. That means contested basketball plays in the paint. That means

getting offensive rebounds.

Think about this, Dazon Ingram grabbed four offensive rebounds. All the guys that play the 4 and 5 for us combined grabbed three. Can't win the paint, you're not going to win the game. I don't care how many 3s you shoot, how good you look. Team that wins the paint wins the game. They beat us on every effort category today.

Q. Coach, kind of picking up on what you were saying, was there anything going in that you could see that gave you concern about that, or once they got between the lines, they just out-efforted you?

COACH MARTIN: That's what happened last time we played. It took a super-human effort by Sindarius. It was ridiculous how good he was that day to give us a chance to win.

But, you know, I'll give you another example. The game's in the balance, the game's on the balance there, and it's a 1 or 2-point game and Avery Jr. at the end of the shot clock puts his head down and drives our zone and our 6-foot-10 guy hip-checks him and fouls him. We have the opportunity to make the same play on the other side and settle for a fade-away contested 15-foot shot.

You got to win the paint. Avery Johnson went and made a play, created a foul. We didn't do that today. Then coming down the stretch, to add everything else that just we didn't get done today, Chris Silva makes the back end of a free throw. P.J. misses a free throw. Felder misses two free throws and Sindarius misses the free throw on a 3-point play. Those are points coming down the stretch that you can't get O for.

We missed out on the points. The few opportunities we had from the free throw line in the second half, we messed them up. Can't have empty possessions late in games.

Q. Just for the guys who aren't seniors or juniors, your juniors, sophomores, freshmen, what do you want them to learn from this loss going forward into their future years?

COACH MARTIN: We got a bunch of really good kids on our team. I need guys that got a little bit more dog in them. I'm just telling you the truth. They're fun to be around, they've played their tails off the rest of the year.

Our young guys, they got to get a little tougher, you know. I don't know if you get tougher in life but -- you can't play -- you put me out there 50 years of age and somehow I can manage 30 minutes in a game, which I don't know how that happens, I'm getting an offensive rebound. If that's what we practice everyday, that's

what we demand, my coach wants, I'm going to go get one. We had guys didn't get any. That's something that those young guys have to do better. Give them credit. We fall asleep on a baseline out and Avery Johnson Jr. gets a backside 3, puts it in the net. We had 3s. We either didn't shoot them or didn't make them. Give them credit. They beat us on those plays. But when the they had the opportunities, they made the plays to beat us.

Q. Same situation as last year, you lose here. NCAA Tournament looks good, but it didn't happen for you on Selection Sunday. What's your feeling now about Selection Sunday, if you can maybe flashback to how you felt this time last year?

COACH MARTIN: My feeling hasn't changed. We lost to a good team. We didn't lose to a team with a 300 RPI. How many wins Alabama got now, 19, 18, something like that? Lost to a good team, a team that finished 5th in the league. It's not like we got beat on a neutral site by a team that's not any good. We got beat. It is what it is. One game on a neutral site against a very good opponent is going to outdo 12 conference wins and the wins we had in non-league play, then it is what it is.

At the end of the day, the committee is not going to call me to ask me my opinion. So what I think and what I feel is completely irrelevant to the whole situation. But if they feel we won enough, they put us in.

Q. Coach, you talk about the need to get these guys to play with a little bit more effort and demand it of them. Over the next few days, as you guys kind of recover and wait for your post-season fate, what can you do to get these guys to understand that urgency, the aggressiveness they need the play with, the next game you play could be the very last one for this season?

COACH MARTIN: I told you guys in my press conference the other day, post-season is about the players. It's not about teaching lessons. If as a player you can't be prepared to lay it on the line knowing that your season ends, then you're probably not going to amount to much as a man. Forget about basketball. And, you know, they've got to understand that.

As coaches it's our job to obviously show this film, let them see stuff. We're still trying to get better and improve. Post-season is about the players. The team that you are is already in stone. You don't reinvent the wheel the last week of the season. You got to go out and play through your identity. Today we did not play through our identity, and Alabama just physically beat us up. That's why we got beat.

Q. Coach, I just wanted to get your thoughts overall

now about how much in the year's time has this league improved in your mind?

COACH MARTIN: It's really good. That's why the question earlier about have we done enough, or whatever it may be, you know, you win 12 league games in this league and this league is a lot better than it was two years, the year before, the year before that.

Just like Alabama, the wins they've had. Just like Georgia. Unfortunately they lost today. The way that they handled their business. This league has gotten a lot better. It's real good right now and that's not me. I've said that every year I've been in here, but right now it's a lot better than it's been since I've been in this league. I think that's why when you -- I haven't looked at these shows, but "Matt Figure," my assistant told me, I guess all the so-called folks that have great opinions as to who belongs in the NCAA Tournament or not, they have five teams as a lock for the NCAA Tournament. That's what I was told this morning. I think people are paying attention that this league. It's a lot better than it's been and continues to get better.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.