

Southeastern Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Thursday March 1, 2018

Matthew Mitchell Taylor Murray Maci Morris Kentucky Wildcats

Kentucky - 71, Alabama - 64

THE MODERATOR: We are now joined by Kentucky head Coach, Matthew Mitchell along with student-athletes Maci Morris and Taylor Murray. Coach, your opening thoughts on today's victory?

MATTHEW MITCHELL: Well, very proud of our team. You know, it's a tough time of year and you've gotta play good basketball, you have to play tough and winning basketball. We were able to overcome a really slow start that could have discouraged our team, and they just kept fighting back. So proud of 'em, and really a tremendous victory against a tough Alabama team.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the student-athletes?

Q. Maci, what was the biggest difference for you in the second half? What were you able to do to get yourself going? How did you guys sort of overcome mentally that slow start?

MACI MORRIS: In the beginning I was rushing a lot so the coaches pulled me out and told me to slow down and be more patient and poised, so I just tried to keep that in mind. Tay does a great job of finding me for open shots so that really helped.

Q. Maci, you guys against Alabama last time shot 60, 70%, you shot really well today. Anybody about that match-up that you guys were able to find good looks?

MACI MORRIS: We just tried to execute to the best of our ability and when we're knocking down shots it's going to help any team what you knock down shots and we found the open players and once we slowed down a little bit our shots started falling.

Q. Taylor, what did you do to change your attitude, I think Hannah Cook hit those three 3s in a row and you were able to bounce back from that. What



were you guys talking about in the huddle?

TAYLOR MURRAY: We were talking amongst each other, staying poised, and we were helping each other locating with our shooters were. So it was about staying composed and trying to come back on offense, too, and trying to score.

THE MODERATOR: Ladies, thank you. Questions for Coach Mitchell?

Q. Matthew, what was the biggest difference in shooting in the second half?

MATTHEW MITCHELL: It's hard to explain. I did think they kept their poise and took some good shots. I thought early in the game they were playing some zone defense and we just were not taking quality shots, weren't being patient enough.

So I thought we were able to create some off of some turnovers and get some buckets in transition that then helped us. Just kids finding the open person and they were trapping a lot and being very aggressive and for us just to be able to stay poised.

Then, you know, our ball screen offense really started working. Alabama was really hedging hard with the five and sometimes that has given our team trouble throughout the year. They continued to improve and we continue to get better and just real proud of them. They made some really nice plays in ball screen offense that are a result of a lot of hard work so that helped us out, too.

Q. If you look at the stat lines for Taylor and Maci had they had a ton of rebounds and a ton of assists, what have they meant to you this season as you were trying to get back from where you were?

MATTHEW MITCHELL: They have been extremely productive and worked hard. I was upset with both of them. I didn't think they started the game -- they didn't start with aggressiveness and I didn't think they started with a lot of mental energy, figuring out what's going on. People aren't just going to lay down and roll over. Everybody is fighting for their life in the tournament and if you lose you go home.

Both of 'em are such great kids, great students, perform well in the classroom, high character. But

they're laid back and sometimes that works to their disadvantage in a situation like this. To their credit and this shows you how hard they've worked and how much they have improved, they were able to change that throughout the game and sometimes that hasn't always been the case. They've meant a lot to us, been so productive. Both have worked on their game and tried to improve, tried to improve their leadership. Proud of them, and they've really worked hard.

Q. I believe KeKe McKinney any was out with a concussion protocol. Do you expect her to be available tomorrow?

MATTHEW MITCHELL: It's a protocol you work through, so I will have to talk with the trainer and see where we are on that and see what we can get done.

Again, that was a very tough blow, just emotionally for the team to handle, and Makenzie had to go back into a situation where she hasn't had a lot of reps, but I thought she made big plays in the game and everybody hung in and stuck together and playing two freshmen post players in their first SEC tournament action. There is something different about the tournament. It gets cranked up and the intensity level is high and I thought Alabama started out with tremendous intensity, so I don't think you can overlook that as being a nonfactor, that was a tough blow for our team to have to absorb and makes the win that much more special.

Q. Coach, just your thoughts on your match-up tomorrow, obviously a quick turn-around, you just played them. What do have to do tomorrow?

MATTHEW MITCHELL: Yeah, well, it's been around a 20-point margin and we've got to find a way to strengthen ourselves and we've got to get five more stops and make five more baskets and get us a chance to win the game at the end.

You know, we've had one quarter in both of the games where they've really separated from us. So, listen, there's so much motivation on our plate. We've got to rise up right now and shock everybody and get this victory, it's extremely important. Our NCAA tournament lives are at stake and we have to play with a maximum Kentucky Wildcat effort tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, congratulations. We will see you tomorrow.