

# Southeastern Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Thursday March 8, 2018

## Avery Johnson Dazon Ingram Collin Sexton Alabama

Alabama - 71, Texas A&M - 70

AVERY JOHNSON: First of all, I want to just say to Coach Kennedy, who's a close friend, my homeboy from New Orleans, what a terrific job that he did with his team today. They're an NCAA Tournament team. He's had a heck of a run over the last couple of years, taking them to Sweet 16 two years ago. But he's a great man.

We know a lot of the kids that are on that team, and they fought hard. They fought hard to the very end, made a big three on us on a broken pick-and-roll coverage. But we just want to congratulate A&M on an outstanding season, and we look forward to seeing them in the NCAA Tournament.

Our guys, I'm proud of them. I'm as proud of them as I've been since I've been here at Alabama for obvious reasons. They fought hard. They responded to adversity. We got stuck against their zone in the second half, but they just persevered. We had our moments where we looked like a really dominant team in certain stretches today, but take your hats off to our team. They were strong mentally. They showed some maturity.

These two guys right here, they look like one of the best backcourts in the country. They played really well off each other. Dazon made some tough drives, great defense. And obviously, Collin carried us offensively for a lot of the game. I'm glad I rested him for a bit in the first half. What an incredible shot and incredible game winner.

### **Q. Collin, just take us through the play.**

COLLIN SEXTON: We called that time-out, and Coach just told me to race it up the floor and get to the basket. He knew how fast I could get there, so he said just get to the basket and get a layup for us.



### **Q. Dazon, just what was different for you guys today compared to the last five games of the regular season? What do you feel like the biggest difference was?**

DAZON INGRAM: We just know our backs were up against the wall today, and we couldn't come out slow like we've been in the past five games on that losing streak. So we just wanted to come out and be aggressive and play off of each other because we know what we can do, and when we do that, we're a special team.

### **Q. Just a follow-up, Collin. When you have the ball and Coach said, hey, go make a play, mentally, how are you weaving through that? There's bodies out there. They didn't like to give you a straight line to the basket.**

COLLIN SEXTON: You know like when you're in the gym sometimes and you just imagine stuff like that happens, and you've always got to be prepared for that. When you're doing, like, home drills and stuff, you weave through and try to get to the basket. So it was just like practice.

### **Q. Collin, what do you feel like you guys showed people today about what you're capable of as a team? Regardless of what happened at the end of the regular season, what do you feel like you guys showed about what you're capable of?**

COLLIN SEXTON: Honestly, I feel like we showed that we've got heart. We lost five straight, and we came back and won this one, which was big for us. It just shows that don't give up on us. And we've just got a never quit attitude. I feel like we played 40 minutes, and we played hard.

### **Q. Dazon, how do you feel about getting that shot at Auburn after the last time you guys played them?**

DAZON INGRAM: It's going to be a big one. We know what they're going to do. They're going to come out and be aggressive. We've just got to not back down and just be aggressive too. The series is tied 1-1, so may the best team win.

### **Q. Avery, Collin described the strategy as get him the ball and just rush it up. How many players would you do something that obvious with?**

AVERY JOHNSON: Well, the main thing was we wanted to get him in space. We work on a lot of those end-of-game situations. We try to do it when they're tired at the end of practice. They executed it. Petty and Dazon did what they were supposed to do. Braxton got him the ball on time and on target. Then it's just a foot race.

Fortunately, they had someone on the in-bounder, which had one less defender on defense in the back. But we need to get the ball up the court that fast, just under normal situations a little bit more, especially against zones before zones are set. But give Collin a lot of credit. Those type of shots right there may turn a guy's season around and give -- we've had a lot of bad news over the last ten days in terms of this winning streak. So fortunately, we got a break, and we got some good news. He made a great play.

But as Matt was asking earlier, I'm just proud of our team's effort. We were a different team coming into this game in the locker room and time-outs, the focus, the energy. So even if we weren't successful, at least we were here in terms of our attitude. But that was a great shot.

**Q. Coach, I've got two real quick. First, before the last shot, Collin seemed to carry you all offensively for most of the day. Was that just part of the attitude, the mindset that you were talking about?**

AVERY JOHNSON: We were struggling. We got stuck against their zone. We got in the middle and didn't make plays. We got the ball on the baseline. So we just wanted to figure out a way to get the ball back in his hands, space the floor, and fortunately, he made some great plays for us. It's just one of those situations.

I saw a story about the kid from Ole Miss, the little kid with the funny haircut three, four years ago, that sometimes you've just got to get guys the ball. It's really no rocket science. It's no magic play. Really good players make your plays work better.

**Q. And to go back to the start of the game, the decision to start Galin for the first time this year.**

AVERY JOHNSON: Yeah, I just think we obviously needed a presence inside to try to make difference, work a little bit on defense. If you look at Davis, 7 points today, compared to the way he beat up on us at A&M, we thought -- even if we lose the rebounding game, which we did, we thought Galin could maybe play a little more defense inside, and then it freed up Donta to come and help us on the weak side.

When we played them at home the first game, that lineup with Donta and Galin playing together had a

pretty decent plus-minus.

**Q. Avery, obviously, A&M is a good team, a 20-win team. Do you feel that regardless of what happens tomorrow, that you guys should be in the tournament at this point?**

AVERY JOHNSON: You know, when you play against really high level teams, whatever quadrant they're in, are they a Quadrant I team? Are they? Yes. So another Quadrant I win. It's a tongue twister. I'm from New Orleans. I can't even pronounce the word. But I think, in terms of what the committee talks about in terms of building a resume, yes, everybody focuses, especially the critics, on the losses, but what about the entire resume? From start to finish, we have a pretty good recent me.

But recently -- I'm just answering your question. But recently we've only talked about the SEC tournament. Other people are going to decide. We've talked about it enough. Let's see what's going to happen tomorrow in that game, and whenever it comes to an end, we'll see what happens. Another unbelievable high level win for us on a neutral site.

**Q. Coach, you're going to get that rematch shot with Auburn. Just talk about that.**

AVERY JOHNSON: We didn't play our best game at Auburn. And Herb Jones makes a difference for us. Not always the glitz and glamour. Obviously, Collin's going to get a tremendous amount of credit. It's going to be probably one of the top ten plays, but Herb Jones does a lot for us. There are not many teams in the country that can get a player back for a tournament game the caliber of Herb Jones. Six points, two blocks, three steals -- he does a lot for us. Fortunately, I know we'll be fired up for that game. We had a lot of things that didn't go our way.

But it's a new season. New season, new opportunity. That's all we're preaching.

**Q. I know you said focusing on the SEC tournament here, but Dazon talked about how you guys felt like you had your backs against the walls. How much do you think that played into motivation as far as winning this game?**

AVERY JOHNSON: It is. I think it's motivating. They understand that there are not a lot of chances left no matter how far you go. Even if you go to the very end, you're going to play ten games or less, right? So there's -- 28-game season. So all I've been asking is the areas we've been asking you to improve in, first of all, your body language, attitude, your concentration level, your passion for the game, responding to adversity -- I've been asking you to do that for a long time. Let's do it today. Let's do it today, and let's see

what happens.

I just told them, are you going to be able to look at yourself in the mirror after this game based on what you did on the court?