

Southeastern Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Thursday March 8, 2018

Ben Howland Quinndary Weatherspoon Lamar Peters

Miss. State

Mississippi State - 80, LSU - 77

BEN HOWLAND: I'm just really happy to get the win. We played great in the first half at both ends of the floor. Really shot the ball -- I think we were 8 for 11 from three, if I'm not mistaken, or something close to it in the first half. Actually, 9 for 12. But really had a lot of good looks because primarily moving the ball.

Both of these two had four assists each in the first half, did a great job distributing. Lamar came out really shooting the ball, and I was really excited about that. Working really hard. So I'm not surprised. That's how he shoots the ball a lot.

I thought we got, obviously, a little crazy there down the stretch. Give LSU credit. I told them at halftime, my number one message at halftime is they're not going away. And Waters is something special. He's really a heck of a player, and you have to credit them for what they did going small, switching everything.

We got hurt at one point there because -- and, again, it was something that we've got to make better adjustments. And they had too many offensive rebounds. They had 14 offensive boards, which gave them a chance. I'm just glad we held on for the win and lived to play another day.

Q. Lamar, after the game, you tapped your chest before you shook hands with LSU and while you were speaking with a couple of the assistants. What did you say to them?

LAMAR PETERS: I was talking to my teammates. By me being a point guard, I feel like we need to close out games better than what we did. It was just fortunate to get the win, I was happy that we got the win. But we'd like to close out better than that and finish out and take



care of the ball. And just get into our sessions as being more perfect, you know, have more perfection on offense and just getting the job done. But I'm just happy for the win.

Q. Lamar, just talk about your shot in that first half. Just what was working so well for you?

LAMAR PETERS: Like Coach said, we were moving the ball, and I was able to get some open shots. We've been getting a lot of shots up during practice during the week, and we've been getting in the gym and shooting a lot. I was just putting more arc on it, like Coach say, and just focused on knocking it down when I was open.

Q. Q, you guys just played these guys on Saturday. It didn't go like this. What do you think was the biggest difference?

QUINNDARY WEATHERSPOON: I think we were just disappointed in the loss that we had Saturday. We didn't like the way we played. We just wanted to come out and play with a lot of intensity in the first half. It was like that in the second half, but we were able to pull it out.

Q. Lamar, you had a couple of, like, ankle-breaking crossovers there. You seemed pretty excited about it. Can you talk about, I guess, your emotions and how you felt today.

LAMAR PETERS: We still got life trying to get into the NCAA Tournament. So I just -- I like to stir the pot by me being a point guard, you know, just getting these guys going and just trying to be a leader like Coach want me to be. As I'm trying to lead, show those guys we should have good energy and keep playing hard because it's not over yet.

Q. Lamar, kind of what you said about fighting for that NCAA Tournament life, what's it like in this tournament day by day to keep on and move on to do that?

LAMAR PETERS: Just taking it one game at a time, you know. SEC is very good, and we're playing against Tennessee. We get to get those guys back, and we know they're one of the best teams in the SEC, and they're going to give us their best punch, and they've got a lot of special pieces.

We're just going to go to the hotel, look in, and go over their things and focus on tomorrow. Just take it one

game at a time.

Q. I've seen you a lot. When you hit the first shot, your game tends to be different. When you were able to hit the first two, how did things kind of change for you?

LAMAR PETERS: When you start knocking down open shots, you know, you feel like the goal get bigger. When you get open, you just want to knock it down.

I credit my teammates. Those guys kept getting me the ball. They saw that I had it going. Then we was fortunate that everybody get it going. We were 9 for 12 from three. Tyson came in and knocked down some big shots. Eli came in and made a difference. Everybody brought something to the table tonight.

Q. Q, were you nervous at all that last minute that they were going to find a way to make a big shot or that ball goes out of bounds and they're reviewing it for a while?

QUINN DARY WEATHERSPOON: Kind of. I know we lost two or three games where it was the end of the game with the last shot. It went through my head that I just wanted to stay with my team and finish it out strong.

Q. Ben, you made a change in the starting lineup. What led to that decision? Was it something you saw Saturday that you wanted to try to do different?

BEN HOWLAND: No, I thought it was good for us, and I thought Aric really responded. This is one of the Aric's best games. When you look at the 30 minutes, he hits a double-double tonight. He had 12 rebounds, 11 points, 4 blocks. So he really responded, and I was really happy for him.

I thought Nick Weatherspoon had a very good first half for us, really hitting his pull-up jumper. I thought we did a pretty good job, for the most part, on Waters. I think he's just something special. To think he's just a freshman. I looked at him in their warmups, and he did a windmill dunk, and he's about 5'9" and a half. He is some athlete. And his ability to hesitate and then quick burst to get by you is really special.

We withstood a big punch tonight and get the chance to live for another day.

Q. Ben, what do you make of the fact that the team that played the second half Saturday against LSU was able to come out and play the first half against LSU tonight? I mean, completely 180 different.

BEN HOWLAND: Part of it -- and someone asked this the other day -- having two days off and having a chance to rejuvenate yourself.

In the last game, Abdul hadn't practiced because he got the hip pointer against Tennessee in the previous game. It's a long, grueling season. So I thought having two days off really refreshed us in terms of physically and mentally. So I thought that really helped us.

We've been playing good here. I think about our team today, and we have a couple of league losses that could have gone our way as well. We've got a good team, and I'm excited about our team, and we've got to bounce back here. A lot of guys played a lot of minutes here. Nick played 35. Lamar played 31, Q. So I'm going to be using our bench more tomorrow, and I'm looking forward to their opportunity to play more minutes.

Q. Coach, you guys have not been great from three this year, and then going 9 for 12 --

BEN HOWLAND: That's an understatement right there. That's like the biggest understatement of the year.

Q. Is there any explanation for going 9 for 12 in that first half?

BEN HOWLAND: I swear to you that I am not surprised because -- but the whole key is taking good shots. The number one thing on offense, you're taking good shots. If you look back at those threes, a lot of them were pretty open. Their strategy is to go under the ball screen and make you make shots. And so Lamar did that a couple times.

I thought Q had some great passes where he skipped the ball, foul on Lamar. He had two really terrific passes. When we play so unselfish like that, we're a really good team. We're a good team at both ends of the floor. Our first half today is obviously one of the best halves we played this season. So I was really proud of these guys because it's a new season. It's do or die.

Q. How do you get more out of your frontcourt this time against Tennessee?

BEN HOWLAND: We're going to have you come talk to them and give them a pep talk. You've been in the meetings. He came on the road trip with us this year to Vanderbilt, I think it was. So Will's seen it up close. But I'm looking for ideas. No, kidding. I think our guys will definitely play inspired basketball tomorrow.

They're really good. They're the hottest team in our league. They're co-champions. They're incredibly well coached. They have a lot of depth. They keep coming at you in waves and trying to wear you down. Schofield and Williams are incredibly special. I love Bone, I love Turner, I love Bowden. They have a lot of

depth, and they keep coming at you.

So we've got our work cut out for us, but we're excited to have the opportunity.

Q. What did you see differently about LSU during that second half tonight?

BEN HOWLAND: I thought that they played -- you know, when you're down that big, you have nothing to lose. I thought they played loose. You know, there was a key juncture there where they went from 11 to 8 where we doubled the post. That's my fault. I probably should have took it off center. I didn't want Abdul to foul out of the game.

Obviously, Waters was the key. What did they do special? He just went crazy. I think he's really that good.

Q. The confidence that this kind of win builds, especially from that loss after Saturday, what is that going to do going forward, especially into tomorrow, where you face another team that you lost to last week?

BEN HOWLAND: It's always good to win. It's always good -- not only just to win. I felt we played pretty good tonight with the exception of the last few minutes of the game where we started to get a little tentative and didn't handle -- they did something that was unique in that they had five guards in there and switched every ball screen because we were hurting with the ball screen actions, and that was something that you haven't seen many teams do.

But give them credit. Give LSU a lot of credit for their fight and their toughness and the way they wouldn't quit and go away. I think this is obviously a good boost for us to win in a neutral site game here against a very talented LSU team that just handled us pretty good on Saturday five days ago.