

Southeastern Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Thursday March 8, 2018

Will Wade Tremont Waters Brandon Rachal LSU

Mississippi State - 80, LSU - 77

WILL WADE: Obviously disappointed. We dug ourselves a huge hole in the first half, to get down 16 and just not able to dig out of that hole.

So give them credit. Peters played great. They did a great job shooting the ball, especially in the first half, and we just weren't able to get into the flow of the game quick enough. That's what -- that's how the game got away from us.

Q. Tremont, just first how did it feel playing with the mask? It didn't seem to affect you too much. In the second half, when it's a smaller lineup, it's more driving lanes. Does that suit your style of play a little bit better?

TREMONT WATERS: I had never played with a mask on. I didn't practice really hard with it over the past few days. Coach just told me just to not think about it, just to go out and play. So like the first few minutes, it was kind of messing with me a little bit. I just kept thinking about it.

But second half, Coach just told me just really not think about it. Just play and think about something else besides, obviously, the mask. So I came out driving and just creating for my teammates and making plays.

And from there, it went downhill. We didn't get the win.

Q. Brandon, what's been different for you these last two, three games? It seems like your intensity level has gone up, taken it up a little bit. Maybe this is the player you thought you could be this year?

BRANDON RACHAL: Just accepted my role, and my teammates trusting in me and my coaches trusting in me, and me being confident to go out there and be the glue guy for this team, make the plays, and do what I got to do to stay on the floor and do my best to help



this team win.

Q. For either of you guys, Peters, he was pretty quiet in the first game, wasn't quiet tonight. What would you say is the difference? Just making shots or something you guys did.

BRANDON RACHAL: I mean, he just, he had that mentality tonight. He played with a killing instinct. He's somebody that I knew playing in high school and stuff, and he always kind of had that chip on his shoulder. So he played with that tonight, and things just went his way.

Q. Tremont, can you take us through that deep three at the end that brought it to within one. Your game today and kind of your season in general up to this.

TREMONT WATERS: Start with the shot. It was a time-out, and Coach said, hey, just go out and make the play. Get the ball to Tre and do what you do basically.

I came out and shot the first three, hit it off the backboard, but somehow we were able to get a rebound and just continue to play. Then I got it back again and actually made the three. That's -- it's not a moment that I shy away from. I was trying to just make a play, and I'm kind of used to doing it because I work on it.

But as far as the game, we just -- we didn't come on the first half and play hard. We played, but we didn't play with that same energy that they did. I felt like they came out with a much more grittier mentality than we did. That's frustrating for us because we know we could have played better, and it just slipped out of our hands.

Q. Tremont, it looked like you sustained an injury in the last couple of minutes. I was just wondering what happened there.

TREMONT WATERS: Which play?

Q. You were on the ground close to Mississippi State's basket, and you struggled to get up.

TREMONT WATERS: I went and got a rebound, and I just got hit where you don't want to get hit between your legs. So I just kind of stayed there and let the refs deal with it.

late in the clock. That was a big one Peters hit right in front of State's bench.

Q. Do you expect to be hosting another game?

WILL WADE: Probably so. Hopefully. God knows we can't win away from home. So hopefully, we'll get a home game. We're a bunch of homebodies. Hopefully, we'll get a home game. That would be great. Maybe we can win that.

Q. Coach, what went into the decision to kind of go with that five-guard lineup that was -- was it just --

WILL WADE: Our bigs weren't doing anything. Duop and Epps weren't doing anything. We don't have any other big guys, so you've got to try something. We're not going to sit there and try the same stuff and expect things to change. They were 0 of 5 from three. They got five rebounds. Rachal had nine rebounds himself. So when they're not playing -- I mean, we gave up an offensive rebound. We subbed one of them back in. If they're not playing, what are we supposed to do? I kind of like the small lineup to be honest.

Q. The lost points at the free-throw line, whether it was one and one --

WILL WADE: We missed two front ends of one and ones. I've never seen -- I don't know where the heck that came from where we ran in there -- Tre's our second best free-throw shooter. Why in the hell are we -- I've never seen that. It's like an elementary school. When's the last time anybody saw a play like that? That's just a -- I don't even know what to say. I don't know what to say. It was going to be a four-point game. Makes the second, it was a three-point game. 1:38 left. I mean, just what can you say? I mean, I guess I'll say it was an aggressive mistake. He was trying to make a play. So we'll -- you know.

But give State credit now. Weatherspoon played really well. I thought Holman played a good game. I thought he responded to not starting. I thought he responded well. And we couldn't guard Q Weatherspoon off the bounce. He killed us, absolutely killed us off the bounce. Those guys did a much better job than they did in the first game, and that ultimately did us in.

Q. Will, can you just kind of talk about Tremont's performance today. Is that just sort of reflective of what he's been able to do the whole --

WILL WADE: Pretty much what he's done all year for us. That's what we get pretty much every night from him. The only reason we're in a lot of games.

Q. You talk about in the first game going under screens, taking that risk. Did the game plan change at all defensively the first half?

WILL WADE: No. I mean, they were 8 of 9 in the first half. Only one of them was under a ball screen. The rest were catch and shoot, easy threes off of penetration, just big-time breakdowns. They made an adjustment like we thought they would. They moved their screens down. But I mean, they hit one from us going under the ball screen. The rest of them were penetrating picks.

The one they hit in the second half, we didn't switch