

Southeastern Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Friday March 9, 2018

Mike Anderson Daryl Macon Jaylen Barford

Arkansas



Arkansas - 69, South Carolina - 64

MIKE ANDERSON: First of all, our guys, they hung in there and found a way to finish the game off. In the first half, I thought we had the game -- I thought we made South Carolina really work.

In that first game, you don't know how your guys are going to come out. I always say the first game is so interesting because you know the nerves are going. I've got guys who have never been in this kind of setting. So they've got to be able to see it and work with the older guys, even with the 15-point lead. It's never safe against a Frank Martin team.

We were even, I think, in the rebounding department, which I thought the game would be won in the paint. The second half they really started to attack that glass and kicking out for three-point shots. But I thought our defense came to the rescue in the end. And we made free throws. We've been shooting not very good this year, but when it counted, we were pretty good tonight. That's the big key.

Again, big plays by these guys, whether it be free throws or the big three-point shot that Macon made as South Carolina made their run.

They had a nice rhythm because they played last night. That's the thing I was worried about. But our guys rose to the occasion much as they've done all year long.

Q. Jaylen, I know you've improved the three-point shooting dramatically this year, but that step-back, the deep one during the run, the Scotty Thurman-like high arc-er. Is that something you practice a lot? How good did that feel?

JAYLEN BARFORD: I don't practice too -- well, I shoot every day, but I guess it was kind of like a horse shot. So I used that. I knew it was good when it left my hands. And he sat back a little bit, so I shot while the

clock was running down.

Q. This is for both guys. Yeah, I guess it was actually Jaylen hit the three. You gave it to Daryl.
MIKE ANDERSON: I stand corrected, Bob.

Q. It's all right. I make mistakes all the time. Jaylen, you didn't hit the three, but you made the steal and the layup for five straight points. Daryl, as a great three-point shooter yourself, what did you think of Jaylen's shot there?

DARYL MACON: I want to say clutch, but I got to truly say I taught him that. I usually make those shots, and I think he looked at me, and he said, I can make this same shot. So I actually think he got that shot from me to be honest. There it is.

Q. (No microphone)?

JAYLEN BARFORD: They ran the play the whole time. So I just kind of played it a little bit. And he didn't see me. It was a big play down the stretch, and there was like 1:30 left, and we needed that stop. It was good, and we just kept playing defense and knocking down free throws.

DARYL MACON: Want to tell him about the shot?

JAYLEN BARFORD: He seen it. It was wet. He seen the shot.

Q. Jaylen, you had a big game against Florida last time. Are you looking forward to getting to play them again? And, Daryl, if you could also talk about playing against Florida second time this year.

JAYLEN BARFORD: I think it's going to be a great game. We've got to come out and play hard and just be ourselves. It's our first game under our belt, so I think we're going to be all right. I know it's going to be a fast-paced game. So I'm ready to play them.

DARYL MACON: Kind of what he said. It's going to be an up tempo game. They try to get up and down the floor like we do. We've just got to execute and get multiple stops and just stay together.

Q. For either of you guys, you've only played Florida a couple times, but they've beaten Arkansas eight in a row. Arkansas hasn't beaten

them since, I think it was 2013. They've won 13 out of 14. So you've really been down against them. How do you feel about that? Do you feel it's your chance to break that losing streak?

DARYL MACON: Actually, I didn't know that. It would be great to break that losing streak in. It would be our time to peak, I think.

JAYLEN BARFORD: You want me to take that too?

DARYL MACON: First, Bob, where do you get your stats? Like you know everything.

Q. (No microphone)?

JAYLEN BARFORD: It would be awesome to break that streak. I didn't know it was that long. You said 0-8? I think it would be awesome to break that streak, and I think we've got a great chance of doing if we do those things, staying together and getting those stops and executing on the offensive end.

Q. Just real quick for both you guys. The fact that Darius and Adrio played really well today. Just your thoughts on their contributions.

DARYL MACON: Can you repeat that?

THE MODERATOR: He wanted to know what you thought of Adrio.

JAYLEN BARFORD: Give him the mic. (Laughter).

Q. Just Darius and Adrio, the lift they gave you guys tonight, just at certain points of the game, really critical.

DARYL MACON: They came in, and they played with a lot of energy. They were critical on the defensive end. Those are two guys that's never worried about the offense. They've always wanted to show folks what they can do on the other end of the floor. So I've got to congratulate those guys on that.

JAYLEN BARFORD: Yeah, it was big for us. They was getting big rebounds, deflections, and just active all over the floor. Darius hit some big shots. Adrio hit some big shots and a free throw. We weren't surprised by their presence tonight, but it was great for us.

Q. Coach, you mentioned how these first tournament games can be sort of uncertain, come in with a lot of nerves, a lot of jitters. Do you think that gives you guys an advantage going into tomorrow that Florida hasn't played yet and is still dealing with that?

MIKE ANDERSON: I don't think so. Coaches, they always have these assumptions that, because you do play. We came in last year, and we were top seed, one of the top four seeds, and came in and just played with

a nice rhythm in our first game.

Florida's a very good basketball team. They've got some senior guards, and the senior guard especially in Chiozza, very good basketball player. Jalen Hudson, and of course, and Allen, KeVaughn, who's from Arkansas. I'm sure those guys will be looking forward to playing. They're rested up. Should be an entertaining game. They're a dynamic three-point shooting team. So our defense is really going to have to step it up.

I'm looking at the offensive rebounds that we gave up, and that's the only stat I'm really disappointed in. We gave up 18 offensive rebounds, and I know Florida is one of those teams, they don't have size, but those guys are very athletic. So we're going to have to continue to play basketball. All I want our guys to do is just get better. Get better from each and every game.

Q. I know Adrio started before the season, but he was undersized stepping into the hole with Justin gone. What did you think of his performance, the blocks and steals, just his overall effort?

MIKE ANDERSON: I thought he played like a warrior. That's what we've been looking for. You got to remember, he was starting earlier in the year. You got to remember recently he got sick and lost about 12 pounds.

Now all of a sudden, the opportunity presents itself, and I think he's taking advantage of the opportunity. He knows what's needed on this basketball team, even having to be on this team last year and saw what Moses brought to the table, Manuel brought to the table, the mentality. And we've got to have that mentality out on the floor, somebody with that toughness, somebody with that grit. Even though he's undersized, he's got to play with his big heart. I thought it was on display getting up to the free-throw line and knocking down clutch free throws. He hit a big shot for us going down the stretch.

That's what you need this time of year. You've got to have some other guys step up. We've been riding these guys for a while. So now it's time for some other guys. That's why, even when you talk about Darius Hall, you can see he's oozing with potential, and we saw it on display tonight.

Q. Mike, you always say that they can enjoy it until midnight. Are you going to extend that at all tonight since they've got like an hour?

MIKE ANDERSON: No. In fact, I almost cut it when I went in there. It's going to be a quick turnaround. We'll get those guys showered, get them out of there, get them a hot meal, and get them some rest. We

have a lot of guys that expended a lot of energy tonight, and a lot is going to be needed tomorrow as well.

Q. Mike, obviously, Florida has kind of had your number lately. What makes them a tough matchup, and do you feel good that maybe this is your chance to beat them?

MIKE ANDERSON: They played well. The last couple times we've played well. We had some games we were right there. We had an overtime game at our place. We had one where we thought we had it won down there. Good teams. We're good teams that match up well each other. For some reason, they make more plays than we do.

They had the luxury of playing at home this year, and I thought they played well. But every year, every game's a different game. So this is in a tournament setting. It's survive and advance. One game at a time, and that's our mentality. But we're looking forward to playing Florida, and I'm sure they're the same, looking forward to playing us.

Q. Just watching them have so much fun, I wonder what it's like with this team, and if that kind of is part of what has helped you guys as a team this year, just their personalities and how they get along.

MIKE ANDERSON: It's been good. I've had an opportunity -- you know, I do my radio shows. I let those guys go on, and people get a chance to witness their personalities. So now some of you guys get a chance. They're a good group. You can see they're very thoughtful kids. They're not guys just -- obviously, they've got some accolades going for them, but I think they're real humble kids, and they make it easy for the young guys, such as Darious Hall or Adrio Bailey. You can imagine Daniel Gafford being on this big stage. With those guys like Anton Beard, they make it more inviting in that locker room.

As a coach, you've got to have that. You've got to have that when -- I'm on them enough myself in practice, but the game's got to be fun, and they're having fun.

Q. Mike, what were your thoughts on Jaylen's five-point swing he did there? Shot clock's run down, and it was about 26 feet or something, and then he gets the steal and the basket. Just how big was that sequence?

MIKE ANDERSON: First of all, he got his fourth foul with maybe like five minutes to go. I think we were leading, and then, of course, they made a run. I figured, you know, it's time to just let him ride it out. So he came in with like 3:59 or 4:59, I don't know. He's supposed to make big plays. He's a tremendous

player, and he sees the opportunity. Made that big shot when the shot clock was running down. And then like you said, proceeded to anticipate what they were doing and took advantage of it. That's what good players do.

We needed somebody to step up for us, and he was one of those guys to step up, but it was, again, look at what took place in this game here, the swing, it just kept going back and forth in the second half. Even when we got the lead, it wasn't safe, but our guys showed some resilience, showed some resolve, and finished off the game with defensive stops and making free throws.

Again, good win. Next game up.