

Southeastern Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Thursday March 8, 2018

Cuonzo Martin Kassius Robertson Michael Porter

Missouri

Georgia - 62, Missouri - 60

CUONZO MARTIN: I thought it was a good game. First, hat's off to Georgia winning the game. I thought they did a great job. They did a great job setting the tone throughout, putting us in position, making plays, timely threes, getting to the foul line when they needed to, getting big rebounds. So they run the game. Give them credit.

Q. For Michael Porter Jr., just talk about how you felt, your game, first one back, all the emotions, and physically how things played out for you.

MICHAEL PORTER: It felt good to be back out there for sure. I loved being out there with my team. My whole thing coming back was just to be able to help where I can and do what I can to help.

Q. Kassius, you jumped out 10-0, and then they immediately responded with a run. How big was that part of the game where you weren't able to create a little bit more distance?

KASSIUS ROBERTSON: It's huge when you don't take advantage of leads like that. I think we had a lot of shots that weren't dropping. They usually do. We got down a couple times in the game, but we always clawed back.

Q. Kassius, do you feel like you guys kind of were out of sync all day, or do you feel like you guys missed some shots that you typically make?

KASSIUS ROBERTSON: Yeah, we missed some shots that we typically make. We missed some easy tip-ins and some layups and some open threes. But I think we did a poor job of fouling, and we put them in the bonus really early, and they made a lot of money at the free-throw line. So I think it was more about the defense. Overall, we played good defense, but like I said, just the fouling part.

Q. Michael, you started defending Yante Maten.



Just how tough was he today?

MICHAEL PORTER: He's a good player. It was cool to be able to guard him. You got to give him credit. He put his team on his back, but it was fun guarding.

Q. Mike, did it feel good to get assists from your brother and to assist your brother in scoring and to see him score and play today like you knew he could?

MICHAEL PORTER: Yeah, it was good to see Jontay. He had a pretty good game offensively, so I'm proud of him. No, it was really fun to be out there with him.

The encouraging part for us is just that besides -- I mean, he's the only one who had a really good offensive game. We played, to me, about as bad as we played offensively, besides him, as we have all year.

So we've got some things we've got to fix, but it's small things. We were just missing shots.

Q. Kassius, you didn't get many touches in the first half. During that 16-0 run, I think it was, how frustrating was it for you to face that defense that was just shutting you down off the ball?

KASSIUS ROBERTSON: It wasn't frustrating. It was frustrating that we were losing. I'm not really worried about the touches. We weren't losing because I wasn't touching the ball. That's not the reason. We were losing because we were giving up baskets.

Q. Cuonzo, Coach Fox said, from what he could tell, it didn't look like you guys changed much offensively with Mike in the game. Is it mostly what you've been doing all year?

CUONZO MARTIN: Yes, we didn't want to change that. What we tried to do more than anything was have a few things where Mike could play out of that. So it didn't flow as well. And I think part of that was too that guys were in foul trouble. Kevin in foul trouble. Jeremiah in foul trouble. So you don't have a real flow.

So I thought the biggest thing really was trying to put Mike in position where he could catch and shoot as opposed to having to make plays off the dribble, attacking the rim, because that takes time, when you're getting your legs up under you, the adrenaline of the crowd, the energy, all of that. So I was just really trying to put him in position where he's a spot shooter,

posting up, making plays at the rim. But because of the lineup situation, we had to put him out there extended minutes due to foul trouble. I thought he did a good job. I thought he did a solid job really just kind of settling in and letting the shot come to him.

Q. Cuonzo, was there a minute mark or did you have an idea how many minutes you wanted to play him? How far over did you go? And just how did the whole integration with him went?

CUONZO MARTIN: We knew as a staff, coming back, it wouldn't flow as well unless you got him spotting up in the corner. One, because of foul trouble, we put him in some spots that he wasn't accustomed to from the time he was practicing. But other than that, I thought the guys were fine.

I thought he had opportunities to score the ball. I think, more than anything, probably rushing his shots, shooting a little quick, because I thought the shots he took were good shots. And the biggest thing, trying to get him around the post a little more so now he doesn't have to exert as much energy as far as making plays.

Q. Coach, you mentioned the enthusiasm of the crowd. It was interesting to see a very, very enthusiastic non-Kentucky crowd. What would you like to say to your fans?

CUONZO MARTIN: I've appreciated them all year long, not just this game, but I think that's what Mizzou fans are made of. That's what they're built like. That's what it normally looks like. I applaud all their efforts and appreciate their support and the way they represent our team, our program, our university. I don't take that for granted. Our guys understand that. They feel that energy and that vibe.

I think Mizzou fans are as good as anybody in the country when they support like that, and I truly believe that.

Q. Coach, you mentioned the flow and kind of the risk, I guess, of folding in any player this late in the game. Knowing that your next game will be NCAA Tournament, how do you try to get that as cohesive as you possibly can without another game to play before that?

CUONZO MARTIN: The good thing about it, you had it now, so now he's going through it. Mike is a guy who puts a lot of pressure on himself just because of the shots. You don't have to go back and watch film. I don't think there were a lot of bad shots. I don't. I think it was just the energy, the way they defended, not allowing easy looks. And the thing is, try to get to the rim, try to get to the rim, not necessarily drive to the top of the key unless they make you drive it. Try to post up around the rim. So make the moves easier.

But I think they'll be fine because they've had a chance to play with him. I think, more than anything, because of the foul trouble with some guys, we had to go, and I think we kind of put him in some spots that he probably wasn't used to. But I think we'll be fine. I'm glad he actually got it out of the way and we can move forward. Things we can look at in practice to put them in position to be successful.

Q. Just along those lines, I think you've said this, but did you almost know that there was going to be some kind of transitional issues? Not issues, but aspects of this for him that he's going to absolutely have to do that? And maybe you can think of it as one step back and two steps up later.

CUONZO MARTIN: We lost the game, and I feel like we had an opportunity to win the game, and we came up short. It's not so much as what Mike did or didn't do. I mean, Jordan Barnett was 1-8, Kass was 3 for 10. Those guys make shots, they make plays. Give Georgia credit. They do a good job defending. So that's part of it.

I think going through it, I knew at some point that's what it would be because, again, when he left the game, he was one of the best players in college basketball. So you don't come back and say, okay, I'm going to fit into a role. His mindset is still the same person. It's just maybe step slow. Instead of 40, maybe 37. It's just all those things, and just really going through it. I think the great thing for him, he actually went through it. So now we can take a couple days off, regroup, and just put him in different spots where now he understands because I think the energy and all that, it has a lot to do with it.

I know my days coming off of injuries, you're just flowing off of sheer energy and mental toughness.

Q. Just talk about Jontay's game. Is there anything else that he can do moving forward? He's had an amazing run here the last week and a half or so.

CUONZO MARTIN: I think the biggest key with him because all the stuff he was doing, he's been able to do. The last month or so, just putting work in, extra work. He's coming in and consistently getting the work in, working on his shots, ball handling, his passing. His post-up game, I think, I'm not sure, it wasn't Auburn, but we lost to -- I think Ole Miss. One of those games where they were switching the smaller guys on him and going in the post, and he wasn't taking advantage of it. Just really sit down and talk and say, man, that has to be an advantage for us. That's an insult when smaller guys are guarding in the post.

Now you see him in the post, he takes bigger guys

down and uses his body well and putting them in the rim. He wasn't doing that before.

Q. Cuonzo, was there a conscious decision on that last possession, you want a three because limited bodies going to overtime. Did you get exactly what you wanted?

CUONZO MARTIN: We were going with that play. Now, again, you read it, guys did a good job making the pass. You read the defense. It was a man to zone, and there was a different action. But guys did a great job delivering the ball.

Q. Coach, how did Kassius' role change? You bring in Michael Porter, Kassius has been the go to guy, but having another alpha dog in there, how does it change his role in the offense?

CUONZO MARTIN: I don't think it changed. He took three shots in the first half, and we didn't do a good job of getting the ball inside more than anything. It wasn't necessarily the shots Kass got. Just kind of refocused and putting the ball in his hands in some situations the second half to get him shots.

We just felt like, going into the game, to get the ball inside to establish a presence down low. That's what we've done the last two or three games. Get inside and allow those big guys to work. We only had two guys go to the free-throw line the whole night. So the focus was really get the ball inside.

Kass is just playing, sometimes we put him in position as a decoy to get somebody else the shot. I thought he did a better job in the second half of being more assertive.

Q. Georgia is the No. 12 seed. Did they look like a No. 12 to you today? If they are different, what's different about them?

CUONZO MARTIN: I don't know if necessarily numbers mean anything this time of year when you play in those settings. They have one of the best players in all of college basketball. They have experience. They're battle tested, and they're fighting for something. I never really look at the numbers, and I think this is probably the first time I've ever been a part of a league where it doesn't matter what the numbers. There's a lot of parity amongst teams.