

# Southeastern Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Friday March 9, 2018

## Avery Johnson Collin Sexton Dazon Ingram

Alabama

Alabama - 81, Auburn - 63

AVERY JOHNSON: After a very disappointing game on the road at their place, it was very disheartening how we finished that game. And then for us to be involved in a five-game losing streak and weather all of that adversity and be where we are right now speaks to the character and the core of our team.

This is no magic formula. I have two outstanding guards. They're outstanding. They play with a lot of heart. They breed a lot of confidence into our team. And even in the first half today, when we didn't play our best basketball, they'll tell you, I didn't raise my voice. I used understandable English, no bad words, and we just talked about how we needed to improve in the second half, and they did it.

So I just want to take my hats off to our team, their intestinal fortitude, the character of the team, and they were playing against a really good team today that obviously won a lot of games in our league and has had a nice year. But this is about Alabama, and we humbly understand that we played a very good basketball game in the second half today and showed what we're made of and what our potential is.

**Q. For both guys, since Coach used understandable language, what was the message at halftime, and what was your attitude coming out in the second half?**

COLLIN SEXTON: Honestly, Coach just told us to keep fighting and don't let this get us down because we were only down 10 points and we had 20 minutes to go. He just really told us to keep fighting.

DAZON INGRAM: Just to follow what Collin said, we just wanted to come out and play a lot better than what we did in the first half. Shots weren't falling. We just wanted to stay confident because we know the shots that weren't falling that we knew we could hit.



As you all could see, we shot the ball a lot better in the second half, and we just played with a lot more confidence.

**Q. Collin, second half you scored 21 points. Just talk about getting on that roll and getting that rhythm going.**

COLLIN SEXTON: Once we got stops, Coach told us to just run. And when I run, my teammates found me, and I was open. They told me, every time I'm open, just shoot it. Don't worry about missing or anything else.

**Q. That five-game losing streak, you were ice cold shooting-wise, and now it looks like you can't miss, shimmying down the court after you're making threes. Can you describe how your mind is different when you're cold versus when you're hot?**

COLLIN SEXTON: Honestly, I feel like we're just having fun. If we're having fun, we're going to make shots. That's really all it is. So my teammates responded to me, and we were having fun playing together. That's really the main thing.

**Q. For Collin, can you describe the one play where you went behind your back and made the pass during the transition?**

COLLIN SEXTON: I felt like I knew Donta was trailing. He told me at half-court he's coming, so I'm going to find a way to give it to him, reward him for running.

**Q. For both players, Avery talked a little bit about you guys showing today just what you guys are made of. What do you guys feel like you showed people today?**

DAZON INGRAM: We're just a team. We played together. And once we play together, like I said yesterday, we're a special team, and we showed that today. Once we get stops on defense, we just want to get out and run, and that's what we did in the second half.

COLLIN SEXTON: All season, they're talking about adversity. Adversity is going to hit. It's how we're going to react to the adversity and come back from it. I felt like we lost those five games and we came back winning two. So I feel like we're on a roll right now, and we're just having fun.

**Q. Collin, what was your all's kind of view where you stood NCAA Tournament-wise entering this tournament, and how do you think you've helped yourself so far?**

COLLIN SEXTON: We knew, when we came in this tournament, we had to win games, and we wanted to because we have a lot to prove. I feel like everybody counted us out, and Coach told us, just go out there and play. Whatever the outcome is, just play and give it your all while you're out there.

**Q. Coach, you came out and hit shots the second half, but you also -- I think you outrebounded them 26-12 in the second half. Was that just sort of a measure of the change of intensity from the first half to the second?**

EVERY JOHNSON: Yes, offensively, we've been sputtering a lot over the last two weeks. Even in yesterday's game, we had three turnovers at the half. We think we're on our way to score 80 points, but we turn the ball over. We weren't great at handling the ball in situations, especially in the first half, but we got to our spots.

We're a little stagnant against their zone early in the game, but we cleaned up a couple of things at halftime in terms of how we want to attack their zone. They were sitting on some of our zone plays. So we basically went and switched over to some man-to-man plays and got some of our guys in space.

But the main thing is we wanted to rebound and run and try to attack them in transition before they can get their defense set.

**Q. Coach, how is Donta? And do you have any idea at this point if he'll play tomorrow or even next week?**

EVERY JOHNSON: No idea whatsoever. I'll meet with the doctors and meet with him and check him out when we get back in the back. But after the game, I had to do an interview on SEC Network and talk to the team. So we'll get back there and check him out, and we're hoping and praying that he's going to be okay. Man, that was an incredible fall. I'm just hoping and praying that whatever happens, that he'll be okay because we're very concerned about our student-athletes first more than basketball.

**Q. Is the worry a concussion?**

EVERY JOHNSON: The word isn't anything yet.

**Q. No, the worry.**

EVERY JOHNSON: Oh, the worry. We don't like concussions. We don't like head injuries. But nobody said anything yet. There's no diagnosis yet.

**Q. How would you sum up what Collin's done the last two days and what he did today?**

EVERY JOHNSON: Well, he breeds confidence in our team. He and a couple of our guys had some incredible practices coming into this game. They never talked about just winning the game. We talked about dominating. And I think, once we got to that point with 11 minutes to go in the game on yesterday, we got a little bit careless. Once we got control of this game today, that's what it's all about. Just trying to dominate our opponents, respect our opponents.

They've had -- Auburn's had a good year. I know people in Alabama don't want to say that, but they've had a good year. What I told our team, don't fall for the underdog role. They're not a 4-14 team. They're a really good team. So let's have a lot of respect for them, but at the same time, let's practice the right way, prepare the right way, and you're conditioned for this moment.

So fortunately, we got the jitters out a little bit on yesterday with Collin's incredible shot, and they're just ready to go now. They're just ready to play ball.

**Q. Coach, we talked about the NCAA Tournament. You were saying the overall resumé. Here's another big win here. Do you feel like more comfortable with that idea of being in the tournament?**

EVERY JOHNSON: Right now that's other people making that decision. All we can do now is build a resumé. We feel we have one of the most impressive resúmes with any team in the country with all our top 25 wins, quadrant one wins, winning on a neutral floor, back to back games in the SEC tournament against two outstanding teams that are projected and supposedly already in the tournament.

All you can do is allow what you do on the floor to speak for itself. Talk is cheap. I say that all the time. But we are an NCAA Tournament team, if you want to know my opinion. There shouldn't be any doubt about that.

**Q. Coach, with Collin's game-winning shot yesterday and the way he was able to take over in the second half, was this really what you envisioned when you recruited him, a guy of this caliber, offensively being able to take over?**

EVERY JOHNSON: Absolutely. Sometimes, man, life is just funny. Here we are finishing the regular season kind of a little bit down. That wasn't -- 8-10 wasn't the record that I projected that Alabama would have. I'll tell you later on, maybe two years from now, what I thought our record would be. But I knew 13-5 would win the

league, because of the depth of the league. But sometimes, man, you just find yourself in a place and it's painful. But they say no pain, no gain. Hopefully, we've gained some maturity.

That shot yesterday gave us another -- gave us some more life. They were able to play a lot more relaxed in the second half.

More than anything, I want to keep my job. There's a restaurant here in St. Louis that our athletic director loves to have dinner, and I wanted him to have dinner at that restaurant again tonight. So I'm glad it worked out.

**Q. Also, to follow up, Coach, on the injuries, Alex and Daniel both had to come out and didn't play much, if at all, in the second half. So that's your three bigs, basically, other than Galin. So any update on them either? Or the same situation as Donta?**

AVERY JOHNSON: I think with those guys, they were able to return to the game. So I'm hoping after some treatment, rest tonight, guys go back to the hotel, say hello to their families. We always give them a little bit to say hello to their families before we require them to go and get off their feet before we jump to this next scout. But I'm hoping with some rest, treatment, that they'll be able to us on tomorrow.