

# Southeastern Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Friday March 9, 2018

## Ben Howland Lamar Peters Quinndary Weatherspoon

Miss. State



Tennessee - 62, Mississippi State - 59

**BEN HOWLAND:** We're praying that Nick Weatherspoon is going to be okay. We had a talk with our athletic director, Bo Hemphill, about 15 minutes ago that he's moving his extremities. He's moving everything. He's conscious. They're performing a CAT scan on him. As soon as we're done with the media obligations, Q and I will head over to the hospital where he's being kept.

In terms of the game, disappointing opportunity there. To have a chance to win it in the last four seconds, getting outboarded by 16 rebounds at the time, giving up 22 offensive rebounds.

I thought our defense was really good. We really competed. But they got too many second shots. We really struggled offensively. They held us to 33 percent from the field. We were 20 for 60.

We've got to get better at being able to score around the basket and develop an inside attack moving forward with the rest of our year this year, which we obviously expect will be an NIT bid Sunday.

I'm really proud of our fight. I thought that Lamar really did a nice job knocking down those threes to help lead our comeback surge. At the end of the day, he made a great pass to Stapleton, who had a wide open three in the corner. It just didn't go for us. That shot goes in, we probably win the game, and we're advancing. So all things considered, it's obviously disappointing because we gave ourselves a great chance. I love the fact we never quit, we never gave up, we kept fighting, we kept battling. Even with the loss of one of our best players and best defender.

**Q. Quinndary, how do you keep playing when you saw what happened to your little brother? How do you get it out of your head and stay in the game and do what you did out there?**

**QUINNDARY WEATHERSPOON:** At that point, I was just trying to play for him, try to play with a lot of energy like he play with. Basically, I did what he wanted me to do to try to play as hard as I can and try to come out with the win.

**Q. Lamar, what did you see on that final play when you kicked it out to Xavian in the corner?**

**LAMAR PETERS:** I took it off the dribble. The lane opened up, but then I helped defend it, and I seen Xavian wide open in the corner, and he shown he could make that shot. I believed in him. I made that pass. If I could do it over, I'd make the same play again. I believed in him, but it didn't fall. I'm happy with my decision. I told him to keep his head up.

We got outboarded by 17. I had no rebounds and no assists. We all have to do better. It wasn't just that one particular play that predicted the game. It's just the whole game. I was happy with the decision I made, and I believe in him. We're fine. We're going to pick up.

**Q. Quinndary, when you're watching Nick, what's going through your mind at that moment?**

**QUINNDARY WEATHERSPOON:** Just making sure that he's okay. I mean, that nothing major is wrong with him. I was happy that he was moving. And we were talking and he asked about the score of the game, which let me know that he was all right.

**Q. For both of you guys, during that play, did you realize that he was down? And do you think the play should have been stopped after you got the ball back?**

**LAMAR PETERS:** I realized -- I saw when he went down, but I didn't think he was in that much pain when he went down. But then when he came back, I think the refs just like -- the refs didn't want to stop the game and take away the two points.

I think one of the guys who went -- when Q went and laid the ball up, somebody landed on him and caused him to hit his head. That's all I seen. But when I first seen him fall, I didn't think it was that bad at first.

QUINNDARY WEATHERSPOON: I didn't think the injury was that bad until we came back down the floor. I think with them stepping on his head, or neck or something like that, it probably made the injury worse than it was. I think, if he would have never got stepped on, he would have been able to get up probably with a concussion or something like that. I don't think it was that bad at first until he got stepped on. Then I was concerned.

**Q. For either one of you guys, for the last five or six years the season has ended at the SEC tournament. How good does it feel there's actually more basketball to be played after this?**

LAMAR PETERS: The season -- the biggest goal was to make it to the NCAA Tournament. That was the main objective. And then we had a chance. We had a fair chance to make it. But I'm proud of the team that we're able to advance in the postseason, and we're just going to learn from this and get ready for the next season, after the NIT tournament hopefully, and just learn and get ready for the next season.

I'm proud of the team. We never quit. That was the biggest thing. We never gave up and always kept fighting.

**Q. For either one of you, how tough was Tennessee's defense tonight? I know you guys both had success on offense, but what type of adjustments did you guys as a team make to try to break that defense?**

QUINNDARY WEATHERSPOON: I mean, we know they was aggressive, and at first they was denying a lot of passes, jumping in the passing lane. So we couldn't run our offense like we really wanted to. But we just settled down and started to get those catches where we wanted to get the catches at. Some of our offense picked up. But then I credit Tennessee. They're a very good defensive team. They're just better on defense tonight.

**Q. Should play have been stopped when you guys got the ball back?**

BEN HOWLAND: That's the rules. They let it go. They don't know the severity of the injury at the time, so I get it.

But bottom line is -- getting to the game, we had zero assists at halftime and one for the game. It's very difficult to win games. Think about it. We got outboarded by 17 and had one assist, but we had a shot with 3.5 seconds left wide open in the corner to win the game. So we played good defense.

And what Q said is true, they really got out and get

after you defensively. Those two starting guards, Bowden and Bone are very good defensively. They're tough inside. 22 offensive rebounds. To give up 22 offensive rebounds and one assist and you have a chance to win, that would be pretty amazing, to be honest with you. We got to get tougher and block out better.

I'm really proud of our team. This league has been incredible. You guys know we've had a couple of chances to have a couple more wins in the conference that got away from us. But I'm excited for our team about getting a chance to play in the postseason. I hope we get some home games in the NIT and have a chance to battle to get toward Madison Square Garden. That would be a great experience for these youngsters. We're so young.

So we'll take the next two days off after playing two days in a row and figure out Sunday night who we're playing and come back and ready to go Monday during spring break. Hopefully, we'll get a good crowd to come support us if we're blessed and fortunate enough to get a home game.

**Q. I know you just mentioned that maybe a little more toughness and you all would have won that game, but for that game to be in that situation despite all the stats you mentioned and the way it went a week ago with this team, what was the difference tonight? Was it just toughness?**

BEN HOWLAND: We tweaked some things on defense with just very little preparation. We ended our game last night about this time and had to turn around and play today. I'm really proud of the way they handled all of the preparation. These guys have been grinding very hard.

I thought Lamar was terrific tonight offensively. Back to back games, he really played well in terms of shooting the ball.

You think about some of our fouls down the stretch. It's my fault, we're 58-56. They just turned over a couple times without the press. Hey, let's roll the dice. We're not going to foul under any circumstances, and we fouled. They missed the front of the one and one. The leading free-throw shooter in our conference missed the front end of one and one, and we can't get the block out done. There was multiple times tonight where they got it back on missed foul shots. That's like the really upsetting one, when you have four against two and they still get the rebound somehow.

**Q. If you guys had won, you would have obviously played tomorrow. How tough is it for any team to play three days in a row?**

BEN HOWLAND: I know Georgia has been playing great. They were beat by a very good Kentucky team today. Your third game in a row when your opponent has not played yet, you're at a real disadvantage. That's why the four teams who get the double bye have a chance to win the tournament, and they should based on the regular season.

That being said, I wish we would have had that opportunity.

**Q. You guys don't make the tournament, and then you lose Nick Weatherspoon like this. How hard is it, do you envision, to get your guys back up after that?**

BEN HOWLAND: I think our guys -- I mean, young kids like this are very resilient. I'm hopeful that Nick is going to be okay. I'm going to head to the hospital right now. As soon as we learn something, we'll try to let you all know from the media as soon as possible.