

Southeastern Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Sunday March 11, 2018

Rick Barnes Grant Williams Admiral Schofield Tennessee

Kentucky - 77, Tennessee - 72

RICK BARNES: We started the game and dug ourselves a hole. Obviously, they were making some shots. We weren't playing the way we were capable of. We just weren't locked in. We gave them too much off our scouting report, messed up a switch here or there that allowed them to get a couple good looks at the basket.

Offensively we weren't making shots, and I thought that impacted us. One thing I knew, and I told the guys, we're going to come back. These guys worked too hard. They had too many good habits. We got back in the game, had a chance -- we took the lead. A couple of ill-advised possessions on the offensive end.

Then the free-throw blockout there late was a huge play in the game. That was a really big play in the game that we gave up. Hopefully our guys will learn this time of the year a free-throw blockout, one or two ill-advised plays offensively can cost you, and it did today.

Q. We're just wondering what happened on the play you went down. How were you feeling when you came back into the game?

ADMIRAL SCHOFIELD: Just playing hard, trying to get a loose ball, and just ran into somebody's butt actually and my head snapped back. I'm all right. Just my nose is stinging a little bit, but I'm okay.

Q. What's the process like to flush this with the news coming up about the tournament selection?

ADMIRAL SCHOFIELD: We go out to win the game. It's hard, but we got something to look forward to starting next week. But we wanted to go out and win this game for our university, our families, our coaching staff, and each other after all the hard work that we put in.



But just little possessions, one or two or three possessions that came down to the end of the game, and we didn't execute as a team, and I take responsibility as well. Not blocking on the free-throw line and doing the things I need to do.

So just the big thing is we can get better, and that's what you can look forward to in this game. It's a lot of areas we can get better. I'd rather take a loss right now because it's going to motivate us for the tournament.

GRANT WILLIAMS: Games like these, you fight. It's hard fought, and then after that, whether you win or lose, you've got to understand it after and learn from it.

We have something to look forward to, like you said, Selection Sunday, and we'll find out where we're going. That's a whole new deal. It's not like that was our last game. We have another chance to play, which is an amazing opportunity.

So we've got to learn from this game, and then after that, just do our job.

Q. For both players, you guys were able to beat Kentucky twice during the regular season. What was different about today?

GRANT WILLIAMS: We just didn't make the plays, I would say. It was a competitive game. It was hard fought. We dug ourselves a hole in the beginning. You can't expect to come out and play like the way we did and end up just winning the game. They're a talented team, well coached, and we blew some coverages. So just understanding those are the things that got us here, that's what we have to keep going.

ADMIRAL SCHOFIELD: Just like Coach Barnes said, didn't execute off the scouting report. When you do that against a talented team, you can't leave any room for error when you have a talented team that's long and athletic like that. You've got to be locked in.

The first two games, we were more locked in than we were tonight. We were tougher and more locked in in the second half, but the first half, we weren't the team that beat them the first two times where we were locked in for 40 minutes, and that's what cost us the game.

Q. Just wondering if there's any lessons for both you guys, lessons you can take into that start next week?

ADMIRAL SCHOFIELD: The biggest thing is you can't take any possession for granted, and got to get back to work.

GRANT WILLIAMS: I agree. It's the same thing and understanding we've got to play a game where every possession counts, especially this time of year in March. Every game is going to be close. We can't take anything lightly.

Q. Rick, how do you get these guys -- do you flush this loss? What do you take from it knowing you'll probably get some pretty good news for the program just here in a few hours?

RICK BARNES: What I told them was simple. Hopefully, we'll have a chance to play for a conference championship again. That's good, and it's great, but you want to win every time you go out. The good thing is, because of what they've done throughout the whole season, their body of work, they get a chance to play again. There's a lot of teams in the country that don't get that opportunity. Win or lose that game, it's a different basketball tournament next week. It's a different one.

Whether you lose it, you worry about -- or the concern is will our guys get it back? And we will. If we win it, can we let it go and get on to the next one. It's basketball. You win, lose, put it behind you and say, hey, now we've got to get ready for the next game, and that's what we'll do.

Q. Looking ahead to next week, do you think you guys have done enough to be in Nashville?

RICK BARNES: I don't know. That would be awesome if we could. I just know that I've always had great confidence in the basketball tournament committee. They've got their procedures. They know how they do it. Whatever it is, it is, and we'll deal with it, but it would be nice. It would be nice to have that.

I would actually like to thank the city of St. Louis today. This was a great atmosphere here today. Congratulate Kentucky for winning, but the tournament here turned out well, I thought. It would be great to be back in Nashville and give our fans a chance to be a big part of it.

Q. I know you mentioned the missed cut outs late, but do you think getting in that kind of hole cost you guys energy late because you had to extend so much to get back into it?

RICK BARNES: What it does, it stresses every

possession, there's no doubt, whether it's offense or defense and you get down. We got down early. We had some shots that didn't go in, then Admiral got hot and got us back in it. We did, we just had a couple of breakdowns.

And give them credit. They blocked some shots at the rim where they -- shots we didn't get up high enough on the glass. We've got to do that.

But like I said, we played in games -- this game was no different than a lot of games we've been in. We've been down. We've been up. But the way we started early -- again, I'm not taking anything away from them because they took advantage of it, but we did not execute early our scouting report for whatever reason.

I told our guys, I said, we're going to get back in the game. I told them I thought we'd win the game when they were up. I said, hey, you guys have too good of habits. You've worked too hard, and I know we're going to fight to get back in it. I'm proud of our team for doing that. We got back in, took the lead, and just couldn't sustain it.

Did it have anything to do with getting down early? Maybe, maybe not. I don't know really if it did or it didn't.

Q. Rick, you talked about the challenges of a Sunday-Thursday turnaround this time of year. What would it mean for you guys to maybe be in that Friday game right now after playing these three games in three days?

RICK BARNES: Yeah, playing on Sunday, yeah, that would be awesome to have that extra day. It would be awesome. But regardless of what it is, we played three in three days and got to turn around and play Thursday, that's what we do. Yeah, it would be nice to have that. I haven't looked at any of that, all those type things.

But when you play on Sunday, it's -- obviously, if you had your choice, you'd like to play on Friday.