

American Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Thursday, March 12, 2026

Birmingham, Alabama, USA

Legacy Arena At The BJCC

Charlotte 49ers

Coach Aaron Fearne

Ben Bradford

Dezayne Mingo

Postgame Press Conference

Charlotte 74, Tulane 60

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THE MODERATOR: We are joined on the podium by Charlotte head Coach Aaron Fearne, Dezayne Mingo, and Ben Bradford. Coach, let's start with some general comments by you.

AARON FEARNE: Yeah, I guess I've found when you get to these tournaments, and this is year eight for me of being over here in the U.S., and just for some reason when you play that first game, it always seems to be a little difficult for the guys to really find their eye shooting the ball.

I don't know if we could have shot the ball much worse in the first half. I think we shot 14.7%, but you know, we're a really good offensive team. We have been all year, and the guys came out and were spectacular.

Then I don't know if I've coached a half of hoops in my life where we shot 77% either, so pretty wild two halves for us.

Really proud of the guys. You know, I thought we were able to put enough pressure on them in transition, which we were able to build some pressure and break it open there. Then we made some timely shots as the half finished off, and we were able to get across the line.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Coach, you play an overall fresh Birmingham team tomorrow. What are you going to take from this game that you'll take into the next game for you?

AARON FEARNE: Look, I was about to say it before. I



know Tulane played the night before, or the day before. It just makes it tougher. That's where you have to position yourself during the regular season to make it easier on yourself.

The guys got a good feel for the stadium and the rims, and we did a lot of really good things. We're going to see zone and man and all different types of things that Coach does with UAB. We only played them a couple of games ago, so they'll make some adjustments.

The guys are going to have to do an excellent job with their recovery right now. Our staff does an excellent job with our guys with all that type of stuff. Just have to find it within. That's what you've got to do.

We're trying to survive, as they will be too. I hope there's a fantastic crowd in here. I hope the community comes out and supports their team and makes it a really fun event out there tomorrow, but we'll be ready to go.

Q. Ben, with 29 points, what led to your offensive success tonight?

BEN BRADFORD: I would say mostly just making shots early and then I could have played off that. I was able to drive more. The close-outs were harder, so I was able to get downhill more once the shots were falling.

Q. Aaron, what were you telling the team at halftime because there was an inordinate number of easy missed shots, tips at the rim, stuff like that? Did you feel like it had to get better?

AARON FEARNE: Well, I don't know if it could get much worse, mate. Look, at the end of the day, did we generate really good shots in the first half? Yes. Did we get on the rim and just miss some easy makeable ones? Yes.

So we just talked about it. I said exactly that. Look, we're going to get the shame shots, and we'll make them this half. That's what we'll get, and we'll get on the rim, and we'll finish those plays too. I think we loosened up a little bit because we were able to get in transition and just see

some easy ones go down.

Q. Ben, were you guys confident going into the second half thinking you couldn't possibly play worse, and you were only down three?

BEN BRADFORD: Yeah, definitely. I didn't know that we were 5 for 34. I think that's the first time I've seen that. But we knew it was good looks. I mean, just like the averages, at some point they have to fall.

Q. For any of you, you played UAB last week and Chance Westry almost had a triple-double. I was curious, both what makes him such a good player and what do you have to do differently to try to contain him tomorrow?

DEZAYNE MINGO: I'm not sure what makes him such a good player, but we're going to watch a lot of film and go back to the drawing board and change the things that we did wrong in that game to be able to come out with the win.

AARON FEARNE: I think he does an excellent job of getting downhill. He's very good off the ball screen. He has fantastic feel off the ball screen. He's good at just hesitating in the pocket, seeing what the big will do.

He's very good at keeping his eyes up, seeing behind that initial line of defense. He does an excellent job with that.

So, yeah, we're going to have to do a good job on him, but they've got a good team. You know, they've slowly got better as the year has gone on. We're going to have to guard them. It was a really good game at our place. It was really competitive. So, yeah, we'll see if we can make some adjustments and get across the line this time.

Q. Obviously a bit of a slower first half, but really turned it around in the second half. What really clicked for you to have such a good performance in the second half?

DEZAYNE MINGO: It's all these guys, my coaches, teammates, Coach Fearne came into the locker room and said that he didn't see a single shot that we took in the first half that he didn't like. That's crazy to hear from him. He's a critic. That fueled me. That gave me a lot of confidence going into the second half to shoot whenever I was open.

Q. This is for Ben. You've been really consistent this year, really stand-out performance today in a game that your team really needed. What's been the key for you to stay consistent all season?

BEN BRADFORD: I would say I've had some ups and

downs. Just I would say it's mostly mental, just staying in the game. Then like this whole week I was just getting so much confidence poured into me since we got here on Tuesday from coaches to all the players, everybody. I would say just keeping the confidence up, and that helps.

AARON FEARNE: I'll comment on that too. I say to these guys all the time, you're rewarded for your work. You either do no work, and that's the reward you get, or you do a lot of it and you get a lot of reward.

Ben's work ethic from the summer to today has been really impressive. Extremely proud of him. He was with us last year in a tough season, and didn't really play a lot, and he was very determined to change that and has improved his game. I think when you put the work in, you will be rewarded at some point.

Tonight he was really big. I said to him when we were working here, you know, he kind of kept us in the game that first half because he did make some shots.

Yeah, his reward is, he deserves it. He's worked really hard and we do as a team. You've got to grind through that. We were able to turn the game and get across the line today.

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