

# American Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Friday, March 13, 2026

Birmingham, Alabama, USA

Legacy Arena At The BJCC

## Charlotte 49ers

## Coach Aaron Fearne

## Dezayne Mingo

## Ben Bradford

### Postgame Press Conference



Charlotte 83, UAB 78

AARON FEARNE: Feel like I could just rewind exactly what I said in the opening statements last night. We didn't shoot the ball great first half, but hung in there. They're a difficult team to play with the changing defenses, two games in a row we've come out in the second half and just shot the lights out. That helps. That definitely helps when we can do those types of things.

But as I said to the guys in the locker room, I think we find a way as a staff and players to just find out some stuff that works, and we had to do that in the second half. Made some plays, which you've got to do. This is tournament basketball; you've got to make plays. We did a really good job of that.

**Q. Mingo, you had 35 points, 8 and 11 of those being from three. Talk to me about the preparation you had going into this game. Just seemed like you would never miss?**

DEZAYNE MINGO: A big part of it is being mentally strong. Last game I shot 2 for 10 or something like that. So just letting that go and being mentally strong is a big part of what I was able to do that.

**Q. Coach, is this characteristic of this team, to play so well and shoot so well in the second half this year?**

AARON FEARNE: Good question. Look, we've been a very good offensive team all year. We've been a top 3 offensive team in the league. We do have some really good shooters.

I say this to the guys all the time: You're rewarded for your

work. We put a lot of hard work, and these guys get in the gym a lot. Our school development coaches do a heck of a job with these guys.

A lot of their numbers from their previous spots and career highs this year for these guys. That just comes from hard work.

Obviously as a staff we've got to put them in positions to make plays, and they've got to have that synergy and rhythm today. When we do that, we can definitely shoot the ball really well.

**Q. Ben, talk about the second half. At one point as a team you made 14 straight shots as a team. Talk about the recovery and the ability to be so strong in the second half.**

BEN BRADFORD: Definitely. I would say we had a quick turnaround playing late last night and then playing at noon today. Recovery was big. We had an early film session.

But just come back in, just being locked in in the second half. We know the shots are going to fall, so we just stay confident.

**Q. It seemed like you had a lot of open unbothered looks in the second half. Is that how you see it? I'm not dinging UAB's defense or anything, but you had some unbothered looks?**

AARON FEARNE: I think you should ding both of our defenses. They shot 60 percent; we shot 76, so I would say we probably didn't do a great job of defending each other come that second half.

But we have a game plan of wanting to get the ball inside for sure, and we did a way better job of that. I just felt first half we played above the three-point line too much. I don't think we did a very good job of getting the ball into the post or off dribble penetration.

I talked to Dezayne before the second half. I just needed to get him to move the ball quicker, get him moving. I



thought we cut better in the second half to be able to break them down and move them around and spread them out, and then the guys moved the ball to open players.

There was multiple times where we hit the roll or hit the post and they naturally definitely try and dig that thing out of there pretty aggressively and guys were poised enough to find open guys on the perimeter.

**Q. Dezayne, what was your thought on that? You had some pretty clean looks.**

DEZAYNE MINGO: Yeah, these guys were finding me. We wanted to play out of the post a little more in the second half and trust our big guys who can pass fairly well. They did a good job finding me. Ben and other guards on the perimeter did a good job. We say whenever we get inside and kick it out, we're a pretty good team, so that was our goal.

AARON FEARNE: Just on that, Spencer Elliott, he has six assists, Anton has three. Getting nine assists from your 4, 5 that played a fair bit of minutes tonight backs that up.

**Q. South Florida has the top 10 scoring offense and they had five steals against you just five days ago. Can you give me a sense, are you more concerned about trying to slow down their amazing offense or ball control so they don't get as many steals, or something else?**

BEN BRADFORD: That's something that we have to look at when we prep. But our main focus was just taking it one day at a time, so we worried about UAB and we'll worry about South Florida later on.

**Q. Can y'all speak on the grit of this team after losing seven of your last nine to end the regular season? Now you're just two wins away from the NCAA Tournament.**

DEZAYNE MINGO: I think that we have something that no other team in this conference has, and that's we got picked 13th, so we have a chip on our shoulder that every day when we go out there, we know that that opposite coach at the other side picked us 13th. So that's our motivation every time we step out there.

**Q. Coach, just talk to me a little bit about what the halftime message is to this group, really today and yesterday. You go out there and you shoot 77.3 percent in the second half yesterday, follow it up with 76.9. Something is resonating with the group in the locker room at halftime really to spark them in the second half. Wondering what that is.**

AARON FEARNE: Just try and keep it positive. It's hard for me to do at times for sure. That's just naturally how I am a little bit with it. Guys will laugh about that a little bit.

No, I thought yesterday we generated a lot of really good shots and just didn't knock them down, and I believed they would in the second half. We did that.

Like I mentioned earlier I didn't think we did a good job enough of moving the ball and moving each other in the first half today, and then second half we were able to do that.

I think it's just you're at this point of the year, when you've played a number of games now where you're trying to get that synergy and connection together and win together.

As I tell our guys, they've got to submit to each other. They're playing for their teammate next to them, and when they have that mindset to play like that, then they all can have success and they can all have their nights.

And we've had numerous guys throughout the year have big nights. Dezayne tonight; it was Ben yesterday; could be someone else tomorrow. That's just really the messages that I've -- there's no magic formula here. We do what we do, and when we're just a little off with it, we have to sharpen it up, and we're able to do that right now.

**Q. Dezayne, can you talk a little bit about your performance last night, and then today one rebound shot, a triple-double, career high in assists yesterday, and then today your shot was falling, career high in points. What does that do for you as a player to have the confidence or to know Coach has confidence in you to be effective in so many different ways?**

DEZAYNE MINGO: Yeah, feels good knowing that the coaches and the players both believe in me. I don't like to get too high or too low, so I'm grateful for both games. I'm just ready to move on to the next.

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