

American Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Saturday, March 14, 2026

Birmingham, Alabama, USA

Legacy Arena At The BJCC

USF Bulls

Coach Bryan Hodgson

Wes Enis

Joseph Pinion

Postgame Press Conference



So I thought they did a better job of handling that in the first half than we did, but we stepped up when it counted and we took over the rebounding battle because I think the under eight media was tied. We ended up taking over the rebounding battle.

I told our guys if we could do that, we'd win this game, beat them up on the blue collar stuff. I thought we got a great team effort, but we came here to win two, not just one. We'll come back, focused, and prepare for our next opponent.

Q. I'll start with you, Wes. You were the primary defender on Dezayne Mingo; you held him to eight points, 3 of 12 shooting. Take me through what worked for you when guarding him.

WES ENIS: Yeah, we had a good game plan: just pressure on the basketball.

But it's not just me. Our defense is so connected. Ball screen coverages, everyone is involved. We knew he was really good. Had eight threes, had 37; we knew he was going to feel good, hit some tough shots. But just staying persistent with the game plan.

Q. Joseph, can you talk about your guys' mentality coming into this game? Was there added pressure coming in as a one seed, double bye?

JOSEPH PINION: The mentality, like it is every game. We're going to come out here, do the dirty stuff, the blue collar stuff. We're going to pressure for 40 minutes and we're just going to let the game take care of itself.

Q. And then Coach, I'll ask you, second half, Charlotte has been really, really good in this tournament, shooting over 75% in the last two games. What was your message to the team for you guys to come out and beat them so bad in the second half today?

BRYAN HODGSON: We have the number one defense in the American Conference and that's not opinion, that's fact. We finished the league with number one efficiency in the

South Florida 86, Charlotte 64

THE MODERATOR: We are joined on the podium by South Florida head coach Bryan Hodgson, Wes Enis, and Joseph Pinion. Coach, we'll start with general comments from you about the game.

BRYAN HODGSON: First and foremost, hats off to Charlotte. They really play made a good run. Played two good games of the basketball. You could tell they were locked in. The last two games, just full transparency, watching on film and being here yesterday and being able to watch some live, credit to the coach and the players because they came ready to a play here.

Obviously we just played them six days ago. That was a different team than we played six days ago. So I want to give credit to them on a good year.

But really proud of our guys. It's always goofy and, listen, I'm all for this format, but when you have six days off at the end of the year, how do we manage practice? How do we manage our bodies? How do we make sure we continue to have an edge?

But I thought this group of guys was phenomenal during those six days on our approach and our effort in practice. We strung together a couple of really, really good practices heading in here so I really wasn't worried about it.

We started off okay. I thought we gave them some stretches there in the first half where we got a little goofy defensively and at the same time, we allowed our shot selection to get a little goofy. Obviously the way the game was officiated they let the guys play and I'm all for that.

conference so they were really good the last two games, they were, but that wasn't against us. As long as we stuck with our game plan and stuck with who we are on defense, connected, talk, max effort, great closeouts and finish plays that we weren't going to allow that same outcome and we held them to 38% in the second half and 34 for the game.

Credit to these guys. They knew how well Charlotte was playing and we talked about it a bunch and they made an effort and a point to make sure that that wasn't going to happen to us.

Q. Coach, what were some things offensively and defensively that you liked into today's game that you want to bring into the championship game against Wichita State or Tulsa?

BRYAN HODGSON: Love shooting 41% as a team. That was a plus. 17 on-boards. We obviously need to clean up the turnovers. We had some unforced turnovers. Obviously the defensive effort. I think we finished the game with 12 steals. I thought our hand activity was great in the second half. We need carryover there. I thought we got great production from our bench. Everybody was locked in. Again, total team effort.

So we got to do a better job of gashing without fouling and protecting the rim a little bit better; execute a little better on our ball screen coverages, and we'll clean those things up heading into tomorrow.

Q. And then for Wes, you have had 20 points in six of your last seven games including four straight. What's been clicking for you over that stretch?

WES ENIS: Just my teammates finding me and just taking the game and not forcing anything. Some nights it might be my night; other nights it might be somebody else. Just taking what my defense gives me, and my teammates are finding me on open longs so it's easy.

Q. Coach, I do want to ask you just real quick, first off, congratulations on the win, but we have seen the initiative in baseball with the non-conference scheduling and the coaches putting a big emphasis on getting more teams in the NCAA tournament. In your perspective, how do we as the conference get more than just one bid to the NCAA Tournament? We could go bag to getting two, three, four, five bids into the NCAA Tournament?

BRYAN HODGSON: I think it has to be a concerted effort by every member school to schedule that way in the non-conference. I think about three of us did and the rest of us didn't, just full transparency.

We scheduled that way; Memphis scheduled that way; Temple was in the mix. You got to, A, schedule those games and win those games. We're not innocent here. We dropped some in the non-conference that could have made us cemented into that conversation but it's going to take a concerted effort from everybody in the conference to go out and seek tough non-conference games and get what, you might have to go on the road and play in Big 12 and SEC and big 10 games and I said it before and I'll say it again.

I put these guys through the gauntlet. We got great support at South Florida. I didn't have to go on the road and play Alabama. I didn't have to go on the road and play Oklahoma State, but we signed up for those and we got better because of those.

Played in a great MT, Battle 4 Atlantic, come home 1-2. That's not a fun trip, but we came back and popped a top 25 team in the country on our home floor. Just scheduling those games and finding ways to win those games is what's going to elevate this league to put us in a position to get more teams in.

Q. Question for Joseph and/or Coach. This is not your first conference championship appearance. You made it in the Sunbelt last March before losing. How much does it sting to lose a conference tournament championship and any lessons learned from last March that you can use tomorrow?

BRYAN HODGSON: I think it's pretty self-explanatory. It stings, obviously. We had great regular season last year. Won the Sunbelt. Got to the conference championship there and lost the game to a really good Troy team.

Those games and your regular season we were fortunate enough to play in the NIT and win some games there but yeah they sting, of course. You hold that in your memory but that doesn't change our approach. We got here for a reason. This is a very connected team. They understand our team goals and it's not a coincidence that we're here.

I've got a team full of winners and I've got the best coaching staff in the country. My assistants are phenomenal. We'll watch this game and prepare to play in another one tomorrow and hopefully come out with a win.

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