

National Invitation Tournament: North Texas vs UAB

Friday, March 31, 2023

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

Orleans Arena

Alabama at Birmingham Blazers

Andy Kennedy

Trey Jamison

Jordan Walker

Finals Postgame Press Conference



JORDAN WALKER: Today is a little hard but I'm blessed. I want to thank God first and foremost for allowing me to even be in this position to talk with you guys.

I prayed this morning and I told Him no matter what, through the good or the bad, the win or the loss, I'm going to praise Him in advance. I'm definitely thankful to be here. I put that to God.

But to Andy Kennedy, I appreciate him like no other. He gave me a chance to come here and be me and show people who Jordan Walker really is, and I always appreciate him for that because he truly believed in me from the moment I stepped on campus to my last game here, and I truly love him for that. He's done nothing but believe in me and uplift me through all my good and all my bad, and I truly appreciate him for that.

And to my teammates, I love them, every single one of them, and I bump heads with a lot of them, but at the end of the day, I love each and every one of them.

And to the University of Alabama Birmingham, I appreciate every single person from the teachers to the students to even the janitors who work in our gym, I appreciate every one of them. But that's all I'm going to say.

Q. We know defense is where they hang their hat but what were they able to do defensively down the stretch to really buckle down?

ANDY KENNEDY: I think they keep constant pressure on you. They force you into some tough shots, some tough decisions. I thought when we had the game, we were really good defensively to start the half. In the open floor before they could get set, we were able to take advantage of some matchups, and we had some guys make some plays.

Down the stretch, offensively, boy, there was a couple of some fortuitous bounces, one kid makes a three to end the clock, and then Tyler Perry makes that big-time shot which was the bone crusher at the end. But they are a good

North Texas 68, UAB 61

ANDY KENNEDY: It's always disappointing when it ends, especially when you've got a group that has done the things that this group has done but we knew coming in, we're very, very familiar obviously with North Texas and we knew we had to play well.

First half, I thought they were beating us to some loose balls, keeping balls alive and just playing better, finishing inside. Second half we certainly changed the tune to that. I think we took our first lead midway through that second half and then uncharacteristically for us, missed some free throws and blockouts.

But they are a good basketball team and they made the plays that are necessary in order to be NIT champs, so congratulations to them.

Q. For both Jelly and Trey, knowing you were able to play all the way in, how does it feel to end your season and career at UAB and what are your memories from this season?

TREY JEMISON: I'm so grateful, man, despite the outcome, despite not playing how I wanted to play, how we wanted to play, I'm still grateful to be playing with these guys, you know what I'm saying.

It's been a wonderful journey, to say the least, and you hate it ends this way but I'm glad it ended with these guy, you know what I'm saying. I'm glad to play for AK for three years and glad to play with Jelly for two years, so just grateful, man.

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team.

I think it's been well-documented over the last -- especially over the last week, the strength in Conference USA, we have had four battles with them, and most all of them have been just like this where it comes down to the team that makes the most plays; and North Texas made most plays tonight, and ultimately they deserved the Championship.

Q. You know what this team has to offer talent-wise but sometimes in these moments you see the heart and with these guys next to you, how proud are you of this team and what they have been able to accomplish this year?

ANDY KENNEDY: I took this job right when COVID hit. And Trey, we had known one another because when I was at Ole Miss, I had recruited him briefly and we had crossed paths. Back in those days, you remember, nobody -- you couldn't have anybody visit campus. Everything was on Zoom. You had no interaction whatsoever.

We were fortunate that Trey was from Birmingham and we had some what of a relationship. So it wasn't as if he had -- oh, I've never been to Birmingham and that makes me worried.

But obviously Quan Jackson and Mike Ertel were with us for two years, and Trey, they were the ones that turned this thing for us to get us back to where we have moments such as this. We were able to have success and then you know we were able to then kind of get back to some normalcy; and we had an opportunity that we presented Jelly. And as he said, it took some trust. It took some trust on his part; that this can be mutually beneficial and we can put you in a position where you'll become a guy that a lot of people throughout college basketball know, and you can also help us take that next step.

Here we are three years with Trey and two years with these two, and we're sitting here with 56 wins, I guess, over the last two years and we were certainly hopeful we could get to 57 tonight, but we just didn't make the plays. These guys have advanced the brand of UAB Basketball, and they have set the standard which we want to attain moving forward.

Q. I know it's tough in this moment to reflect and talk about it, and I know it means so much to represent Birmingham for both of you, one, being from Birmingham and Jelly, the city rallying around you and what you've been able to bring to this team. What's your message to the city and what your fans -- what would you want to say to them after all of this?

TREY JEMISON: I thank y'all for just raising a kid like me and giving me so much throughout three years growing up in Birmingham, I'm eternally grateful from Birmingham and blessed to be from the 205. I want you all to know, I gave my all every time I had that jersey on; every time I showed up at class, study hall, whatever it was, I gave it my all, I want y'all know. I'm just so grateful to be from Birmingham and thank y'all for all y'all did for me, man.

JORDAN WALKER: For me, I'm from New York. Birmingham is far from where I'm from, you know. But since I've been in Birmingham, it's been nothing but love from everybody.

And for that city to be behind me, whether I go get food or go to the gas station, people are rooting for me and saying good things about me all the time, I appreciate every single person and I appreciate that city.

It will always be my second home, and I've been to a lot of different schools, but for the rest of my life, this is going to be my second home.

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