

Southeastern Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Thursday, March 11, 2021

Nashville, Tennessee, USA

Mississippi State Bulldogs

Abdul Ado

Postgame Press Conference

Mississippi State 74, Kentucky 73

THE MODERATOR: We are now joined by Mississippi State center, Abdul Ado. We'll take questions.

Q. You've been around long enough to know how big it is to beat these guys. What does it mean to finally come out on the winning side of one of them?

ABDUL ADO: This is great. I can't put it in words how much it means to me. I was just telling Devon that this is the first time I've beaten them since I've been here at Mississippi State.

This was, like, an outstanding win for me. But we are just going to enjoy this win for now, play Alabama tomorrow.

Q. Playing Alabama for a third time, a team you're familiar with. What have you learned from the first two against them that you can use to your advantage tomorrow?

ABDUL ADO: I think they're a team that really pushes in transition. They are like a transition team, transition, they run, run, run. Even on a make, on free throw, they pushing hard, they pushing it down your neck.

But, yeah, right now the main focus is for me and the rest of the guys on the team, I'm pretty sure the coaches will emphasize that, being able to get back in transition. For a fact I know we did a great job on the halfcourt when we're playing defense. We know how to guard at the defensive side.

The best thing we could do is try to limit them in transition, try to get stops in transition, everything will take care of itself.

Q. That was part of the day today, transition defense. Were you better in that area today? How much did that help you to get Kentucky off its game a little bit?



ABDUL ADO: Like I said, at the halfcourt we are a tough team to score on because we communicate, we talk to each other, we help each other on the defensive side.

If we can get back in transition and everybody pick up a man, it doesn't matter who it is. We're going to guard our butts off every time.

The focus is transition, transition. Today I feel like everybody did a great job, the whole team did a great job on their part of getting back in transition. We messed up a couple times. I think they had a couple of transition buckets. Apart from that, we really did a great job.

You could really tell how much of a good job we did in the halfcourt because they struggled. We play hard. Especially the first half, we played really hard on the defensive side when it came to halfcourt.

Q. How much did your heart stop for a second when you saw that last shot from Kentucky go up?

ABDUL ADO: When the shot went up, for somebody who has been hot the whole game, when it went up, I kind of had like flashbacks of playing at LSU when we lost on a buzzer-beater by Skylar Mays. I had flashbacks of that.

The main focus was if it comes off, we have to get the defensive rebound. They do not get no second shot. So I was going to get that rebound no matter what, regardless. We came to stay. We not going home, so...

Q. You heard the phrase 'find a way to win.' You were up 14, down 5, then back and forth in the last 2 minutes. Talk about the ebbs and flows of this game, how you kind of stuck together when Kentucky made the charge back, closing it out?

ABDUL ADO: We always talk about it in our huddle. We always talk about basketball is a game of runs. Every team is going to make their run. But it's how you respond to that. Do you put your head down or do you pick your head up and everybody just push forward, get a stop. One play at a time, one play at a time, which is what we did.



The coaches called a play for Iverson and he hit two shots. We have confidence in him, in our shooters. We will do whatever it take to get that person open. Iverson is a great shooter, D.J. is a great shooter. We were willing to get them wide-open shots.

As you can see, we were down five, he came out, hit a shot. Second time we set the screens for him, he didn't think twice, he hit those threes. That was the whole focus. One play at a time. One play at a time. Go back on defense, get a stop, get a stop, get a stop, stops, stops, come back on offense because we had confidence in each other.

They made their run, fine, whatever. We're going to come back and make our run, so yeah.

Q. Earlier this year Kentucky blocked a lot of y'all's shots in the first half. Do you think you caught them off guard with the way you attacked them right from the tip?

ABDUL ADO: I got to give the guards credit. The guards really looked inside to the bigs. D.J. had 10 assists. You could tell he was looking for everybody. If we were wide open, he was going to pass you the ball.

We figured the first time we really didn't play inside-out. We really needed to help the guards outside because it can't be just an outside game the whole time. It has to be inside, outside. If we help them on the inside, it helps open up space for them to get wide-open shots to drive and kick. D.J. drove, kick, drove, kick, because he was looking for the bigs the whole first half.

We just decided we wanted it. You could see in our faces, we were desperate for a win. There was no denying that for us, so...

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Abdul.

ABDUL ADO: Thank you.

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