

Southeastern Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Thursday, March 11, 2021

Nashville, Tennessee, USA

Vanderbilt Commodores

Jerry Stackhouse

Postgame Press Conference



Florida 69, Vanderbilt 63

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thanks for joining us.

JERRY STACKHOUSE: Yes, sir.

THE MODERATOR: Let's get some opening thoughts from you, then take questions.

JERRY STACKHOUSE: We're disappointed. Our goal was to come in here, really do something special. I thought our guys fought all the way. Had some opportunities, had some shots to give ourselves a chance. Thought we competed extremely hard, got defensive stops, all the things that you need to do to win a game like this. Just got to shoot a little better percentage.

Talked all year, somewhere for us is getting around 11 or 12 threes. Tonight it was none. We get a couple more of those, couple more stops here and there, could be singing a different story right now.

I got no problem with the effort, no problem with how our guys competed. These guys really dealt with a lot this year with COVID, protocols. Every day they came to the gym, stayed together, tried to work hard, work on their game, with a lot of doubt, naysayers about who we were, what these kids were. They just kept going. Super proud of them.

Can't wait to get a little bit of time off, let their legs breathe a little bit, probably 10, 11 days, then we'll get right back in the gym and start trying to get better to try to take it a step further next season.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Now that it's at the end of the season, how would you sum up this season within the context of where you are at as a program compared to what you want to build?

JERRY STACKHOUSE: We want to become a tournament team. I mean, I think we're a step off from that. We're playing our best basketball at the right time. I think we got better. But now it's for us -- I think our guys have improved, they understand what we want. We've kind of had that with different groups, guys that knew it a little bit better, they played better this year. Scotty, Dylan, Jordan Wright. I just anticipate Trey Thomas, Isaac McBride, Myles Stute, those guys, Akeem Oduisipe, Quentin, those guys actually playing the year, having another year under their belt, they're just going to get better. They're going to have more confidence in each other, more confidence in what they're able to accomplish together.

That was kind of our goal. When we first saw this group, we were like, Man, this is a group that we feel like we can get old with, we can grow together. As we get Dylan and Tyrin back into the mix. Tyrin Lawrence was a guy we haven't talked much about at all because he got hurt early. He was a guy we counted on big-time because he just does things above the rim that really nobody else on our team can. When we talk about having that SEC athlete, he's that guy. Hopefully he comes back healthy and strong, like this injury never happened.

But we got to feel good about where we are. We know we still got a ways to go, a long way to go from my mindset of where ultimately where we want to be. It's not just noise to me to talk about, Okay, we want to get back to where we make sure we're back in the tournament, making a run in the tournament.

So, yeah, it's good to win an SEC game, but we got much loftier goals than that. I think that's throughout our program.

Q. What is Scotty's future looking like at this point? Anything you and him have spoken about regarding next season?

JERRY STACKHOUSE: Not at all. I mean, I think that's something -- I don't know. I think I'm going to get all the information that I can for him. We did the same thing with Aaron and Saben last year. I think the league, they send



out this information, whenever you request it on these guys. Whatever we get back we're going to share with them.

That's something that he and his family are going to have to make some decisions about. Obviously I hope that he comes back. I feel like he still has tremendous growth. Not like he has some family situation that he needs to sprint off for to get a check. I think they're doing okay.

I think from the standpoint of just being in college, I mean, I think Scotty enjoys college, enjoys being here. Again, those are conversations we'll have a little bit later down the road. Right now I just want him to catch his breath, catch his body up. Again, like I said, he got banged up a little bit at the end of the season. I know his body is not 100% right now.

I just want our guys to heal up all those little nagging injuries, take a little bit of time off, get right back at it. My goal is to get back in the gym probably about 10, 11 days, really go hard for a few weeks before we give them a nice little break for the spring, before they come back for summer school, then we'll be back full blast again.

We're building here. We don't have time to relax on anything. It was a nice accomplishment to come to the tournament, win a game, to compete our butts off and have an opportunity to win another game. But those weren't our goals.

I mean, talking to those guys, we knew we could play with any team that's playing in this conference. Let's try to go and do something special. That was the conversations that we had.

I mean, it was heads down in our locker room. Guys are disappointed because they know we had a chance to play another day, and we just didn't get it done. It wasn't in the cards this time.

Like I said, I'm super proud of these guys, super proud of their efforts, and hopefully we can start giving them a little bit of credit for who's here and what's not here.

There's no saviors. I think my biggest message to our guys was we have -- really the trajectory of our team depends on us getting better internally. We got some nice pieces coming in, but what's really going to help us jump-start and really get ahead of the curve is for us to come back, put that work in, start to see that improvement on the current roster, then go from there.

Q. On the decision for the future, is Dylan also a kid who might take a look or does the injury change that

for him? On your seniors, any chance that Max or Clevon could be back next year?

JERRY STACKHOUSE: Yeah, I think there's a chance with Dylan. His recovery for that is going to take him probably well into the summer, so I don't think it would be the smartest thing for him to declare for the draft. I fully anticipate him coming back.

Again, I could be surprised, too. Wouldn't be the first time I've had a surprise in that situation. Like I said, you don't know what these kids are thinking all the time. I think for the most part he's just trying to get his body healthy to come back and have a big year next year.

There is some possibility. Obviously these guys get this year back, some programs they can apply to, hopefully we can have some success getting them in there and go from there. Love to have those guys back. I think we lose Ej, so we'll still have one scholarship for next year.

I think the graduate program is something that he really wants to get in, is not offered at Vanderbilt. I think he's going to try to find. He may want to play somewhere else that has that program.

Really thankful for Ej. He was a guy that we put him in a lot of different roles over the course of this season. He was starting sometimes, playing some minutes sometimes, sometimes he wasn't in the rotation. He still was as happy and as good of a teammate that you could ever, ever want. Whatever his desires is going forward, we're going to do everything we can to try to help him.

As far as Clevon and Max, we're definitely going to have some dialogue about getting those guys. It helps us get older. Again, having guys that's been together for two, going on three years now, I think that's what everybody wants.

You look at the teams that's playing now and having success, you talk about it, a lot of these teams, Alabama, not to take anything away from Nate Oats because he is a great coach, but he has some seniors on that team, some guys that have already had some accomplishments in this league. That's what you got to have to have some success.

Look around, a lot of these teams that we played this year, they had guys on their roster that already had college careers, you know what I'm saying? Grad transfers that have come in, played well in other programs, come in for a year as a hired hand. I don't think that's necessarily our model.

What we're doing, how we're playing is hard to really pick up in one year. I think we're building from within, going to continue to try to get old together with this group.

I really would be happy to see what this group, Quentin, Dylan, would look like being together for four years. I think we'll all be pretty happy with the product if they stay together that long.

Q. You mentioned the third scholarship that's coming open from Ejike leaving. We don't know who is going to be available. Ideally, what type of player would you fill that spot with?

JERRY STACKHOUSE: It's interesting. I mean, like I said, with this new rule with the transfers able to play right away, we've offered some guys. If they decide to commit, we would take those guys. But it's something to be flexible about a little bit, kind of see what's available.

As the season starts to wind down, you're going to see a lot of different guys jump in the portal. That's something we'll take a look at, see kind of what makes sense for us.

Obviously with decisions that could possibly be made with guys that's on our current roster, again with Scotty, don't know if that's a void we're going to have to fill.

I think flexibility is golden right now just for us to kind of take a step back, let things kind of play out for a few weeks. But I do think there's going to be some good pieces that will be available to add.

Again, I'm not thinking so much from a grad transfer, but maybe a young player that makes some sense for us that we can add and continue to makes some sense with our group.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you.

JERRY STACKHOUSE: Appreciate you guys, man. Thank you guys for putting up with me all year. Know I get at y'all a little bit, get at my players a little bit, but I appreciate y'all. Thank you all for being who you are, and hopefully continue to grow our program. Know you guys will be there with us. Hoping it works out the way we all want. Thank you.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports