

Southeastern Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Thursday, March 11, 2021

Nashville, Tennessee, USA

Missouri Tigers

Dru Smith

Postgame Press Conference

Missouri 73, Georgia 70

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Dru Smith.

Q. How big was it for the team tonight just to get the tournament started the right way?

DRU SMITH: Yeah, I think it was really big for us. Obviously from here on out, it's just win and advance. We're just glad to come out of there with a win.

Q. What is it like as a player to consistently kind of go through these close games, especially when you have these leads, then they dwindle down a little bit?

DRU SMITH: Yeah, I mean, it does get a little tiring. But, I mean, whatever we have to do to win games, that's what we have to do. There's going to be runs, teams are going to make runs. It's kind of going to go back and forth most of the time.

Just understand we have to have one more point at the end. At the end of the day, that's what we did.

Q. What was Coach Martin's message to you in the timeout you took with about a minute left, how to close out the game?

DRU SMITH: Yeah, I mean, we just had to get a stop. I think we were up three at that point maybe. I'm not sure. But I think we were up three. I know we were making sure we didn't want to give up a three obviously. Just that we had to lock in one defensive possession. That was really it. We just had to get stops.

Q. You had about four shots rim out in the first half. Did it take a while for guys just to settle in offensively? Did you just feel better in the second half?

DRU SMITH: I mean, yeah, I felt better. I felt like honestly I was taking good shots. They were rattling and rattling



out, I was missing layups. It was ugly for me there in the first half.

Yeah, I mean, just settling in. As a team, we were able to settle in there in the second half, just play a little bit better basketball.

Q. What is the feeling like for you? A year ago this opportunity doesn't happen. Now this is what you came here for. What's the feeling like now?

DRU SMITH: I mean, I'm just excited. I'm excited to have this opportunity, excited to be moving on, just looking forward to our next matchup tomorrow.

Q. You all were able to score the ball pretty effectively for most of the second half until about the last 6 minutes or so. What was the difference between when the offense was clicking and when it wasn't tonight?

DRU SMITH: I mean, I think they went to a zone there for a second that I thought it threw us off a little bit. It made us a little stagnant. We've had that problem in the past.

I think they went to that 2-3 there for a second. I think that was around the time that you're talking about. I think it just gave us a little pause. We weren't as aggressive as we had been before.

Q. What do you feel like the difference was for you in the first half and the second half? Was it the rim?

DRU SMITH: No, I don't think it was the rim. I guess it was just me. I don't know. I just couldn't make a shot in the first half. I was getting a little frustrated. I mean, I just kept telling myself just move on, next play. Shots will start eventually falling.

Q. How did that solid ending to the first half where you made over 50% of your shots, how did that feed into the second half?

DRU SMITH: Yeah, I thought it gave us definitely a good little burst of momentum there. Kobe got that steal, was able to push it ahead, hit X wide open on the wing. He



knocked it down. Definitely was big for us. Obviously just cut the lead down a little bit. We were able to come out only down one. Also just to get our momentum, our spirits up and everything going into that second half.

Q. You all turned 13 turnovers into 19 points. How important was it to not only get the turnovers but capitalize in transition?

DRU SMITH: Yeah, it was definitely important. It's always important for us to get out and run in transition. Live ball turnovers are usually the easiest way to do it. Definitely good we were able to capitalize on those. Hopefully we can continue that.

Q. You mentioned how close these games have been recently. It's not so long ago you had the shot against Florida. Is there a certain way the team envisions those close-game scenarios going? Is there a certain person you want taking that shot?

DRU SMITH: I think we have a lot of guys that are confident to have the ball in their hands at any time in the game. Just trying to make sure that we're taking team shots. That was something that we said there late down the stretch. We're making them one more pass still, we're not trying to take any hero-type shots. Just making sure we're still playing good basketball no matter how much time is left on the clock.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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