

Southeastern Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Friday, March 12, 2021

Nashville, Tennessee, USA

Tennessee Volunteers

Santiago Vescovi

Postgame Press Conference



Tennessee 78, Florida 66

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Santiago Vescovi. Questions.

Q. What did you see on the play that knocked John out of the game today? How did that affect you guys the rest of the game?

SANTIAGO VESCOVI: First of all, I didn't see it. I was already turn around, going back. All I heard was John on the floor, the ref whistled, then my teammates told me he got elbowed. I asked one of my teammates if he saw it. He was like, Yeah, he did it on purpose.

We all felt pain for John because I think we really care about his well-being, him being healthy and playing with us. I think that helped us a lot just to have more motivation. Since that point we knew we were playing for him, too, because he got taken out. To me, it was not like a really fair way. I think it really helped us and motivated us.

Q. How big was it for you today to see some shots go in, be productive?

SANTIAGO VESCOVI: I mean, I felt pretty confident in the game today. I think I gained more confident as the game went. First of all, I think the perception of the rim and the stands behind was kind of playing some games in my mind. I couldn't get the real distance from me to the rim. But then I settled down a little bit, I started feeling more good, I started feeling better.

I just feel that we played in a fun way today. We all had a lot of smiles. Everybody was smiling. We were having fun while we were playing. We're playing for each other. I think that's one of the best things that we could have done moving forward and thinking about tomorrow.

Q. Defensively you guys have been lights out against

Florida these past two games. Was it game planning? Execution?

SANTIAGO VESCOVI: Personally I think that part, it goes half and half. I think as players we did a really great job in terms of just sitting down, taking pride defending everyone. But I think also the coaches had a really great impact in that because we know we're going to play -- coming into the game against Florida before the SEC tournament. We had a whole week to prepare for that.

The whole week we were just practicing one-on-one defense, just scouting about how we were going to play against Florida. I think that helped us to get in a much higher level in terms of defense.

Yeah, like I said, I think we contributed a lot in terms of attitude and taking pride in defending, but also the coaches did a really great job preparing us for these games coming.

Q. You're going to have to play Alabama tomorrow. Do you remember anything from the first game that will be helpful in your rematch with them?

SANTIAGO VESCOVI: I mean, we all remember the first game. It was not good for us. I think still for everybody on our team, it's still in the back of our heads. We're still thinking about that. I think that also can help us as a motivation for the next game.

We know it's going to be a battle, but we just got to take pride every single possession.

Q. Y'all have had more guards on this team this season, it was always going to be a little bit different. Your production has been more up and down. You hit some really big shots in the second half. Where is your confidence level knowing you might not be scoring 16 a game, but when the team needs big shots you can do that?

SANTIAGO VESCOVI: I mean, like I said first, on the first half I was struggling a little bit with the depth behind the rims. Once I settled down, I was feeling more confident. Also I think all my teammates and the coaches gave me



the confidence. Every game I make or I miss shots, they tell me to keep shooting every time. They never say anything when I shoot it. I think that also gives me a lot of confidence and helps me whenever I got to shoot another ball.

Q. With your own team, how would you define your role on this team right now?

SANTIAGO VESCOVI: I think I'm a guy right now that can help my teammates. I think most of the times I can -- I can help the guards drive because I know the other teams are going to stay a little more attached to me. That gives whoever is going to drive more room to get to the rim. Also defensively I think I'm talking all the time, so that also helps to the whole team.

Q. How unique is the way Alabama plays? They get a lot of publicity for taking three-pointers or layups. How do you prepare for them defensively?

SANTIAGO VESCOVI: I mean, I think they're a team that play really fast. They get out a lot of threes. On transition they try to score every time as fast as they can.

In terms of the defensive part, I think that the coaches are going to do a great job, as they always do, in terms of preparing us. That's all we're thinking about right now, just thinking about tomorrow's game. We know it's big. Also think about how it went last time back in Knoxville. I think we have a big motivation coming into tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

SANTIAGO VESCOVI: Thank you.

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