

# Southeastern Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Friday, March 12, 2021  
Nashville, Tennessee, USA

## Florida Gators Mike White

### Postgame Press Conference

Tennessee 78, Florida 66

THE MODERATOR: Questions for coach.

**Q. Mike, can you kind of speak to the physicality of the game. I know you've addressed a couple times this year before the emotions in your team, that might have manifested itself in this game. What about those two things?**

MIKE WHITE: Yeah, no, I think both times we've played these guys this week, we got a little bit too emotional. I think we lack the emotional maturity that you need day in and day out to be a championship-level team. That's why we fell short again here in this tournament.

We had another chance. I think that we've got a high level of character off the floor with these guys, got a really good group of guys to work with. But at times when things aren't going well, we can make some poor decisions offensively, defensively, between whistles.

Just ran into a Vol in the hallway, asked about Fulkly. I haven't seen the clip yet. I hope he's okay. Got a lot of respect for him, the way he plays, the way he approaches the game.

I thought Tennessee was terrific today. Are they physical? Absolutely. We need to be more physical. We're not the most physical team out there. We're working on it.

I thought that Tennessee just overall was better in several areas. They beat us to some loose balls, beat us up on the interior. Hard to get anything going close to the rim. They're terrific defensively.

**Q. What makes them so hard to score against? Is it a connectivity thing with them?**

MIKE WHITE: Yeah, I mean, I think they're big, strong, fast. They've got great athleticism and length in their



backcourt with those freshmen wings. Vescovi is very sound, of course. Victor Bailey is very, very sound. They change defenses on you at times.

Then they've got the ability, I think what separates them, at the four and five spots you have experienced, tough, intelligent, versatile, quick, fast, interchangeable pieces with Fulkerson and Pons. Pons can go one through five. Fulkly can use his feet. The way that he can get out and blitz and hedge, even get into some switch scenarios, stay in front of guards.

I don't know what their computer numbers are today, but they're arguably one of the best defensive teams in the country.

**Q. What do you say to Omar Payne after that?**

MIKE WHITE: I hadn't seen it honestly. I told him he had to go to the locker room. That's what the officials told me. I'm assuming he did something that he shouldn't have done. We'll have a conversation. We've had a couple of those in his early career here, a couple of them last year.

We've got to be better than that. We've got to be more mature than that. We have to show better sportsmanship. We have to play with an ultimate level of physicality, but play by the rules as well.

**Q. When it comes to the emotional maturity you spoke of, this season you're at tournament time now, I'm sure you've talked yourself blue in the face to get these guys to get that right. At this point is that just the way this team is? Is it just something you have to cope with?**

MIKE WHITE: Well, definitely been coping with it. It definitely is who this team is right now. I would hope that with one more swing at it, we could put our best foot forward in the next event. As we lose one more time, it's over.

My guys are tired. It's been an emotionally draining season. No one has been through what these guys have been through. So to go overboard on beating us up about



how emotional we are and how immature we are, coming off a loss here, two in a week, we've got to probably infuse some type of confidence, some type of discussion, an open discussion with all of us to where we can put this thing behind us somehow, figure out how we can grow up as much as possible in a short period of time. Maybe we can finish this thing strong.

**Q. Obviously it's been an emotionally draining year. Schematically what can you do right now to maybe improve in the halfcourt? Other than pick'n roll that was really all that you could get today against Tennessee.**

MIKE WHITE: Well, we ran some shooters off of some baseline screen action a few times. Tennessee is able to switch that stuff out because of the versatility of their front court. We threw into the post several times, didn't get much out of it.

We tried a couple back screen situations trying to get guys lobs or layups. Again, they handled those things pretty well. Switched a couple of them, if I'm not mistaken.

When you play these guys, there's only so many actions that you run in basketball. Unless you had a chance to start the season over and run a lot of different screen actions off of the ball, that's just not who we are. We've had a lot of success in league play. I don't know how we finished the regular season, but I want to say we were first in field goal percentage, first in three-point percentage, shot free throws well, didn't value the ball very well as we've talked about all year. Against some good defenses we found pick'n roll situations to be beneficial, pick'n pops, some isolations. We were able to play through the post more so this year than we ever have.

Unfortunately today we became very one-dimensional and we struggled to score on the interior at all. That being said, credit Tennessee, John Fulkerson, Pons, they're terrific defensively.

**Q. Niels Lane has only gotten spare minutes. Is there anything he can do to get on the court when you guys start to struggle offensively? Where is he in his development, his progression?**

MIKE WHITE: Yeah, Niels is behind some of these other guys offensively. But we're playing from behind really from the tip. We wanted to pressure these guys. We wanted to extend pressure in the full court and even in the halfcourt at times. He's got some tools to be a good player in those scenarios.

Also those guys I thought did a good job of getting downhill

one-on-one with some rubs and some isolations. He's pretty good at staying in front of the basketball. He and Sam here as of late are just trying to take advantage of a little bit of opportunity. I thought Jason Jitoboh, plus six in 6 minutes. We played as well as we did in this game with Jason on the floor.

**Q. What do you think was the difference with Tre in the first and second half? He said he made shots in the second half that he didn't make in the first.**

MIKE WHITE: I would agree. I'm rarely a make or miss game type of guy. There's so many factors involved with it. I do think he had three or four really good looks in the first half, despite how good they are defensively. But he's got an ability to create it.

I think we had a couple inside-outside post kick-outs that he missed, as well. Then he really got it going in the second half. We struggled throughout offensively, other than App, who was pretty good, did some good things. Then Tre obviously was fantastic. We just didn't get much help around those two guys.

**Q. Thinking about Tre, at what point did you see him take his game to this next level, whether it be on or off the floor?**

MIKE WHITE: It started I would say mid January to where he was a different player in practice from a mentality standpoint. I said it a few times late last winter. I wasn't just saying it to appease him or finesse him in any way. I thought he would break out.

Unfortunately late last season he just had some games where it just didn't go down for him. He had a lot of competition, of course, at his spot. I really thought in the post-season he would break out, I really did. I want to say he made a couple shots, if I'm not mistaken, in our last home game. Got it going from a confidence standpoint. I thought he was about to break through. Crazy game, we're up 18, K.J. Blackshear breaks his hand. You come here, get ready for this tournament and your season is over.

Then pandemic starts. Every time I'm talking to the kid, he's either heading to the gym, leaving the gym, going back to the gym later. The weight room, gained 12, 15 pounds of muscle. I just think it's really, really important to him. He's got a high level of basketball character. He's a worker. He's really matured. He's a no-excuse type guy. It's on me, this is what I have to get better at, I'm going to do it. He's turned himself into one of the best guards in the country.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

