

Southeastern Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Saturday, March 13, 2021

Nashville, Tennessee, USA

LSU Tigers

Will Wade

Postgame Press Conference

LSU 78, Arkansas 71

THE MODERATOR: We have head coach with us.

WILL WADE: All right. Great win. We had tons of contributions. I thought just a total team win. Very proud of how we've been playing. I thought we showed some toughness at Missouri, showed some toughness last night, tonight. We made some key defensive stops. We got just enough rebounds when we needed to. I thought it was just a huge, huge win. First time since '93 we're going to play for the championship tomorrow afternoon.

Very, very excited. Our guys are really excited. We'll have to figure out something, see if we can keep it close with 'Bama tomorrow. Just very, very pleased with today. We're starting to play some of our best basketball, get some toughness to us. We're making plays when we need to. We're starting to get there.

Very, very excited. Excited for our players. Excited for our fan base. Excited for the state. We'll get back and get a little bit of rest, get some recovery, go at it again tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Really seemed in the second half that things really turned defensively when you put Eric Gaines in there. Talk about his contributions down the stretch.

WILL WADE: Huge. How about the block? That's as good a block as you'll see. Just takes the ball from him, steals the ball late in the game. Hits a huge three. Made the front end of a one-on-one. Made some free throws at the end. He was tremendous.

That's what he does, he brings us energy, brings us some toughness. He can really, really pound the ball and guard the ball. He was tremendous for us.

Q. Talk about your defensive philosophy. You are not



wedded to one style of defense. What worked for you? Javonte said it was the man. Was that the plan going in or something that developed?

WILL WADE: We probably got too cute on this quick turnaround. We tried to press back to a zone back to man, which had given them some problems in the past. We got too cute. We didn't have time to work on it and put it in.

The last probably 32 minutes of the game, we basically played straight man with a little bit of pressure, but it was basically straight man, which allowed us to try to stay square.

Like you said, we've got two or three different presses, two or three different zones, we have a bunch of different stuff we can throw to kind of see what sticks and what works. Obviously nothing was working early. Moody was getting loose, things weren't working like they needed to early.

We went to our straight man. We still gave up some at the same time. I think the last 8 to 10 minutes of the first half, we only gave up six points. In the second half we did a much better job.

Q. Javonte, we asked him about the last 25 or 30 seconds. He said that's what point guards do.

WILL WADE: Great leaderships do.

Q. Great guard, that's right.

WILL WADE: You teed that up for me (laughter).

Q. You're welcome. You put the ball in his hands in the last 30 seconds. Your most experienced player. He delivered.

WILL WADE: It was huge. That's what you do. I thought he played a great floor game. They were hounding him, pressuring him all over the court. I thought he played a really, really good floor game.

He attacked the pressure. That's as good a shot as you'll see at the end. That's a big-time, big-time, big-time floater,



big-time, big-time shot. That was huge for us. So very, very proud of him. That's what you want. You got veteran guards, a junior guard, that's what you want.

Q. The second half, was that the best defense you played all year?

WILL WADE: That was close. We were active, we were contesting things. Gave up a couple slips and that sort of thing. Like I said, I thought our conditioning was top-notch. You have to give Greg Goldin a ton of credit with our conditioning. I thought we were really, really fresh down the stretch, fresh defensively. We forced them to take a bunch of jump shots, which is certainly an advantage for us defensively.

Q. Your last four opponents have averaged 39.6% from the floor. Talk about the catalyst of that type of defensive effort.

WILL WADE: Well, that's a great question. Any time you can hold them under 40 and win the field goal stat, you're going to give yourself a great chance to win, especially with as potent and dangerous as we are offensively.

Really been staying in front of our man. We haven't given up nearly as much in transition, which has been huge. We've been giving up a ton in transition, but we haven't given up nearly as much in transition which has helped our defense. We've rebounded the ball a little bit better.

They got going a little bit at the end of the first half. Ethan Henderson, he's been a thorn in our side. He played well against us two years ago in Fayetteville. He got going against us on the offensive glass.

When you don't give up a bunch of offensive rebounds, we gave up some today, your defensive numbers are a little bit better. Our halfcourt defense has been fairly solid all season.

Q. Trying to keep Notae and Davis and Smith from beating you, what was that the situation there?

WILL WADE: Yeah, I mean, it's hard to add the scoreboard up when you're not making threes, threes in bunches. If we could limit Notae and Moody's threes, it's just hard to score enough points as long as we do what we need to do offensively. Notae has been playing great. Moody is obviously a first-team all-league player, tremendous player.

I think that our guys did a good job on them. Like I said, it's tough to win two-by-two.

Q. You talked about developing some toughness there. These two games have been pretty physical, but they've been letting y'all play through it. Javonte said that's something he noticed. Is that as important?

WILL WADE: Yeah, I mean, I think it's tournament basketball in March. They're going to let you play. I'll say this, I think the overall, if you watch every game in the SEC tournament, they're all officiated the same way. I think that's a total credit to Mike Eades, him having taken over the officiating program.

They're all called the exact same. It's not hard to predict what's going to happen when you're watching Tennessee and Alabama play because you know the officials in your game are going to do the same thing.

That's what you want: players to make plays in March. You don't want the ticky-tack stuff. You have to play and finish through contact.

Q. You spoke last night about how you thought today would be the last big chance to make an impression on the NCAA Selection Committee. Jerry before the game had you guys on the five line.

WILL WADE: I've always liked Jerry. I don't know if you know this. I really have. It's just the truth. When we got in in 2011 at VCU, we were one of the last four teams in, literally the last team in, went to the Final Four. Jerry was the only bracketologist that had us in the field. We were holding up hope for Jerry all the time. I've always liked Jerry. Happy to be going to Indianapolis. Happy to be in the NCAA tournament.

We're not going to start bickering over seeding and that sort of thing. Doesn't matter whether you're five, six, seven, whatever it may be, it's all about the matchup. Your matchup as a five versus a 12, if you play one of the those play-in game winners, it could be worse than your matchup in the (indiscernible). It's more about the matchup than it is the seeding number.

I can't tell you till I see the bracket.

Q. Very familiar with Alabama. Is it going to be a long night tonight with an early tip tomorrow?

WILL WADE: Yeah, I mean, we've got to obviously do something quite a bit different than we've done the first two times. They've absolutely blasted us. We've got to change some things up and figure some things out.

We'll work on some things and we'll put the best plan together we can as quick as we can.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

WILL WADE: Thanks, guys.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

