

Southeastern Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Saturday, March 13, 2021

Nashville, Tennessee, USA

Arkansas Razorbacks

Eric Musselman

Postgame Press Conference



LSU 78, Arkansas 71

THE MODERATOR: Questions to coach.

Q. Was the second half too many turnovers?

ERIC MUSSELMAN: I thought we did a poor job of taking care of the basketball. I think we had 10 second half turnovers. We drove the ball into traffic. Give LSU a ton of credit for winning the game.

Having said that, not having Jaylin Williams, I mean, we got off to a 3-0 start without him. I just body-wise tonight -- when players are struggling that are in your rotation, then you're minus a body, I thought we just didn't have enough gas in the tank tonight on a back-to-back.

Q. You mentioned not having enough gas in the tank. You scored 31 points in the first 10 minutes. Moses sparked a lot of that. Is that what you attribute it to, maybe some heavy legs?

ERIC MUSSELMAN: Yeah, some guys just didn't play well at all. I mean, halftime, it's a three-point game. They out-scored us by four in the second half. I haven't seen anything. I thought Moses did a good job sliding over with 50 seconds left.

I give our guys a lot of credit for playing until the very end. We cut that thing back to one, I think under a minute. But we just had some guys not play well at all. You can't do that in a tournament setting.

Q. You mentioned maybe a little bit light on the bodies tonight. To have a guy like Ethan, who didn't play a ton over the course of the season, to play such a big role, what does that say about his performance tonight?

ERIC MUSSELMAN: Yeah, I thought Ethan played hard for us. He played his role. He only had one turnover in 26

minutes, so he did a good job not turning the ball over. I thought our two freshmen played really well. I thought Devo was really good. Obviously Moses, especially in the first half, played really well.

I thought Justin was great other than his five turnovers, which is way too many turnovers. But I thought he did a good job attacking the rim. Any time in a tournament setting that you have a player go 10 of 13, have 7 boards, 21 points.

Some of the other guys, they got to play better in order for us to win.

Q. You've talked through this streak about how difficult it is to keep winning these kind of games. It's your first SEC loss in two months. Can you put the streak in perspective? Was it just not your night after 12 straight SEC wins?

ERIC MUSSELMAN: I don't know. No, I'm mad we lost. I mean, maybe tomorrow I'll think about that. Right now, we lost, we didn't play well enough to win.

Q. Obviously this is the end of your season. You're going to find out tomorrow about the NCAA. Good news obviously. How do you feel about that? Is Jaylin Williams going to be back for the NCAA tournament? If so, what will that mean?

ERIC MUSSELMAN: Hopefully we'll feel better tomorrow. I'm not going to feel better tonight because we lost. I'm not thinking about what announcement there is tomorrow. I'm worried about how we get better after tonight.

We'll regroup. Yeah, Jaylin will be back. It changes the complexion of who we are. We'll see if we make a change to the starting lineup. But we got to get better.

Q. Not to keep harping on it, but you talked about turnovers last night, too. 16 more today. What did you see as a cause for some of those? Is that a concern right now?

ERIC MUSSELMAN: I would say yes, but I think last night



the turnover difference was one. Tonight it was one. I think a lot of it is also tournament play. It's physicality. I think last night we outscored our opponent in points off turnovers. Tonight they outscored us 21-20.

Yes, we need to definitely take better care of the ball. Having said that, if you look at the style of the game, the two that we played, I mean, again, I think if -- if we were minus seven in that turnover category, I'd be alarmed because normally our teams in the past, not just this year, but in past years, have done a great job taking care of the basketball.

But again, we're about even in these two tournament setting games on turnovers. Yeah, we got to get better at it, look at it, stop driving the ball into traffic would help.

Q. You shot 58% from the line tonight. Even guys like Moses who is accustomed to shooting over 80% just struggled. As a coach in that situation, can you do anything? Anything you say to those guys? Is that just on them?

ERIC MUSSELMAN: No, I mean, you get back in the gym and work on your foul shooting. I mean, we've been a pretty good free-throw shooting team all year. If you look at our guys' percentages career-wise, we're actually way ahead of probably what we thought free-throw percentage coming in. If you look at everybody's free-throw percentage, like I said, throughout their career.

We didn't make free throws tonight, that happens. We played against a great rebounding team. We out-rebounded them. We have 16 offensive rebounds. But just little things. You can't let No. 25, Gaines, go in there and get two offensive rebounds. It can't happen. It did. So therefore, we lost a game.

Q. Right after the game it looked like there was a little chippiness on the court, some of the LSU assistants had to be held back. What was going on there?

ERIC MUSSELMAN: No, I mean, I didn't see anything with their assistant coaches. They had two players that were yelling at our bench. I mean, Coach Wade and I talked. He said that he would address it.

Other than that, I didn't see any of their assistant coaches do anything other than come over and congratulate us on a good season and wish us well in the NCAA tournament, as I wished Will good luck heading into tomorrow night's championship game.

Q. What is the mood in the locker room right now? Obviously pretty down.

ERIC MUSSELMAN: Yeah, it should be. We lost a game.

Q. What happened in the second half? You went over seven minutes without a basket. Can you talk about what was going on on the floor to cause that length of time. You were only scoring at that time was from the free-throw line.

ERIC MUSSELMAN: Yeah, I think we looked tired, plain and simple.

Q. It's been a while since you guys have lost. What was your message to the team right after the game?

ERIC MUSSELMAN: That we have to get better, that we have to get back and improve before our next game.

Q. Moses obviously was hot early. What did they do to slow him down? He always seems to have a really good game if he has a low-scoring game. What do you think that says about him?

ERIC MUSSELMAN: In the first half, it's hard for a player to keep playing like he was in the first half. If he would have, he would have had 40, which is pretty unheard of.

I thought he was great. He led the game in scoring. I mean, he played phenomenal other than missing a couple free throws, which we all know he usually makes.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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