

Southeastern Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Saturday, March 13, 2021

Nashville, Tennessee, USA

Arkansas Razorbacks

Justin Smith

Postgame Press Conference



LSU 78, Arkansas 71

THE MODERATOR: We'll open it up for Justin Smith.

Q. That was your first loss to an SEC team in two months. How does that feel?

JUSTIN SMITH: It's definitely difficult. When you're kind of on a run like that, you kind of get used to it. I don't think we ever got complacent or anything like that, but it definitely hurts. Losing hurts every time regardless. We really wanted this game, so...

It is what it is. We have the tournament to look forward to.

Q. You're going to get some exciting news tomorrow about the NCAA tournament, who you're going to play. How do you feel about that?

JUSTIN SMITH: It feels good. It's kind of what we've been working towards. We were working towards this tournament as well, but it didn't work out. Everybody dreams about playing in the NCAA tournament. This will be my first time, so I'm excited.

Q. Moses really played well to start off the game. What did you really think of his performance? Were they able to slow him down in the second half?

JUSTIN SMITH: He came out firing. I think he kind of had a chip on his shoulder after the last game. He came out aggressive. He was hitting shots. He really propelled us, kept us in the game in the first half. He's very important to our team, especially with his scoring and stuff like that.

In the second half I think they did a good job on him. Maybe that's on us, the rest of us, trying to get him more open shots. But we'll take this game as a learning experience.

Q. What did you feel about Ethan Henderson's

performance the last two games?

JUSTIN SMITH: Ethan, he really stepped up. He gave us a lot of good minutes. He made us be able to do a little bit more different things on defense. He made us more versatile.

Getting J-Will back will help us, giving us a bigger body. He'll help us on the defensive boards, just being able to be down there and bang. We look forward to getting him back, getting him back in shape.

Q. Coach said there was a little bit too much dribble-driving into traffic today and that led to some of the turnovers. Is that your take on it, too?

JUSTIN SMITH: Yeah, I think they did a good job of running us off the three-point line. Once we kind of dribbled into the paint, they really converged on us, made it difficult. We weren't really able to see our outlets, our kick-outs. Credit to them and their defensive scheme for making it difficult on us.

Q. What was the mood in the locker room like? How do you rebound from this loss to get ready for the NCAA tournament?

JUSTIN SMITH: The mood? We kind of sat there for a little bit. But I think the fact that we were able to talk about it I think as a group, we really kind of -- we haven't moved on yet, but we were kind of flushing it out of our system. We still have a lot of basketball left to play. We really wanted this game, really wanted to be able to compete for an SEC championship.

Guys are really locked into the NCAA tournament now. We're going to take in this loss, look back at it, but then we're going to keep looking forward. We got more games to play.

Q. You had 31 points in the first 10 minutes, then things went downhill a little bit, slowed down. Do you attribute that to anything in particular? Do you feel fatigue played a role down the stretch?



JUSTIN SMITH: No, I'm not going to make the fatigue excuse.

I think we stopped moving the ball. We were getting really good shots. We were getting open shots. Also in the first 10 minutes, they run the zone. We made them get out of that. But credit to their defense, making it difficult on us.

I think we kind of -- yeah, yeah.

Q. I think you went on a 9-0 run to make it a one-point game, then LSU made some plays. J.D. had a tough turnover there. The way you've been playing during this streak, did you feel like you were going to pull it out again? What was the feeling when you were coming back there late?

JUSTIN SMITH: I mean, I think we've showed that we're never really out of the game, regardless of how much time is left or the score. I think we were all confident that we were going to be able to make plays, and we did down the stretch.

J.D. had that turnover, but that doesn't take away from all the other turnovers or all the other mistakes we made the rest of the game. That mistake will be magnified, but that's not what lost us the game.

So I think when it comes down to it, we're proven winners as we've proved over the last however many games. Hopefully we can just keep that in the back of our minds, just keep doing what we're doing.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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