

Southeastern Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Sunday, March 14, 2021

Nashville, Tennessee, USA

Alabama Crimson Tide

Nate Oats

Postgame Press Conference

Alabama 80, LSU 79

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by head coach Nate Oats.

Coach, if you could make an opening statement about winning the SEC men's basketball championship, then we'll take some questions.

NATE OATS: Again, just want to reiterate how excited I am for our players that deserved it. They've played the right way. They've bought into what we're trying to get them to do.

That's a good team. They got a lot of talent on LSU's team. They came ready to go today. We kind of came out, had a great start. They answered it, made a run there in the second half. I thought we did a good job.

It was fitting it came down to their offense and our defense at the end to see who is going to win the game. I thought our defense came through. Keon Ellis had a huge block, guarded the underneath out-of-bounds play well, forced them to take a tough one. I wish we could have gotten the first rebound, we didn't. They got it. Fortunate they missed the put-back. Came out of here with a tight win.

Really happy for our guys. I think of those three seniors, Herb and Petty and Reese, that are all from the state of Alabama. Huge Alabama fans. Came here to win championship. Just the fact that I've been able to be a part of their journey here these last two years, super excited for them that they're able to close this senior year out with two championships, regular season and tournament championship.

You add in Tyler, who's a walk-on that's been here the whole time, then Jordan Bruner. Can't say enough about what Jordan's added to the culture here too.

I told Quinerly before the tournament started, I knew he



was playing well, I thought he was locked in. I said, Let's go win the tournament MVP. I coached four of them at Buffalo, one as an assistant, three as a head coach. Time to add a fifth one to the mix.

Happy for Quinerly. Really happy for his family. Saw them up in the stands. His mom was crying. They've been through so much. Really glad he played well on a huge stage, show what he's about.

Shack came through after we struggled yesterday. I talked to him in his hotel room yesterday, just told him he's going to have a big game. He came through, had a huge game for us.

Happy for the guys. We'll get our NCAA tournament matchup here in a couple hours, head up to Indy.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. I think your voice is probably an indication, but how emotionally draining was this game?

NATE OATS: It's like this every year. I got to get all the cough drops, the teas with honey in them and stuff. I was just talking with Adam Bauman, my ops guy, and Hodgson, who was with me at Buffalo, get to this third day, up there, voice is shot, I'm exhausted. I really just want to take a nap.

At least in the MAC, you had a championship Saturday night, you could kind of relax for one night. There's really no relaxing here.

We get our matchup here in about two hours. Go back, pack my room up. It's a disaster because all I've been doing is watching video. Pack up my room, get the bus loaded, get our matchup, load up the video on my computer, watch some video on the way up to Indy. We'll get some sleep and rest after the NCAA tournament is over.

I'm pretty exhausted. Voice is shot. We'll get the voice back before next weekend, that's for sure.

Q. Everybody really had contributions. It seemed like Herb had something a little extra down the stretch especially after the foul call. Then the game winner with 19 seconds. You get tired of me asking about Herb after every game, but describe what he contributed.

NATE OATS: I mean, he was the Player of the Year in the conference, Defensive Player of the Year for a reason. That layup to put us up was big. We wanted to get out in transition. I didn't think we got out in transition quite enough, to be honest with you. I thought they got us in the halfcourt a little bit more than usual.

I'm trying to look right now, the box scores, to see what our transition conversion rate was. It was a little low. We didn't meet our goal on it like I thought. They made us play in the halfcourt a little bit more than we thought.

It was fitting we did get a transition bucket from Herb at the end of the game off a stop to put us up one. I thought we screwed some stuff up defensively there at the end of the game. Herb himself had a couple screw-ups, which is uncharacteristic. He gave up that O board, they hit the three, he got beat on the backdoor.

I thought Trendon played a great game. He hadn't played particularly well some of the earlier games when we beat them twice earlier in the year. I thought he was great today. Ends up with 30. We had a hard time guarding him today.

Herb did a pretty good job. Some of our other guys struggled a bit. I thought Reese did a pretty good job too.

Happy for Herb. We needed him to play well. We don't play well when he's not playing well. It's good to see he's back healthy. He's forced us away from a triple-double. The first game of the tournament he would have had a triple-double if we hadn't been up so much, and I had to actually play him more minutes. 13-11-6, a pretty good night for him.

Q. What are your plans for the logistics of getting to Indy?

NATE OATS: So we head out right after the selection show, drive up, get in there tonight, COVID test. You have to quarantine. I think you have to get two tests. I think we'll do one tonight, one tomorrow, quarantine tomorrow.

Give them the day off. They'll be in their rooms. They'll have their iPads, laptops. We'll get all the video loaded up they can look at on their own.

We'll reconvene Tuesday, we'll have video practice time. I don't know if we'll play. It's not Thursday/Saturday or Friday/Sunday like usual, everything is pushed back a day. We won't play possibly till either Friday or Saturday. So we'll have Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, or Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday. So based on when we play, it will kind of determine how much we do each of those days.

We'll get it figured out on the bus ride up what our schedule will be once we get up there.

Q. You mentioned how big Keon Ellis's block was. Offensively he found his rhythm as well. 6 of 8 from the field. Depending on the status of Josh going forward, how big is Keon going to be for you guys?

NATE OATS: He's been big for us all year, whether he came off the bench or he started. Doesn't really have a whole lot to do with it. He's getting a few more minutes because Primo's minutes are gone now. Those have to get split up with Shack, Petty, Keon, some of those players.

He's big for us. He hit that big three in the second half. He's hit big threes for us in big games a lot this year, to be honest with you. Two of four from three. Shack shot it well. He shot it well. Even Reese hit two big threes. He hit a big one for us yesterday. I was really happy to see Reese give us the minutes that he gave us.

Keon has been one of our better defensive leverage guys all year. Yeah, he was lower than the team average today, which is good on defense, the points per possession. Reese had a great day defensively. Keon also had a great day defensively. We had some guys that didn't play particularly well on defense today. Those two, Reese and Keon Ellis, were pretty good for us.

Q. You mentioned Quinerly and his family. What did you do or say to his family and to him this year for them to believe he would be utilized the way he was?

NATE OATS: First game of the year, he had a pretty good game. I think they saw how he could be utilized. He had to take a couple weeks off in the middle of the season. Shoot, he's been pretty good.

I thought he got screwed on the Sixth Man of the Year award, to be honest with you. I thought his numbers were better. We won the league. Most of that voting, you look at who wins. If we didn't have a guy that deserved Sixth Man of the Year, you don't vote for him. But I thought we had one. I think he got short end of the stick on that one. I told him, I said, They may have screwed you on the Sixth

Man of the Year, but let's go win the tournament MVP.

His mom talked to him, his dad talked to him. They're both involved in different areas. They're great people. They were never concerned about how he's being utilized or any of that stuff. I called them to get help on how to coach him to make sure I was getting the most out of him. We had a great conversations.

They're the parents you don't have to worry about. They're never questioning the coach, none of that.

Their dad is a Jersey cop. I love him. He's a man's man. I mean, if he needs to have a talk with Jahvon, he's going to have a talk with Jahvon. Jahvon's got some toughness about him. He's got that Jersey toughness. He'll play in there, fight a little bit. Pretty scrappy.

We had great conversations all year. They were so happy. I gave mom a hug up there in the stands. She just kept thanking us for giving him a chance. The kids thanked us for giving him a shot. Shoot, I'm thanking them for trusting us with their son. He's been great for us all year.

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