

# Southeastern Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Wednesday, March 9, 2022

## Vanderbilt Commodores

Tampa, Florida, USA

Amalie Arena

## Jerry Stackhouse Scotty Pippen, Jr. Jordan Wright

Postgame Press Conference

Vanderbilt 86, Georgia 51

**JERRY STACKHOUSE:** I thought we had a great start to the game, especially from a defensive standpoint. We started off a little slow offensively, but our guys really turned defense into offense there. Really sharing the ball. I was a little nervous about how we would respond. This is the first time we've really been whole all season where everybody was healthy.

It seemed like when we got a couple of guys back, somebody was going out, but it's the team that we envisioned. And hopefully we can continue to have the defensive effort that we had tonight, and hopefully we'll find enough points to continue to win some games.

**Q. For both of you guys. What did it mean to have Rodney back? What have you seen as he has tried to get back, and, also, what do you guys think you can do now that you are whole as a team here?**

**SCOTTY PIPPEN, JR.:** Definitely. Like Coach Stackhouse said, this is the first game we've been back full. Rodney brings a lot, especially for me as an individual. He helps take pressure off me handling the ball, guarding the main ball handler. He just brings another aspect to our team. On the defensive end, he is chippy, getting steals, getting in the passing lane. And offensively, handling the ball and being able to spot -- be a spot-up shooter.

**JORDAN WRIGHT:** I agree with that. He has an aura about him. He brings a calming presence to our team. He is a vet. He has been through the fire. He is a winner. Having him out there on the court, it helps us all. We're at ease when he is out there. He takes a lot of pressure off all of us. Having him out there just gives us all confidence.



Him being able to shoot the ball the way he does and be able to take the best offensive player off the court, so just having him out there is a big help for us.

**Q. I guess for both players because you guys in particular played Georgia three times and had good games against them all three times. Did you feel like tonight that you got Georgia's best effort? Did you sense anything different with them?**

**JORDAN WRIGHT:** The way we guarded them tonight, think it was just hard for them to get in the rhythm throughout the entire game. Our bigs were taking charges. Que and Liam have five charges together. The way we guarded Oquendo on the perimeter. I don't know if their effort was any worse to be honest. It felt like they were playing hard. Just couldn't really find the flow on offense, and the shots weren't falling. I credit that to our defense.

**SCOTTY PIPPEN, JR.:** I agree with that. I think the starting group, we jumped out on them defensively, although we got some open looks. We weren't hitting shots early, but I think this team, as deep as we are, is fully healthy. It's hard to compete with us offensively and defensively, and when we have two 7-footers taking charges and everyone hitting shots, so it's hard to compete with us.

**Q. Both you guys turn the page to Alabama. You played them a few weeks ago. It was a pretty good game. What do you remember about that and what do you think you can take?**

**SCOTTY PIPPEN, JR.:** It was a very winnable game for us. It was a close game down the stretch. Jordan and I both made some mistakes. We've been talking about that that we want to take back. We were right there. We go into this game with a chip on our shoulder. They're a very beatable team, a team that we wanted to play. We'll see tomorrow.

**JORDAN WRIGHT:** I agree with that. I mean, down the stretch, we guarded them pretty well. The last four minutes of the game, that's how we pretty much got back in the game the way we guarded. The effort that we had those

last four minutes really helped us get in position to have a chance to tie the game up at the end. Like Scotty said, it's kind of a revenge game for us, the way it left a sour taste in our mouth the way we went out the last game, so we've been looking forward to this game.

**Q. Coach Stackhouse, I'll ask a similar question to you. You coaches are a very tight fraternity. There's a lot following Tom Crean right now. Did you feel like their team played as focused and determined as they did the previous two?**

JERRY STACKHOUSE: I thought they competed. Again, I like to give our guys credit for their disposition. I know it was kind of tough. Everybody kind of saw the news of what possibly is coming down the pipe with them and for him to come out and still coach his team. My hat is off to Tom. Tough situation to be in, but I thought his guys came out there and played for him.

They did some good things. I think we took them out of a lot of what they wanted to do, but, again, like I said, this is a fraternity. We're coaches. We know this is a tough business, and you have to have success or some changes, but he is a great coach, and I know he will land somewhere.

**Q. What's it mean to be able to rest your key guys as much as you did tonight going into tomorrow?**

JERRY STACKHOUSE: I think we have -- our goal is to win five games and to be able to come here and not have to expend a lot of minutes from our key guys with big. I think it's a credit to what we worked on all year, trying to build our depth. We had a lot of this and that said about our younger guys playing, minutes during the regular season, but this is what it's for, when we have these opportunities to get some extended breaks doing a tournament during the conference tournament or possibly postseason tournament. You look forward for those opportunities, and I thought our bench guys stepped up, and they kept the defense going, stepped up and made shots. I think that's a credit to what they've been able to -- the ups and downs they've had during the course of the regular season allowed for them to step in with confidence in this game tonight.

**Q. Same question I asked to the players. About Alabama, what do you remember about that game, and what do you think -- what do you see going into this one?**

JERRY STACKHOUSE: I just remember we lost it. I mean, I don't spend a whole lot of time. I know we have some moments in the stretch where we didn't handle the

pressure well. I think those type of situations that you have during the course of a season, they help you in moments like that when you see those opportunities and those moments come up again. And we're looking to -- you heard those guys. I mean, they got a little chip on their shoulder about it. We felt like we gave one away at home. That was right in the three-game stretch there that we lost. That could have easily changed our season, I think, we could possibly -- probably not be here tonight, but, again, it is what it is. Our record is our record, and we're here to try to keep fighting.

I think our guys are in a good place mentally, and they feel good about who they are as a team right now. Great having Liam back healthy. Great having Rodney back again. Rodney is just a winner, and I think that's the biggest key. They talk about all the different things that he does for our team offensively and defensively, but he is just a winner, and I think that's what we needed.

As much as our guys have gotten better and they improved in their development as individual players, we needed to have kind of an influx of some winning players, and he fit the bill perfectly for us. I'm glad that he is healthy enough to get out there and contribute because he could have easily have just said that it's over. That's it. He fought. Rehab is tough. Coming in every day all the guys on the court working out, and he on the sideline rehabbing and trying to get back for this moment. So hopefully it's a special moment for him.

**Q. (Off mic) -- out of this and was able -- did he have to try to keep it warm when he was sitting? How did that all go?**

JERRY STACKHOUSE: Rodney is a tough kid. If he did have something, he probably wouldn't say anything, but I just think he is -- out of the last couple of practices that he had, he got up and down pretty well and did some good things and came out of that good, and we came in conscious to monitor his minutes. We came and got him early. He picked up a couple of fouls, which made us have to get him a little earlier than probably what we wanted to.

No, he is -- I think he is fine. We got one of the best in the business in Brandon Wells, our trainer, our strengths and conditioning, Carlos Daniel. Those guys are phenomenal in what they do and getting these guys available for us to have on game night, so big hats off to those guys as well.

**Q. How about the importance of Trey and Myles hitting those threes and just getting shots falling in this arena tonight to have a leg up going into tomorrow?**

JERRY STACKHOUSE: That's what they do. Those guys

are shot makers for us. They make the game easy. Not every night they're going to make shots, but I like their effort on the defensive end. I think that's the key. We're not always going to make shots. I mean, we made 16 threes tonight. Everybody kind of got into the fun, but basketball doesn't go that way all the time where are.

You are going to have tough stretches where you're not going to make shots. We have to hang our hat on being solid on the defensive end, and I thought we did that, and tonight it fueled our offense. We were able to get some easy opportunities in transition. We moved the ball really well and guys stepped up with confidence and knocked them down, and those are a couple of key guys that are very, very capable of making shots for us.

Appreciate it.

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