

# Southeastern Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Thursday, March 10, 2022

## LSU Tigers

Tampa, Florida, USA

Amalie Arena

## Coach Will Wade

## Darius Days

## Efton Reid

## Tari Eason

### Postgame Press Conference

LSU 76, Missouri 68

**WILL WADE:** We got off to a good start. It's a good win. Any time you can win in the tournament is a positive. Obviously, we had some major lapses in the second half, but I thought Missouri played extremely, extremely well. Caused 24 turnovers, which was good.

We still turned the ball over way too much, but we got to get that corrected. We've got to -- we have a really good Arkansas team that's had our number this year coming up, and so we have to get it corrected.

But I thought Murray played great with nine assists. I thought we had five guys in double figures, which was really good as well. So we've got to play better tomorrow, but we're happy to get the win.

**Q. Really for any three of you guys, obviously, Xavier Pinson came into this game playing against his former team. Was there any extra motivation for him, or how do you guys kind of see him go throughout the game?**

**THE MODERATOR:** Start with Tari maybe.

**TARI EASON:** Can you repeat the question, please?

**Q. X.**

**TARI EASON:** Oh, about X?

**Q. (Off microphone).**

**TARI EASON:** I don't think there was extra motivation. I



think we just wanted to win. We wanted to get a win, and, obviously we wanted another crack at Arkansas.

So I think that was motivation in and of itself, obviously. Maybe X had a little more intrinsic motivation because it was his old school, but it was motivation nonetheless like any other game.

**Q. Darius, coach always talks about y'all played well with distractions and stuff like that. Did the first half today kind of play into that a little bit?**

**DARIUS DAYS:** I just feel like we just executed everything -- mostly everything Coach said, but we just got to be better.

And distractions really doesn't bother us too much at times, so we just got to lock in and get ready for Arkansas.

**Q. Hey, guys, what do you remember about those first two Arkansas games? What stands out to you, and what are your expectations for tomorrow, getting a third shot at them? I would like all of them to take it, if that's okay.**

**DARIUS DAYS:** Could you repeat the question, please?

**Q. I'm sorry. What stands out to you guys about the first two Arkansas games? Obviously, they were back and forth and very close, and what are your expectations playing them tomorrow?**

**EFTON REID:** Yeah, those are both games that we played. They were close games. They were really good games, and we look forward to playing them again and executing our stuff against them basically, yeah.

**Q. Darius?**

**DARIUS DAYS:** For sure. He takes a lot of charges. All the guys take charges, like defensive end, and they always have their hands up and always in the gap.

So that's one thing we're going to have to adjust to tomorrow. We're very excited to play Arkansas.



**Q. Tari?**

TARI EASON: Yeah, the things that stand out to me really is just that we lost, and what I'm hoping to look for tomorrow is a win.

So that's what we're geared up for and that's what we're going to hopefully gear up to do.

**Q. I actually wanted to ask you guys about Kentucky's big man, Oscar Tshiebwe. What's it like going against someone who is as dominant as he is, and does it take a different toll on your body when you are having to go against him? And, like, just what's it like going against someone physically like that?**

THE MODERATOR: Which player would you like?

TARI EASON: Yeah. As you all know, he is a strong, physical guy. He is aggressive on the rebound. He has a high motor. It can be difficult at times to box him out. He is just kind of a problem down low at times.

So I think just trying to put a lot of bodies on him, trying to throw as many bodies as you can at him kind of down low to get him out the paint and out of the rebounding situation. You got to just kind of do that as best as you can and manage it.

THE MODERATOR: Same for the others.

DARIUS DAYS: Tari basically said everything. He is a low down below; very, very high motor. He takes a toll on your body throughout the game, and at the last six minutes of the game, you know, you are just dead tired.

You're like, wow, he continues going to the glass. So he is a problem. It's fun playing with him down there.

EFTON REID: He is a good player. I've been watching Oscar since I was 14 because he played with my AAU team, the older version -- the older -- my older AAU teams.

I've been watching him since I was 14, so I wasn't really surprised what he was doing. I already knew he could do that, and I was happy to see him being successful.

So, yeah.

**Q. Efton, you had your best offensive game in quite a while. I think you were 6 for 6. What went into that today? And you stayed out of foul trouble until late. What went into that today? The hair maybe a little different?**

EFTON REID: Yeah, that's what my mom says. My mom says change is always good. Yeah, my mom thinks it's my hair.

No, it's March, so, I mean, I really just sat and talked to my mom and my brother, and they told me basically what I had to do and just focus on, and I really focused on those things that I needed to do in this game and just trying to not foul early on and just focusing, not worrying about my points, rebounds, or just blocks, but worrying about just every possession.

**Q. Darius, you referenced Jalen Williams and another guy on the team that's had a really successful season for the Razorbacks, J.D. Notae, and you guys pretty much contained him. He was 4 for 12 for only 12 points. What's going to be the key to stopping one of the best offensive players in this conference?**

WILL WADE: Pray.

DARIUS DAYS: Coach about said it right.

WILL WADE: He got lucky. He missed some shots now at Arkansas. I mean, he missed some open shots. We were fortunate.

He makes those nine out of every ten games.

**Q. This is maybe for Darius and Tari. You guys are going to be playing your second game in two days tomorrow, but you had a good win today, and you already kind of got hot for the tournament. Arkansas, it's going to be their first game in several days. Which scenario do you think is better? Playing and winning or having a little extra rest like Arkansas has had?**

DARIUS DAYS: Coach always says the first game is the hardest game, so coming off this win is really going to help us tomorrow, I feel like.

TARI EASON: I feel the same way. Basically the first game, like he said, is the hardest game. But the first game is always good at the same time because it helps you build momentum, and that's something that we definitely need gearing up going into the rest of this tournament.

**Q. Basically the same question I asked previously to them. Just kind of talk a bit about Xavier Pinson's performance today and just kind of what he brought.**

WILL WADE: I thought X got off to a great start. It's good to have him hit a three. He won't say it, but it does mean more to him when we play Missouri. He still is close with

Pickett. They're still very, very -- very, very good friends.

I mean, X spent three years at Mizzou, so I think it does mean a little bit more to him. But I thought he played well today. I thought the first time we played them he pressed a little bit early in the game, and I thought today he was -- he let it come to him a little bit more.

**Q. I know you're happy with the win, Will, but can you tell us anything about the NOA and how you addressed it with the players?**

WILL WADE: I can't comment on any of that -- on any of that stuff, so we haven't been able to comment on it since everything started. I certainly look forward to commenting when it's all over, but until then, they won't allow us to comment.

I will say this: In general, Shelton, you cover us every day. When stuff is swirling around, you have to narrow your focus, and so you can't worry about everything that's going on around you.

You have to narrow your focus. We're here to play basketball. Whatever is going on doesn't affect anybody on our team. Not one of our players was here hardly. I mean, it doesn't affect anybody.

So we're here to play basketball. They're focused on basketball. We talked about narrowing our focus to basketball, which we did.

**Q. Have you seen it yet, the NOA?**

WILL WADE: I can't comment on anything having to do with the investigation.

**Q. Will, what stands out to you about those first two Arkansas games? They could have gone either way. And getting a shot at a third time, how motivated do you think you guys are and what are your expectations for tomorrow?**

WILL WADE: The first thing that stands out is how hard Arkansas plays. I think they're one of the hardest-playing teams in our league. You know, it's what makes this league so tough, how good everybody is. But there's not like -- not like a team that sits back in a two-three zone, you know I'm saying?

Like every team, but I say this as a compliment to Arkansas -- Missouri plays extremely hard as well -- I think Arkansas is towards the top end of the hardest-playing teams in our league, if not the hardest playing team. Obviously, Notae made huge plays and Williams have

made huge plays in both games.

Toney killed us at Arkansas. I think he had 18 points and scored everything around the rim. Umude hit some big threes. I think he is shooting over 40% from three-point line in SEC play.

They have a very balanced roster. They've got a very, very -- very, very good team. I know they'll be extremely well-prepared. I think Muss does a phenomenal job of preparing his team and taking away your strengths.

So they'll be well-prepared. It will be -- we're going to have to play extremely well. I do think having to play today is to Arkansas's advantage because you have to play so hard to beat them, and we had to play seven, eight guys today some major minutes. Seven guys, some major minutes.

But we'll go back and we'll prepare, and they're a great, great team.

**Q. Is there extra motivation...(off microphone)**

WILL WADE: I don't know about that. Both the games were very, very good games. The game at Arkansas was a tremendous back and forth game. The game at our place, Arkansas made some huge plays down the stretch and finished the game on a big run.

So, look, it's an SEC tournament game. It's a game to get to the semifinals, so just happens we're playing Arkansas, who has clipped us twice at the buzzer. But should be a really, really good game.

**Q. Is there potential that that could affect your future with the program?**

WILL WADE: I can't comment on anything having to do with the investigation or any of that sort of stuff.

**Q. You brought up Au'Diese Toney. I wonder if he can't play tomorrow, does your strategy change against Arkansas?**

WILL WADE: I know he didn't play against Tennessee, but I heard he was out there warming up and then he didn't play, so I'm assuming he is going to be good to go tomorrow.

But, look, they got Trey Wade. They've got other guys. I thought -- I've watched the Tennessee game. I thought Kamani Johnson played tremendous in the Tennessee game in Toney's place.

I thought he was physical and played well around the rim.

The way they played, they tried a bunch of guys out over the course of the year, so I'm not sure -- it will make a difference at some level just because Toney is so good.

Talk about somebody who is -- what's the average for Arkansas? Nine points a game? Ten points a game. I think he averaged 14 or 15 at Pittsburgh. Somebody was sacrificed for Arkansas to win.

I have a lot of respect for him and what he has done to help Arkansas, to help Arkansas win. We're going to prepare as if he is playing. My guess would be he is going to play.

**Q. The last Arkansas game was a heavyweight fight. NCAA tournament game. When you walked away from that, did you kind of say, I would like to get -- play them again?**

WILL WADE: I walked away from it and said, I would have liked to have made a layup at the end.

But it was a really, really hard-fought game. Really great game. It was in an unbelievable atmosphere. When we missed that layup, that's about as loud as I have heard an arena at Bud Walton. It was a great game, and the brackets shook where we end up playing them again.

I mean, it could have -- I mean, shoot, if ten things don't happen last Saturday, we're in the eight/nine game probably. Just kind of shook out that way. That's just the way it worked out.

**Q. I know you were joking earlier about stopping JD Notae. You just said pray, but you guys kind of hard-hedged him and doubled him off screens. Do you plan on implementing a similar strategy against him tomorrow?**

WILL WADE: Why the hell would I tell you that? Look, we're going to have to do something. We can't -- look, we normally switch, right?

Well, they just iso'd us against our switches the first game, and so we had to do something a little bit different. We'll certainly -- they'll be prepared for what we did the second time, so we're going to do something different than that.

We've got some ideas, and we'll see if we can get them implemented in a quick walk-through tomorrow morning.

**Q. I can't remember how many changes Jalen Williams took against you guys, but he has taken 48, and I don't think the NCAA keeps track of that, but what do you think about that? He passes. He rebounds. He scores**

**pretty well now, and then he takes 48 freaking charges.**

WILL WADE: (Off microphone) at Arkansas. I can remember all of them. He took three against us. I mean, look, I think I've said this going into that game. I'm not saying he is the best player in the league, but in my opinion he is the most valuable player in the league. He is the most valuable player to Arkansas's team the way he can stretch the floor.

He has made some shots, and he makes every big shot. Seems like every three he makes is a huge three. The way he rebounds, the way he protects the rim. If you remember in the Arkansas game, he took three charges on us. We had a two on one break, and we shot a 12-foot pull-up floater because we were petrified of going in there and charging.

So that's -- there's a huge difference between shooting a layup and shooting a 12-foot floater, and so it's not just the charges he takes, it's the shots that he affects that you have to take.

You have to take a lot more challenging shots than you would normally have to take. Great player.

Thank you.

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