

Southeastern Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Thursday, March 10, 2022

Missouri Tigers

Tampa, Florida, USA

Amalie Arena

Coach Cuonzo Martin

Trevon Brazile

Javon Pickett

DaJuan Gordon

Postgame Press Conference



LSU 76, Missouri 68.

CUONZO MARTIN: I thought we did a great job finishing the game. Came out much better in the second half. We attacked the press, got over the top of the press, made plays. Was very assertive moving the ball, so that party was fun to see.

But we got off to a slow start. Credit those guys, but I thought we did enough to give ourselves a chance to win the game in the second half. I'll give them credit.

Q. This is for Javon. Now that the season is officially over, have you given any consideration to a COVID season and whether you'll be back next year?

JAVON PICKETT: The game just ended, so no, not really.

Q. Javon, beyond that decision, just what are the emotions like after a game like that and some finality to the season?

JAVON PICKETT: I was happy to see the way that we kept fighting. Guys was continuing to battle throughout the whole game. The second half towards the end you could just see the growth.

A lot of guys were competing, and that just made me proud. Of course wanted to come out with a victory, but just to see guys continue to fight and not give up.

Q. This is for maybe Trevon first and -- what impresses you about LSU? What do you think makes them such a good team.

TREVON BRAZILE: I think they do a good job of getting teams scrambled. They show as a good defensive team.

Q. Javon?

JAVON PICKETT: You just got to take care of the ball during the press. They do a lot of running and jumping. They like to reach for the ball, so you just got to be strong with the ball.

They switch five different ways like in the half court doing a lot of pointing. But it's effective for them, so you just got to get -- you just got to run your offense and just stay focused with what you are doing.

You know, they do a good job of what they do, though.

Q. DaJuan, how difficult is it to transition from an Ole Miss game where their pressure isn't as great to transition into LSU team who pressures the ball very well?

DAJUAN GORDON: I think -- I think it's not hard. I think that's something that's all within the team. We have to be able to take pressure. That's all within us.

We started the whole summer off pressing each other, so I think it's something within us.

Q. Trevon, you had a career high today. You had a really productive two games. Just how far has your game come maybe in the last couple of weeks and what's the next step for you, do you feel like?

TREVON BRAZILE: I feel like the last couple of weeks I've been more aggressive. I just have been trying to work on defense and rebound.

As far as what's next, just planning to have a good offseason and get better and stronger.

Q. This is for Javon. When you fall that far behind early in the game against a team as good as LSU, how tough is that to dig out of that hole?



JAVON PICKETT: You know, it's going to be difficult with anybody, so you just got to keep going, just keep fighting. If you get yourself -- if you dig yourself in a hole against anybody like that, it's going to be difficult to come back.

So just can't put yourself in that spot, but if you do, just go the to keep fighting.

Q. Trevon, LSU has a lot of big, physical players. What was your mindset coming in to try and compete with them and come away with a lot of big rebounds for your team?

TREVON BRAZILE: Just match their intensity. We played them before, so we know that they have some guys that will bang down low.

So just to match their intensity was my focus.

Q. You guys made some adjustments at halftime. How did you -- what did you do at halftime, and how did that give you more success in the second half?

CUONZO MARTIN: I think, one, just settle down. I thought we showed that late in the first half. Just settle down. It's a basketball game.

You know, oftentimes in my old age, you know, in planning games I thought playing against the zone and playing against the press would be somewhat easy because you can get over the top and make plays because you can identify the gaps in it.

So you try to get your players to understand that piece. Just settle down. Read the defense. Make plays. Get over the top.

Then in the second half we did that. Late in the first half I think we had two or three threes driving the ball and moving it, and then in the second half it was just a basketball game.

I wasn't really consumed with how many we were down. It's basketball. You can come back and win a game if you focus on the task at hand, and we did that and just came up short.

But I thought the guys did a great job of executing the game plan, reading the defense, getting -- because what makes them effective defensively is their press. They can get steals. In the half court you're able to make plays. Settle down and make plays.

Q. Cuonzo, obviously Xavier Pinson had a pretty big

start to the game. What did you see from him, and what do you think wasn't working defensively against him at the start?

CUONZO MARTIN: I think, one, he had a drive, and then he had a three ball in transition. After that I thought he was -- I mean, he had 11 points in the first half. He didn't score in the second half.

So I thought it was okay. Once the guys settled in. He is a good basketball player. He is a guy that started almost three years before he got to this point, so he understands how to play basketball.

But they have other guys. That's what makes them good.

Q. And if someone already asked you that, I apologize. I got in here a little late. You have eight guys dressed. LSU came after you right away. Just to try to tire you out. Did fatigue become a factor at all?

CUONZO MARTIN: Not at all. Not at all. I'm not sure if that was the game plan, because whatever happened, we must have got stronger late because we gave ourselves a chance to win the game.

So I don't think that was the case. I'm not sure. I just feel like they played the way they play. We weren't very assertive and I thought we were passive against the press, but I didn't think they did anything differently, no.

Q. Cuonzo, I know your mind is probably fresh on this game, but can you describe what your emotions are right now? And in your mind, is there a chance that was your last game?

CUONZO MARTIN: Last game coaching? I'm good to go. I'm at peace with whatever. I don't get consumed with that. I don't worry about that.

If that's the best thing for both parties, then that's the best thing for both parties. But I won't waste any time with that. Whatever happens, happens.

Again, like I said with life, you know people -- if that's the best thing, then that's the best thing. As long as you don't take the main things from my life, I don't worry about that.

I don't, because if it is, then the plan worked because when I was put here -- it worked because I was here to make it work, and I say that with all humility.

I'm going to let the chips fall where they may, but I have a tremendous peace of mind, and I'm going back to the hotel to relax with my family and then go from there.

Q. What impresses you about LSU? What do you think of the main reasons that they're such a tough team to play?

CUONZO MARTIN: One, this is SEC basketball, so high-level basketball. We have a lot of talented teams. We have a lot of guys that the next stop will be professional basketball, in most cases the NBA.

We have talented players. I don't necessarily think it's more impressive than -- because they're not one of the top four teams, so there's a top four. Not to take anything from LSU, but this is a talented league and guys can play, but they're a good basketball team. They were better than us today.

Q. What's the message to the team now that the season is over?

CUONZO MARTIN: I mean, it's fresh. It's like Javon said. I'm not sure how other programs do it. I don't have ten pages of notes right after a game to say these are the plan A, B, and C. This is life. Relax. Ease your mind because, again, these are relationships.

For us it's not just about coaching a basketball team. We have life relationships. There's a love and a passion to see these young men be successful, so it's not -- I don't need to put together three keywords after a game. I'll talk to them until they put me in a casket, so it's not let's hurry up and say something real quick. I don't need to do that.

Q. I believe you guys had a season high for turnovers today. Can you just kind of talk a bit about how that affected the game and what kind of went wrong there?

CUONZO MARTIN: You give them credit. We had 24; they had 19. Even in that you gave yourself a chance to win the basketball game. What goes into it? Just turn the ball over. That means you have to be better with decision-making, taking care of the ball, and being strong with the ball. That's all.

Q. Are there any players that you think just took a big step forward as a whole this season?

CUONZO MARTIN: You just saw one right here. You are talking about a guy -- I'm not sure the college landscape around the country, but you find me nine better next fall barring any major injury.

The way he jumps at the rim, I mean, just if you.

Study the game and if you are a student of it, his growth

from day one -- and he missed 12 games, so his growth from the time he got into SEC play to down the stretch, you give me ten guys in the league, period, the last ten games down the stretch.

I'm not even talking about your first team guys. It's his production. That's not easy. I thought he did a tremendous job. That's one right there. I mean, just -- he won't say it, but Javon probably shouldn't have played today, but because of his grit and toughness, he laced them up and went to battle.

And I thought just his numbers as a basketball player, hey, how he grew as a player, but I think guys have certainly grown. Grew as basketball players. Sometimes you don't see it in the midst of losing games, but those are life lessons. They learned a lot in the midst of battle, so I'm proud of all of them.

Q. I know this isn't an excuse, but you had to sit around for almost an hour waiting for that first game to end. Players get ready. They get ready to roll, and now all of a sudden you got to put them on hold. Was that a problem?

CUONZO MARTIN: Not at all because both teams had to do the same thing. Not at all. Not at all, no.

Thank you.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports