

# Southeastern Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Friday, March 11, 2022

## Alabama Crimson Tide

Tampa, Florida, USA

Amalie Arena

**Nate Oats**

**Jaden Shackelford**

**Jahvon Quinerly**

Postgame Press Conference



Vanderbilt 82, Alabama 76.

NATE OATS: I give Vanderbilt a lot of credit. They're 0-15, and we're only in the second half. Stayed with it, fought. They're a tough team. We took everything we had to beat them at their place. We knew it would be a tough game. We have to do a lot of stuff to win games at this level, and you can't just play hard.

I thought our guys gave an effort, but we had 18 turnovers, couldn't make a free-throw, didn't shoot the ball particularly well. We didn't do a very good job guarding without fouling. We gave up 54 in the second half, and you look at how they got them. They hit six threes. I didn't think we did a great job at the scouting report on some of the threes they got off. They run good actions. They got some off that.

Stute is obviously a good shooter, and we just kept fouling. Pippen, I mean, he is a good player. He picks up fouls a lot, and we didn't do a very good job of guarding him without fouling. A combination of all of that.

We gave up a 15-point lead, and that's a tough way to lose to go out after some of the wins we've had this year and what we're capable of doing. We lost three in a row now. We have to regroup and get ready for the NCAA tournament.

**Q. What was different about that second half when they came out and they had that 12-0, 15-2 run?**

THE MODERATOR: Jaden, would you take that first?

JADEN SHACKELFORD: We talked about coming out and having a strong second half, something we struggled with

this year for sure, but when they went on that run, it was just kind of -- just a little adversity we needed to answer, and we kind of just let them keep piling buckets up and not getting the stops that we needed. So it's a learning experience. We got another shot at this, so it's just coming out in the second half stronger, locked in getting stops.

JAHVON QUINERLY: Just to piggyback off of what he said, we just didn't get stops. That's really what it comes down to.

**Q. You were just saying you'll have another shot at this. You have the NCAA tournament coming up, so how do, for either guys, do you regroup and get things back together knowing what you are capable of?**

JADEN SHACKELFORD: Just staying together. That's the number one thing for us. Knowing that we're going to go on that floor and battle with each other one more time, hopefully more than once.

I feel like it's just staying together, staying locked in. There's more out there for us, and we're capable of doing a lot of good things in March.

**Q. For both guys, Scotty Pippen's comments last night about this team being beatable, how much did that motivate you? How much did that get in your head at all during the game at all tonight?**

JAHVON QUINERLY: It's something we talked about. It's something that did motivate the team. I think we came out with the right energy. We just didn't put it together for 40 minutes.

JADEN SHACKELFORD: I agree. Obviously, we don't try to pay too much attention to stuff like that, but obviously when it's a game of this magnitude, I guess you kind of use it for motivation. Like he said, we came out with the right energy, right mindset. Just got to put it together for 40 and win those tough games.

**Q. For both of you guys. Vanderbilt scores 28 in the first half, 54 in the second. What do you want to prioritize going into the NCAA tournament in terms of**



## just sort of nailing down defensive consistency?

THE MODERATOR: Jaden.

JADEN SHACKELFORD: Like Coach Oats said, being more locked into the scouting report, not giving shooters open threes off of actions that we've gone over multiple times in practice, and really just locking in and getting stops.

I feel like there's got to be an intensity about us going into the NCAA tournament to just get stops and shut the other team down.

JAHVON QUINERLY: I just think kind of need a mindset shift in practice, walk-throughs because we guard these actions -- we guard these actions two, three days, and then the game comes, and we don't guard them the way we were guarding them in practice and the shoot-around. So just needs to be a mindset shift. We just got -- it has to be some type of carry-over into the game. Obviously, the turnovers, that's something that needs to be shut -- that's something that needs to be cut down.

**Q. Coach, you talked about the free-throws. Lately your team has been shooting pretty well, but then tonight obviously it was a struggle. Do you think it became a mental thing for your team where it just seemed like every trip to the line it was 1 of 2?**

NATE OATS: It looked like that a little bit. We didn't have very many guys step up and go 2 for 2 often. Obviously, Keon is the best free-throw shooter. He made those three. We got foul on the three. I think J.D. went 2 for 2. It seemed like everybody was going 1 for 2, 0 for 2, and guys getting frustrated.

Got to be a little bit more mentally tough. It's not -- it wasn't going great in the first half. I think we were 10 of 18 in the first half. We just need to turn it around and step up and make them, but that's kind of our deal.

When you are locked in, I think you're locked in. I think you're taking care of the ball, stepping to the free-throw line, making free-throws. I think you're locked into the scouting report. I don't know if everybody was quite as locked in as they needed to be tonight.

**Q. Hey, Coach, obviously, you guys won 5 of 6. You have lost three in a row. There's obviously a lot to still play for, but where do you go from here?**

NATE OATS: We've tried to reference other teams that have made runs. We've been a little up and down this year. We have some of the best wins in the country, and

we have some tough losses.

The team that beat us last year in the Sweet 16 game, we went 12 of 25 at the free-throw line and lost to UCLA. UCLA almost lost to Michigan State in that play-in game. They were an 11 seed, and they ended up going to the Final Four. They lost four in a row, lost their last three regular season games, lost the first round of the conference tournament. They lost four in a row going into the NCAA tournament and made a run in the Final Four, and they had to play a play-in game.

I think Gonzaga will probably end up with the overall number one seed. They lost to Duke on a neutral. St. Mary's on a true road game. We essentially played them on a home game. We played them in Seattle, and we're the only team that beat them in the State of Washington. We beat Baylor who won the whole thing last year. We beat Houston. It was a Final Four team last year. We've been up and played well against Kentucky for large stretches and played well against Auburn. Those two teams will be one or two seeds.

We've proven we can play with anybody in the country. We've also proven we can lose to anybody on our schedule, so we got to get guys' mindsets in a good spot. We're going to play a week from today or a week from tomorrow, whichever we end up at. And we've got to have a great week of preparation going into it, and see if we can't -- you know, we were close tonight. We make some free-throws. You know, we win the game. We take care of the ball.

I mean, some of the turnovers are just mind-blowing. Just kind of handing the ball to the other team. Just misdribbled by some pretty skilled players. Definitely stuff we can fix. We have to fix it and see if we can't get on a similar run to what some other teams have done in the past.

**Q. Scotty Pippen Jr., was just in here. He said that one of the assistants or someone in the staff from Alabama was shouting over to him something about before the game about his comments about Alabama being beatable before the game. Is that something you were aware of, and how does that comment factor into your pregame talk?**

NATE OATS: I didn't know anything about that. Probably not something we want our assistants doing is talking to the other players before the game. That's probably not the smartest thing to be doing, so address that afterwards here. I didn't know anything about that.

**Q. Coach, last week after the A&M loss, you referenced the fact of a little bit of a void in leadership**



**with guys like Herb, Petty and Reese no longer here, kind of challenged your team. Was there anybody in this last week and a half that stepped up either vocally or just in practice, and how important is that going to be as you guys head into the NCAA tournament?**

NATE OATS: I think James Rojas has tried a lot. He plays hard. He is more than willing to talk. He is willing to address guys that aren't going hard. He has an intensity about him. He made some tough plays for us tonight.

Shackelford has been trying. I think he is about the right stuff. He has had a good week of practice, and Quinerly had a really good week at practice. He had some tough turnovers tonight. I thought the one play he got fouled before the ball was loose, and then he kind of ran over the kid. He kind of was tough. He is in foul trouble. He is not usually in foul trouble. I thought he had a really good week of practice and was trying to say the right things.

We need those guys to lead again this week. We can't be discouraged because we lost a game. It happens in sports. You miss free-throws. We have to step up to the free-throw line and make them. The stuff that's controllable, we got to do a better job with and need the guys to continue to lead for another week. Let's try and stretch the season as long as we can make it. I think it's a good group of guys that like playing with each other.

**Q. How challenging was it to respond to the Vanderbilt run in the second half and manage the rotation when your leading scorers were in such foul trouble?**

NATE OATS: It makes it hard. They're making a run. You have Shackelford with four in the middle of the second half with ten minutes to go. Keon and J.Q. picked up four. All three of those guys had four with a significant amount of the game left.

Now you're having to play guys that -- different games of the year didn't play a minute. Jusaun Holt, there were games he didn't play at all, and he is playing big minutes in a huge game for us. I thought he did well in his minutes.

We just had to manage the game. That's part of coaching the game. The guys get in foul trouble. You have to manage it. I thought we did a decent job managing the foul trouble. We have to do a better job being disciplined enough to not get in foul trouble, and I thought the guys that came in and played more minutes than they would have had we not been in foul trouble gave us good minutes. From Jusaun, even Rojas played a little more. J.D. played more than he would have been used to. He ended up with eight assists and seven rebounds.

We just didn't shoot it particularly well. Some of those guys maybe just some nerves in a big game like this. I'm not sure, but I thought it was hard to make the comeback without our main guys in the game, but I thought other guys gave us a pretty good effort there.

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