

Southeastern Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Friday, March 11, 2022

Texas A&M Aggies

Tampa, Florida, USA

Amalie Arena

Coach Buzz Williams

Quenton Jackson

Tyrece Radford

Postgame Press Conference

Texas A&M 67-Auburn 62

BUZZ WILLIAMS: They dismantled us from start to finish at their place. We didn't play great, and they played even better. We tried to have the same sort of game plan coming into today.

I thought our guys did a really good job and a quick turnaround to reabsorb a lot of what our initial game plan was, and then the assistants made some changes that I thought were paramount to giving us a chance.

They're arguably one of the most talented teams not only in our league, but in our country, and I think that's selfless to say that they only lost three road games in conference play.

Their talent overwhelms you, and it's hard to decide how you're going to play them, because once you choose something, you're giving up something on the back side. They really did a great job on the offensive glass in the first half; we were a little better in the second half.

Very fortunate to be able to hang on to close it down.

Q. For either of you or both, has it got to the point now where you all just expect to have these kind of games and that they're going to come down to the wire like that?

THE MODERATOR: Quenton first.

QUENTON JACKSON: We go into the game thinking it's not going to be easy. We talk about that as a team and the organization and the staff, the coaches. We look for a dog fight.



We don't expect nothing to be that easy, so we just got to keep playing our ball all the way down to the last buzzer.

THE MODERATOR: Same question for Tyrece.

TYRECE RADFORD: I think the resilience of this team and the fight that this team has and everything that we have been through earlier in the season prepared us for everything that's happening now, and I don't think we're coming into any game thinking that we're going to lose or anything like that.

Our heads are held high, and just the confidence that this team comes in the game, whoever we're playing against.

No matter what the odds are, what the line is, whatever it is, we just know we have to come out there and fight, and that's the only way you can win.

Q. Tyrece, this was the second game in a row you guys jumped out big. What was the mindset at halftime, and anything you took from the game yesterday that kind of helped you guys hold on today.

TYRECE RADFORD: At halftime I think as a team we just recentered, forget about the first half. We came out thinking it was 0-0, and we played like it too, and we just kept that confidence going in the right direction.

Basketball is a game of runs, so when the opposite team goes on a run, just don't get on your heels. Just continue to fight, you know?

Q. Quenton, can you take us through that sequence with the block there with about a minute left?

QUENTON JACKSON: We called a play. I'm not really sure which play we called, but I drove it to the side, and I was about to get downhill, and he kind of just moved out the way and stole it.

And I knew at that point in the game with the time, score, and momentum that I had to make up for it. So I think Wade was a get-back. Wade was playing the center field



because No. 1 was on the opposite wing, so you knew he was going to skip it.

I think when No. 12 seen he had a wide-open layup, I kind of just watched him set up for it, and I I knew I had to go to the glass and get it just to try to make a play and make up for my mistake.

Q. Quenton, I just wanted to ask you, I think you scored the last nine points or so. Did you get to a point where you felt like, especially after they hit the two three-pointers, that you had to do something? Did you take it on yourself, or is that just the way the flow of the game went?

QUENTON JACKSON: Just the way the flow of the game went. I never go out there thinking I need to be a hero. I have all the trust and confidence in my guys. As you can see, they play with all the trust and all the confidence. I don't care who shoots the ball, as long as it's going in.

Q. I know this is old news for you guys, but how do you explain a 4-0 start in the league and then lose eight in a row and now, you know, you're on a winning tear?

THE MODERATOR: Pick a player.

Q. I'm sorry. Quenton, please.

QUENTON JACKSON: Like I said earlier, it's something that we needed to go through. Everything that we went through earlier in the season has literally prepared us for now. Every game that we lost was a test. Literally it was a test.

At some point you got to pass the test. You study, you study, you study, you study; and we failed eight times, but that ninth time we won, so...

Q. Quenton, in some ways free-throw shooting is the most basic thing in basketball, but a lot of guys have trouble with it. What's it feel like stepping up at the line with the game on the line, and what's it feel like after you hit them?

QUENTON JACKSON: I like this quote right here. True confidence comes from your work. I put in a lot of work and my team puts in a lot of work on free-throws, so when we step to the line, I got 100% confidence in myself that I'm going to make these free-throws.

And I think my team and my coaches have 100% confidence in me to make the free-throws, and that's how it just goes all the way down the line with the whole team.

Q. Buzz, Auburn took 20 threes in the first half. Was that part of ya'll game plan, to limit them to the perimeter?

BUZZ WILLIAMS: I don't think that as effective as 13 is in the paint; I think 0 had over 300 field goal attempts. Over half of them are in the charge circle. One is very similar, not quite, the clip.

We don't really have a rim protector, and so I think the only thing that gave us a chance is we did have to flood the channel, and then the rotation out to their threes had to be contested.

I think going into today they were averaging over 25 threes per game. Ten, five-plus, zero five-plus, one, five. That was 15 of their 25, and so statistically speaking, we would have no chance if we allowed them to do what they wanted to do inside, so we had to defensively play inside-out.

Q. Buzz, I can imagine trying to defend somebody like Jabari Smith keeps people awake at night. How do you think your team did against him, and were you surprised that maybe they didn't go to him a little bit more?

BUZZ WILLIAMS: I can't remember exactly what his numbers were at their place. I looked at it a lot, obviously, since this time yesterday. He is just so effective regardless of where he catches it, and I think they do an incredible job of putting him in different places to catch it.

And then without being too complex, based on my answer to the last question, if we're going to try to protect the channel, we have to do a lot of different things to keep the ball out of the channel.

And so it puts a different match-up on No. 10. For us it's not one person that's going to guard 10. In truth, it's not one person that's going to guard any player on the floor, because we have to protect the paint, but when he gets space -- and because of his length and size, he can create his own space.

As you saw, we have sub-6' guards trying to take up his space, but it's like -- it has no impact. I've enjoyed studying their team and how efficient they are. Offensively I know their numbers are even better defensively, but 10 is a hard guard.

Q. Buzz, a couple of things. First of all, I wanted to ask you -- you know it's going to come, so I'll go ahead and ask it. Do you feel like this win should get you a spot the NCAA tournament? And I wanted to ask if

you felt like -- or how much of yourself do you see in this basketball team?

BUZZ WILLIAMS: Yeah, we're -- I know you've watched us, I think, nearly every game except when you went to Vegas, so you have probably seen 25 of our games.

I don't know where you would rank us from a talent perspective in the SEC, but it would be in the bottom half. I just don't know that you can evaluate the heart and the character and the fabric and the fight.

Like I've mentioned before, so much of what our program is based on, so much of how we work, it's intangible, and so much of how society works is tangible, and so it's hard to explain or articulate, hey, this is what we're good at.

Kind of like what Boots was saying, and even Q. How did you ya'll win? Ah, I don't really know how to explain all of that to you, because it's not an easy answer.

I think even those two guys, the two guys that were up here yesterday, there's some sort of connection that I have because of my history personally and professionally with their history personally and professionally.

I think the language we speak to one another is probably different than what the outside views it, and I think there are many kindred spirits within our organization.

Devin has been with me 11 years, and he was a manager at New Orleans. As an African-American, I think he is more than deserving of having a chance to be a head coach.

I hired Lyle as a GA because he chased us around for multiple years, so that he would have a chance to grow.

Rock was the first college coach that I met when I was a junior college assistant. Coach Layer hired me when I didn't even know who he was, so there's a lot of history that's hard to explain after you win a game in a conference tournament.

I wasn't trying to be offensive. I've read every article John Clay has written for 12 years now. The reason that I said what I said yesterday about Coach Calipari was not to be condescending. It's true.

I think what Coach Cal said on Sunday was right, and if what he said is right, that's great. We've won two games since then. Is that enough? I don't know. The reason I don't know is I am wise enough to understand that if we would not have won seven of our last eight games, it wouldn't even be a conversation.

And so it's hard for me, okay, it's happened, now do I respond? I don't know, because I've been so completely immersed in how can we try to win the next game. What does the committee think of that? I don't know, but I do know that we get to play again tomorrow. We don't know who we're going to play, and so we got a lot of work to do between now and the next time I see you.

Q. Buzz, you've been to a number of these SEC and NCAA games in your career. Just wondering what you think of this arena, this town, this setting. Going to leave and go to Nashville for a long time, but what do you think of this event being here?

BUZZ WILLIAMS: The first year that I was here, obviously, the tournament was canceled six hours before our tipoff, so I spent the night in the hotel in Nashville and we went to shoot-around the night before.

And then last year we played in the last place game, so our stay was abbreviated. The only time that I had ever played a game in Tampa was when I coached in the Big East when South Florida was in the league.

I didn't know what this arena was. They mentioned that it was the Lightning. I like it. I don't know if I'm supposed to say that or not, or if Nashville and Tampa are in, you know, some sort of issue there.

But I think the SEC nearly in everything that you could create a category for, I think they do it in a first class way. The administration, all of the people that names are never tweeted about, you can tell there's a high level of care and professionalism.

But I thought Florida's home game yesterday was a great environment, and I thought Auburn's home game today was a great environment.

Q. Buzz, despite the home court advantage, the A&M fans were out, and they were loud. What do you want to say to them? I haven't been to many A&M games, but I was impressed.

BUZZ WILLIAMS: Yeah. We appreciate it. Maybe there will be some more there tomorrow. I waved to my wife, and I can hear my daughter and sons that are here's voices during the game.

But once I wave to Corey, I don't ever look up there. If you are impressed, I'm thankful, because we need all the support we can get because we're always playing from behind. We appreciate everybody that was here.

