

Southeastern Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Friday, March 11, 2022

Vanderbilt Commodores

Tampa, Florida, USA

Amalie Arena

Jerry Stackhouse

Scotty Pippen, Jr.

Jordan Wright

Postgame Press Conference

Vanderbilt 71-Kentucky 77

JERRY STACKHOUSE: First off, our hats off to Coach Cal and the Kentucky Wildcats. They played a great game. Super proud of our guys and how they fought. I thought maybe a break here or break there. Maybe it's a different story, but I thought they really competed hard and gave ourselves a chance, but it was a great game.

Hated that it didn't go our way, but we're still excited and still hopeful that it's not our last game. I think we may have a possibility of the postseason, maybe with the NIT. And then the thing about our guys, they want to play. They're excited about that possibility, so we're going to be eager to see what happens on Sunday and see if we got a chance to continue our season, but super proud of what these guys have been able to battle through and accomplish this season, if it is the end, but hopefully we get a chance to dance just a little bit more.

Q. Scotty, just what do you think went different for you tonight than what happened in your first two match-ups against Kentucky? Was there anything that they did specifically on defense, or was it just an off-night shooting?

SCOTTY PIPPEN, JR.: I'll give credit to them. They had a good scheme on me, but we played three games in three days. I think that had some affect as well. Just tired legs. I got a lot of open looks that I usually knock down every game, but I just couldn't even hit the rim today. It is just a weird feeling, but I think it's more about having fatigued legs and stuff like that.

Q. It was a big point of emphasis for both of you. Talk about how Kentucky fans travel. How difficult is it not



just when you guys are tired, but to be playing a neutral site game that is really such a hostile atmosphere.

JORDAN WRIGHT: We just talked about that in the locker room. It felt like a home game for them. I felt like we were playing at Rupp. They had a great crowd, had great energy. When they needed to be picked up, when they needed some energy, the fans were there with their chants and hats off to them for traveling the way they do and having the fan base like that.

Q. Same for Scotty.

SCOTTY PIPPEN, JR.: I agree with him as well. The fans, they feed off their energy and stuff like that, so just knowing that we don't have the same traveling fans. We do have enough with the dudes that travel with us, the people that travel with us, and it's the players on the bench. We try to create our own energy throughout that just knowing we have each other.

Q. For Jordan, just wondering if that's as good as you have felt offensively in a game at Vanderbilt?

JORDAN WRIGHT: For sure. I had a really good rhythm tonight, got some good looks. My teammates found me when I was open, and I made some shots, so definitely felt good.

Q. For Scotty, I know you guys may have more basketball left, but any thoughts at this point on next year for you?

SCOTTY PIPPEN, JR.: No. After this game, I'm just going to focus on what happened, just reminisce over this loss. I have no thoughts of next year.

Q. Coach, did you think Kentucky, did they do anything differently on Scotty defensively, or do you think it was the legs like he said?

JERRY STACKHOUSE: I think he was a little fatigued. I think they played in the same way. They tried to put a couple of bodies on him, bump him a little bit here, bump



him a little bit there. I thought he had some good looks. I thought he had some very makeable looks for him.

I started pressing a little bit there. Took some quick ones. When they started making a run that probably -- I don't think he would normally do that. He was just pressing. He wanted to win this game, and he is a super competitor. He is an Alpha male. He wanted to make it happen. At the end of the day, he didn't have his best night tonight. And when you are in these type of situations playing against that caliber of team, your best players have to play well, and tonight wasn't his best night.

Q. Jerry, on the technical, what was the conversation there, the call, and then also, did you ever get a look later at the out-of-bounds play that they reviewed?

JERRY STACKHOUSE: I thought Rodney got fouled right there in front of me. I thought that was a missed three-point opportunity right there, but, again, that's the ebbs and flows of the game. When you got -- again, I said it last night, when you got high-level athletes like that on the floor, they're not going to get every call right, and I feel like there might have been a couple of missed.

Again, those are the breaks, but I think we had enough opportunities to make our own breaks to where a call that didn't go our way or did go our way wasn't a difference in the game. We had to step up and take responsibility for making our own breaks, and we didn't do that enough tonight.

Q. Just kind of stepping away from the game for a bit. I'm not sure if you saw the news about Cuonzo Martin being out at Missouri. Just kind of wanted to get your thoughts on that and kind of your reactions.

JERRY STACKHOUSE: Disappointing, obviously, when you see anyone in our fraternity lose their job, what they love to do. Cuonzo is a stand-up guy. One of the best in our business. That's about the right things for his student athletes. Whether it's on the court or away from the court, I mean, he is about social justice, making sure that he has a big voice, not only as a college basketball coach, but just as a Black man in America.

He steps into the forefront a number of times when we're dealing with a lot of stuff with George Floyd and everything that happened over the past couple of years. He has been one of those guys that is always leading the charge. I know, again, him, Tom Crean, both of those guys have some unlikely fates over the last couple of days, but I'm pretty sure they'll land on their feet. Very good basketball coaches. Very good basketball minds that I'm pretty sure will land somewhere soon.

Q. Coach, could you just comment briefly on number zero, Jacob Toppin, for Kentucky. He comes in, gets a couple of big blocks, and really, really plays a great solid game for them.

JERRY STACKHOUSE: Really -- he did a really good job for them. I think just his energy, got some offensive rebounds. I thought we tried to box him out. Just his length and, again, a couple of those marginal plays that maybe could have been a jump ball, maybe could have been over the back, but he got them and brought a lot of energy, got some extra possession for them.

TyTy Washington was really good tonight, made big shots when they needed them. They earned it. They had a two-day bye. They came in here with fresh legs. You always wonder whether it's rest versus rust when they come out and be a little -- a step slow, but I thought they came out with great energy from start. Again, hats off to them.

I sit here talking about what we didn't do. They did a lot of things well. They beat us, and I hope they win it all, honestly. The team that beat us, I hope they wind up winning it all.

Q. Just wonder, over the weekend what did you learn about your team? How does that translate as you look forward as well with the program?

JERRY STACKHOUSE: I know my team well. I knew what we were capable of, knew what these guys -- when they're healthy, what -- I think, again, I love the opportunity for us to continue to showcase it a little bit, but we got a good group of guys. Those guys that just left up here, those are the guys that started when we first were here. They look so much different than they did a couple of years ago. Some 17, 18-year-olds coming up here and how they matured. Scholar athlete of the year in the SEC. We've had two in two years, so it's not only that they're improving on the basketball court, but they're improving as great citizens.

So it is disappointing for them because I would love -- who knows what the future holds for Scotty. We would love for him to come back and be a part of it again, but I think he is going to have some opportunities to at least test the waters again and see where that lands for him, but Jordan, I know he is going to be eager to get back, recruiting class that we have coming in.

We just got a lot of synergy, a lot of good synergy around our team. This year our recruiting class coming in, my support staff, our administration, boss lady back there,

Trace. They got back up, and that's good. I mean, there are tough stretches during the season. It's great to get those notes, those texts from them continuing to encourage. I know it's my job to make sure I encourage my staff and encourage our team, but it's good to have that support and get those messages and know that we're building it the right way, and we know that something special is on the horizon.

We have gotten better every year, and we're going to try to continue to do that. A lot of great energy, what we're doing, our facilities. We just got a new locker room for our guys. Things that may seem kind of minute, but they're big things for our program, and we got a new operations facility that we're going to break ground on this year. Just a lot of great momentum for Vanderbilt basketball, and I'm excited to be at the helm of it and excited to lead us into the future.

Q. How does playing like three days in a row and then coming around and playing Kentucky on that third day, how does that affect your team, and does fatigue play a factor in that?

JERRY STACKHOUSE: I think, yeah, when you look at it, but Jordan Wright was 10 for 12, had 27 points tonight. Probably had his best game in a little while, so if you ask him, he probably would want to play every game three in a row.

Scotty, you ask him, and he probably has a little different. He didn't have the success that he is capable of or that we know that we're accustomed to seeing from him. Yeah, of course, it's a little tiring on everybody. Again, with Trey Thomas being out, who is a big part of what we do, had to have some other guys step up, and I thought Shane Dezonie and Tyrin Lawrence came in and gave us valuable minutes, but they're just not the three-point threats that a Trey Thomas is.

If we get an opportunity to extend our season that we can get him back healthy and get back in the mix so we can get whole again. This has been the story with us since I have been here. Somebody has kind of been out of the mix, and even this year getting guys back, then somebody else goes down. Jamaine Mann, who has started to trend up for us, he was dealing with a knee injury, but he came in and gave us some solid minutes today as well.

Again, just hopefully we have a couple of days to get everybody rested up and see what happens after the selection show on Sunday.

Q. If it's not NIT, would you go to any postseason tournament if you had any other opportunity?

JERRY STACKHOUSE: I think that's possibly something to discuss. I think our guys, like I said before, they want to play. They're excited about us finally kind of being whole, and they enjoy each other. They enjoy playing basketball, but that's something that we'll discuss.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports