

# Southeastern Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Saturday, March 12, 2022

## Texas A&M Aggies

Tampa, Florida, USA

Amalie Arena

**Buzz Williams**

**Hayden Hefner**

**Quenton Jackson**

Postgame Press Conference



Texas A&M 82-Arkansas 64

**BUZZ WILLIAMS:** Yeah, it was a quick turnaround. You know, we haven't played Arkansas since January the 22nd. They were a mirror opponent. Kind of a quirk in the schedule maybe. We played them twice within a two-week span, and so we had a lot of work to do since yesterday when they beat LSU.

Our staff was phenomenal in the preparation for that, and then we got with our guys last night for mental practice, and they were as good as they've been all year. And then this morning as we went through walk-through and film, you could see that the synergy between the staff and the players on what we needed to do was really good.

I think one of the things that was I was unaware of, they lost those three games to start conference play, and then lost one game in February, one game in March, I think, and those two losses were by a combined five points. They were playing at an unbelievable clip with the personnel groupings and the things that they had done to change.

So really thankful for the response of our guys and the high level of work by our staff to be able to be in a position to beat a top 15 team.

**Q. For both guys. I mean, you guys were playing your third straight day. They were playing the second. You thought Arkansas would be the fresher team, but you guys looked fresher. What was the key to coming out with the energy you did and getting that 12-point lead in the first half?**

**THE MODERATOR:** Hayden, would you take that first?

**HAYDEN HEFNER:** I think it was really just a testament to what we've been preaching to each other all week. We know that for us to have a chance to win any game, it's got to start with our energy level and how we attack the game and how we start the game and how we start the second half. I think whenever you preach that over and over and really believe into it and buy into it, it will end up happening.

**QUENTON JACKSON:** I would say the same thing he said, but I would go even further and say it's a testament of everything that we have done since the year started, all the work that we put in from boot camp, to individuals, to practices, to all that. It's a testament of all of that.

**Q. Hayden, would you just talk about the impact you were able to -- I know you came in early, and there might have been a couple of miscues here and there, but you came in, and I think after the timeout when they got within three, did Coach call that play for you, or did it just work out? Then, just your thoughts on the impact you were able to make on the game?**

**HAYDEN HEFNER:** Yeah, that was a play we kind of drew up. I mean, it was really up to Boots to make a good decision. He was the one that had the ball. It was really up to him to kind of get in the lane and read their defense, and he decided to turn around and give it to me, and I was just -- I don't know. Everything was clicking, believing in it, believing in what you are doing and just never holding back. I think that's ultimately what it was.

**Q. Quenton, you were going up against Au'Diese Toney in the first half. He had a couple of blocks. You still managed to get 20 points. How difficult is it to go up against one of the better defenders in the SEC and you were able to have success?**

**QUENTON JACKSON:** Starting the game, it was a little frustrating. I was trying to find ways to score. It was kind of frustrating because they was locked in on me, but I was kind of telling my team that it will open up for them because they were locked in on me. So every time I drive, they would corral me, and I was telling my teammates, be on the field so I can hit you guys.



We just made adjustments around it. And as the game kept going, I just was able to find a way to score the ball, but that's just because my teammates were scoring it as well, so it opened up the game for me.

**Q. I think in the second half, Arkansas cut it to three. You seemed to get some momentum, but you pushed the lead back out to double digits, and they cut it to five, and you pushed it back out to double digits. It seemed like you always had an answer when they would run back at you. What do you think was the key to that?**

HAYDEN HEFNER: I think it's really just a testament to who we are as a unit from staff all the way down to our managers. You know, every day we're testing ourselves, working on different scenarios, and just when you have that belief and that unification with the team, it's really hard to break it apart because it's up to us really. Whenever we're believing in one another and just all clicking, I think it's just hard to stop.

QUENTON JACKSON: I would say basketball is a game of runs. They went on their run. We went on our run. At the end of the day, like I think I said yesterday, it's a testament to everything we've been through earlier in the season. Losing eight straight will teach you something. When things are not going our way, we know to stay calm. We know to stay collected. We know to stay together, and that helped us.

**Q. Quenton, do you feel like y'all should be in the NCAA tournament now? You think you clinched it?**

QUENTON JACKSON: That's not up to me. I just go out there, and I play my game. That's up to the higher-ups. I just go out there, and I try to make sure that me and my team are on the same page and we play as hard as we can every night.

**Q. Buzz, Notae has had rough shooting games, but he always finds a way to score 10, 12 at least. Sometimes he scores 30, if he isn't shooting that great. What did you do to hold him to five? What was the key to that?**

BUZZ WILLIAMS: He is so talented. I know I was a little too wordy in the initial introduction. He shot 100 more balls than anybody on their team. He was averaging 16 field goal attempts in SEC play. I just think he is the engine, and I think 10 is the most skilled guy, taller than 6'2" in our league, and those two guys, you can't guard him with one guy. And they have such a high IQ. And so most of our prep work was related to those two guys and how we were going to handle a lot of their actions.

And then 5, 4, 3, they just put so much pressure on the rim that that's the counter to how you're going to handle 1 and 10. An ultra, ultra talented player.

**Q. Coach, I was sitting right behind you yesterday when you were kind of scouting Arkansas, and I wonder from a coaching standpoint, how much more you gain from watching a game in person than just watching film?**

BUZZ WILLIAMS: I know everybody makes fun of me. I think I'm probably the only head coach that still attends games. That's one of the NCAA rules that you are allowed to do. You know, if you are in a tournament, you can "live" scout, and when I was young and coaching, you could actually go scout games, you know, live-scout and watch somebody. That kind of went away a long time ago.

So I'm kind of like a little kid when I can actually watch a team and don't feel the stress of having to win or lose, so it's just good for me to get a feel for things that you can't pick up on tape.

We kind of do it football-style in regards to the responsibility of our staff. The buckets of responsibility that they're in charge of, I never step on, but to be able to sit next to those guys and watch something live and go, oh, what was that? Yeah. Let me see it again. Then go back to the hotel and I saw it, and then I can watch it again on tape. For somebody that needs as much help as possible being able to watch a game live is really healthy for me.

**Q. Buzz, three games here. Y'all really have been kind of at a disadvantage inside height-wise and size-wise. How do you all keep overcoming that?**

BUZZ WILLIAMS: Yeah, we've been at a disadvantage since the first SEC game, not just since we got to Tampa. Locale doesn't change that. Our only chance is to be an overachiever and overcomer. We don't even -- I don't even know that we talk about that in regards to the deficiencies of our size, but I do think that as time has went along, we have found ways to counter our deficiencies.

And one of the things that I've learned from our guys is they have been very comfortable receiving what they know their deficiencies are. Most players don't want to hear what they're not good at, but if you do want to receive what a deficiency is and here's the counter to it, then you have a chance, and I think that's what's transpired with our group.

Similar to what you've heard the five guys say that have been on post game the last three days, like, they're completely aware of how we're going to be attacked, and

they've been accepting of that, and our staff has done an incredible job. When they do this, this is our counter to overcome our deficiency.

**Q. Buzz, the players talked about it, but what did you think of the energy you had playing a third straight? They were just playing a second, A&M. It just looked like you guys were lighter on your feet or whatever.**

BUZZ WILLIAMS: Yeah, I talked to a couple of the media people when we showed up, and maybe I should have been better prepared. The NCAA allows you to work six days in a row, so we took our off day this week before we came here, and so we've been working six days a week all year long since the season started. So for our guys, they would rather play than practice. And for us to be able to play three games in a row instead of three days of practice, they think that's more fun, so it was never a topic of conversation.

Like we get to play, and the reward for doing is the opportunity to do more. We weren't supposed to beat Florida, and so the reward is the opportunity to play Auburn. Then we weren't supposed to beat Auburn, and so the reward is the opportunity to play Arkansas. We are not supposed to play Arkansas, and so the reward is we get to play again tomorrow.

From an energy standpoint, hey, they've done less, we've done more, they've been here longer. We never broach that subject because that's not how we operate on a daily basis.

**Q. Coach, Quenton had that big dunk that sent it into timeout, and you kind of grabbed him and huddled everybody together. What was your message to them because that really kind of started a stretch run for you guys to close it out strong?**

BUZZ WILLIAMS: We kind of handle halftime probably different than most people think. We probably go about time-outs a little different too. Sometimes I think just sitting around and letting a coach talk like it's a clinic may not necessarily be best, and so that timeout and multiple time-outs since we've been in Tampa and every halftime, we don't sit around much.

Let's talk about what's coming next and how can we be better and who needs to be in the game and who needs to be out of the game. So I don't exactly remember what I said. Q is my guy for life, whether he dunks it or shoots an airball. I love him, but I think we did it four times yesterday in ATOs. I think we did it three times today. It's like same thing with halftime. We just go about it a little different.