

# Southeastern Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Wednesday, March 8, 2023

## South Carolina Gamecocks

Nashville, Tennessee, USA

Bridgestone Arena

## Lamont Paris

## Hayden Brown

## Gregory Jackson

### Postgame Press Conference

Ole Miss 67, South Carolina 61

THE MODERATOR: We'll continue with South Carolina. We'll ask Coach Paris for some general thoughts on the game, then take questions for the student-athletes, then we'll finish up Q&A with Coach.

Coach, general thoughts?

LAMONT PARIS: Before I get started, I just wanted to acknowledge Win Case and the job that he did, he's done. These situations are tricky and tough. He's done a great job. Their guys played really hard. Really seemed to play together. I want to acknowledge that.

But our guys competed and played extremely hard. I had no issues whatsoever. It was a really good college basketball game. They had some runs. They had one more run than we did. We came back every time they made a run. We made some big shots and big plays when we needed to to get ourselves and put ourselves in a position where down the stretch we had a chance.

We just fell short and didn't make some plays down towards the very end. But thankful for our guys and what they've been all season, who they've been. These two guys here. Just our entire group.

I was really happy with their effort. It's hard when you have a senior like Hayden, he's been around for a long time. But it's finally his last year of college basketball.

Anyway, it was a good college basketball game. Hard-fought on both sides. A lot of plays made on either side of the basketball, and we just came up a little short today.



THE MODERATOR: Questions for Hayden or Gregory.

**Q. Right after the game, can you talk about the moment, what that was like for you?**

HAYDEN BROWN: I think it's emotional for a lot of different reasons. I wanted to thank him just for the teammate that he's been. There's been some ups and downs, but he's just been a teammate. I was just so thankful to have had this year with him.

I hope that I've encouraged him or taught him or exemplified something to him. But it just means a whole lot. This game means a whole lot to me. My teammates mean a whole lot to me. The coaching staff means a whole lot to me.

I just wanted to hopefully just encourage him in that moment because this kid has a crazy career ahead of him, he really does. I just wanted to encourage him, yeah.

GREGORY JACKSON: In those moments, grabbed me, I felt sweat a little bit, but I want to thank Hayden as well. I never had a big brother in my life, I always had a big sister annoying me.

But to have someone that can lead that way a on team, on a Power Five team, on a SEC team, the best conference in college basketball, says a lot about the kind of player he is. He always has this one quote that we would say a lot: the river's going to keep flowing.

We fought hard tonight. But again, I want to thank him for being that big brother for me.

**Q. Obviously the first year with the new coaching staff, new program, growing pains, but what are some things that you learned about yourselves and the team, ways that you grew as a group this year?**

GREGORY JACKSON: Well, I'll start individually saying I came in thinking that I was going to be like an ISO scorer, all that. I got a real, real rude awaking.

Coach Paris told us in the locker room, This team will be remembered, for sure, because it's the start of something great. Yeah, that's pretty much it on that.

HAYDEN BROWN: Yeah, I think, man, there's been a lot. But I think ultimately we learned how to win. If we didn't win the game, we competed in the game.

That's a lesson that a lot of young guys don't really know how to execute. It's a difficult thing at this stage in their career, especially at this level. It requires a lot. It requires more than just raw talent.

So I think we collectively, myself included, learned how to win in tough situations, or learned how to at least compete in tough situations. I mean, we talk about it, it's been very repetitive, but it's repetitive for a reason, how much we've grown over the past how many months since November. You look at that team, look at this team, it's a completely different animal.

I am so excited, honestly, to see where Coach Paris takes this program. They're going to win. They're going to win. They're going to compete and they're going to be a team that people don't like to see on their schedule. That's going to happen pretty quickly.

We saw signs of that this year.

**Q. Hayden, you talked in November the thing that excited you about coming to South Carolina was the ability to be a part of building something. As you sit here now, do you still feel that way? How did you contribute to that?**

HAYDEN BROWN: Yeah, yeah, I'll be quite honest. I mean, it's kind of hard to sift through the sheer amount of emotion that I'm feeling right now.

But, yeah, I mean, this season has been a culmination of that desire coming true, if that makes sense.

Yeah, I feel just very thankful for the opportunity. I feel like we have built something. Like, it was started, a foundation was laid. It's not like we can look back at the season and I don't know if we really laid anything, we'll work on it in year two. No, it was laid this year.

I'm just excited to see where the program heads. I was just incredibly grateful and thankful and excited and happy to be a part of it in the first year.

**Q. Hayden, you've been around this program for a while. What does South Carolina basketball mean to you personally?**

HAYDEN BROWN: Yeah, it means a lot. I mean, I don't want to sound like a broken record, but just having the ability to come in here for one year. I only had one year, there was no ands, ifs or buts about it. That was the only way.

To have the sheer amount of this excitement that I do towards Coach Paris and the staff, the program, I think is a testament to how much the program means to me.

Because of what I was able to learn about myself, because of all the things I was able to experience, just the opportunities that I had, it means a lot.

Just having one year, man, I feel like there's a sense of school pride. Like, I'm a Gamecock forever. I spent five years at a different school. That's just a testament to the work and the effort and the long days that we put in over the year, so...

THE MODERATOR: We'll excuse the student-athletes and continue with questions for Coach Paris.

**Q. What have you seen in terms of growth from these guys, in terms of building a foundation for this program?**

LAMONT PARIS: I think it would be easier to list the ways that there was no growth than the ways that there was growth probably.

That's every individual on our team, a multitude of individuals, I would say. I'd say every. Even some guys you have never seen play in games, just how they grew at practice, not even as a player but from a maturity standpoint.

It's hard to describe how much growth that there was this year. I keep saying that word, but I've never been around so much growth in my life in one season.

So I'm happy about that and thankful for that, but there's a lot of foundation that's been laid. Amazingly enough, I'm still doing a renovation on a house that I bought, and there was like a three-month period that I would walk in there and I expected it to look like a new house. Every day I walked in there, it never changed over three months, except for electrical was done, plumbing was done, HVAC was done, AV was done. The house looks the same to me.

There's a lot of foundation that was built in that house, even though I was there and I didn't know, I didn't see. I wasn't in it every day so I don't know what it was about.



I think that's a fair analogy for what has happened this year. We get judged on wins and losses certainly, but I'm evaluating it differently. I evaluate it on a day-to-day basis. In our practices leading up to this tournament, I'd say the last five, six, seven practices were incredible.

Not just from energy, when you talk about growth, me looking as a coach, acknowledgment of things, listening to something and then putting it right in, making a tweak against a team that we're playing for the third time and only having to say it once.

Again, it's hard for me to quantify the growth that took place with this particular team.

**Q. In terms of building, how do you approach that with recruiting? How to you sell this program?**

LAMONT PARIS: Yeah, I think part of it is cherry picking those situations and those moments and talking about what that can look like to be in those situations on a regular basis.

When you talk about foundation that's laid, these are some of the high points that can certainly occur when you have a group of guys that are relatively inexperienced. Our numbers were not what we wanted them to be.

I think as you're talking to recruits, that's part of it. 'Vision' is always a word that goes out there, too. You want kids that want to be a part of something special. Doing it in a different way, that's why I can't thank Hayden Brown enough, he was the first guy that said yes to come here. He wanted to be on the ground floor, he did. He wanted to be on the ground floor.

It took longer for us to get to this point. I'd like to play 30 more games right now. That's what I'd really like to do. I'm sure he would, too.

When you're talking about recruits, you're talking about vision, you're talking about the energy and excitement. Our fans were really good, really good. Some of the games we had at Colonial Life Arena, our student body and our fans in general..

You see that. You see the excitement. We talk about that to the recruits, as well. But the vision and being a part of something and getting in there early, an early adopter of what we've got going on here. It's going to be fun.

Again, Hayden and this group in general, this is what GG was alluding to, that this group will be "the" group, it will be "the" group that really started that, that really got it going,

that showed what practice is going to look like, how we carry ourselves outside of the basketball arena, who we are as students, who we are as human beings, how we communicate with the staff that's working at a hotel trying to help us feed ourselves, and they're at our every beck and call, it seems like. All those things.

Just try to sell the recruits that want to be on the ground floor. Again, like Hayden said, I believe also, I think the process, it will play itself out, but I'm optimistic with the growth we made this year when that will happen.

**Q. You talk about building and laying the foundation. What is next in the off-season, what you want to add to this program?**

LAMONT PARIS: Yeah, I think every team in America is always on a mission to make some roster management is the thing. This day and age, that will be a big part of things.

We'll get back and pretty quickly here we'll be talking about roster management situations. Obviously Hayden will be gone.

I think plugging and improving your overall talent level, whether that's physically, addressing needs that you have. I hate to talk about student-athletes as commodities, that's what it ends up sounding like. Getting all that put together, that's the next step. That's what we will be. We've been involved in some of that already, amazingly enough.

A lot of our time, it's not spent with our current student-athletes, almost all of our time will be involved in that. So that's the biggest priority as we move forward from today.

**Q. Now that you've had a full season in the SEC, just curious what you take from the experience, officials, venues, style of play, anything that stands out?**

LAMONT PARIS: Well, our slogan is: it just means more. And it does. It just means more. It just means more. I've been around. It just means more. It's very apropos.

But it's a really good league, good coaches, good facilities, good crowds, good home crowds. I think that's really good for the sport of basketball.

A variety of styles of play. Athleticism is at a high, high level in this conference. So it's good. You want to be challenged. I'm looking forward to the challenge.

It's fun to go through the year and see how the officials, how this league is called. My high major was spent as an

assistant coach was in the Big Ten. I hope nobody gets mad at me, but I felt like we should have been wearing helmets sometimes in that league. It's a very physical league.

This is a different type of league. The athleticism stands out. It's fun to be in this conference with really good coaches, really good student bodies everywhere we go, a lot of support.

Yeah, I guess the best thing I can say is it's a very accurate slogan, that it just does mean more.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you very much.

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