

Southeastern Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Wednesday, March 8, 2023

LSU Tigers

Nashville, Tennessee, USA

Bridgestone Arena

Coach Matt McMahon

Trae Hannibal

KJ Williams

Postgame Press Conference



LSU 72, Georgia 67

THE MODERATOR: We're ready to begin with LSU. We'll begin and ask Coach McMahon for some general thoughts on the game, then questions for the two student-athletes, then continue with questions for Coach.

Coach, would you begin.

MATT McMAHON: Thank you. Really proud of our players. Thankful for the opportunity to advance here in the SEC Tournament. It was a fun game, a great atmosphere. I was not expecting that many people here on opening night. I hope I'm never back for opening night, but that was a lot of fun.

Really proud of the way our guys responded. As we all know, we've had some 10-, 12-point leads where we haven't been able to sustain it and find a way to win. Georgia did a great job fighting to get back in the game and tie it up. Had all the momentum. I thought our guys really responded well and found a way to win.

Just looking at the box score, things that really stand out to me, how do you overcome 36% shooting from the floor and 20% from three? 25 to four on the offensive glass, second-chance points was huge for us. Then just limiting our turnovers. 10 assists, one turnover in the half. Finished 13 to five.

Proud of our guys and looking forward for tomorrow night.

THE MODERATOR: We'll take questions for the two student-athletes.

Q. Trae, you guys were able to get an edge on the

offensive glass. You had 11 total rebounds. What do you think it is about this team that's so good on the glass?

TRAE HANNIBAL: This is a tough team. We've been through a lot this year. We can't go back and change it now.

At the end of the day as long as guys go out there and do their job for the team, anything is possible.

Tonight I just played hard and did what I could for the win. Thankful.

Q. KJ, you told us about a week and a half ago you've been taking Shawn Phillips under your wing. What did you feed him today?

KJ WILLIAMS: Me and Shawn are roommates at the hotel. I told him to come out and play basketball, block out all the noise, come out and just play basketball.

The outcome was the outcome. Came out with his first career double-double, 13-10. He just stayed the course on the offensive end, defensive end. He's worked tremendously hard, and it came out with a good outcome today.

Q. You saw Vanderbilt a few weeks ago, see them again tomorrow. What did you make of them then and now?

TRAE HANNIBAL: Vanderbilt is a tough team. They're well-coached. They really play hard.

Like tonight's game is over with, we have to put it behind us. Our main focus now is on Vanderbilt. Going out there for 40 more minutes, give it our all, stick to the game plan, I think we'll be fine.

KJ WILLIAMS: Like he said, we got to lock in on our principles. They came out and gave us a great game. But we came out with the win. We got to come out again, just come out and just play hard.



Q. Trae, you looked like you came out tonight and wanted to attack right from the start. What was the plan going in? Take it right in the middle to them?

TRAE HANNIBAL: Yes, sir. Like I said, going out there and doing what I can to help this team win, being as aggressive as I can and attacking the rim at all times.

This team, we have a lot of great shooters. Can always space it out. Getting downhill is my main trait, and I think I did that pretty well, so...

Q. How do you plan on handling the crowd tomorrow? Pretty heavy for Vanderbilt, of course.

TRAE HANNIBAL: You got to treat it like white noise. Tonight we went out there. As long as our team knows we're all together as one, we'll be fine. Everything else, you got to block it out, go out there, have fun, play ball. I think we'll be fine for tomorrow.

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

Q. You said Monday the big thing would be turnovers. Do you think that was the big key in the game?

MATT McMAHON: I think it was a huge part of it. I mean, you look at so many games, all right, just last week, for example, I mean, our two opponents outscored us 33 to 6 on points off turnovers. It's impossible to win when you're giving away that many points.

I thought that was important. We really executed well offensively in the second half. Excuse me, got to flip that, in the first half (smiling). The ball moved. I thought we were able to really do a good job attacking. Our ball screen attack there with 10 assists, only one turnover, enabled us to build the lead.

Second half, Georgia changed their coverages up. We didn't attack as well. Of course, we turned it over the first two possessions for a good laugh there (smiling). Overall, 13 assists, five turnovers.

Also, you have to look at the offensive rebounding. We turned our 18 offensive rebounds into 25 points. It's not just that we got the offensive rebounds, it's that we were efficient in converting those into points, which has not always been the case for us this year.

Q. Really big sequence when Shawn got the dunk on the put-back, and then he blocked the shot when it looked like the guy, Bridges, was going to get an easy shot. How big was that for a young guy like him?

MATT McMAHON: I thought he made huge plays that really impacted winning, not just those plays you mentioned, but going to the line, up by one, I believe, at the time. He knocked down both free throws in a clutch situation there.

Bridges is such an effective scorer there in the post. I thought he was really solid on the defensive end of the floor. Overall, just was a great screener for us offensively. I thought he did a lot of things well that enabled us to win the game.

Q. Derek Fountain, is he going to be available? Also, what did you tell Shawn?

MATT McMAHON: We sure hope so. It's a day-to-day injury suffered in practice earlier this week to his right shoulder. Hope to have him back tomorrow night, but not counting on it. We'll see how he responds to treatment.

I think Shawn just knew there was a great opportunity for him to step forward there. Derek has been one of our most efficient and consistent players all year. We were going to need someone to step up, and Shawn came through huge for us.

I thought KJ made big plays when the money was on the line there late in the game. Made clutch free throws. That was my final key to the game, the free-throw line. I thought we all know Texas A&M leads America getting to the line. Well, Georgia is number two in our league. Us being able to stay with them and match them at the free-throw line I thought was really important tonight.

Q. Heading into tomorrow, what are your thoughts on Vanderbilt, what Jerry Stackhouse has done with that program this year?

MATT McMAHON: He's a big-time coach. We'll have to really turn the page quickly here and start our preparation. I think offensively they execute at a high, high level, as well as anyone in the country.

The other thing we obviously have to factor in is when we played them last time a few weeks ago, Robbins was still available. Had a monster game. I think one blocked shot, a triple-double. With him out, I know they've continued to have great success and win a lot of games.

But we have to spend a lot of time tonight, figure out how they're playing different and what we need to prepare for to give ourselves an opportunity tomorrow night.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.



