

Southeastern Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Wednesday, March 8, 2023

Georgia Bulldogs

Nashville, Tennessee, USA

Bridgestone Arena

Coach Mike White Jabri Abdur-Rahim Justin Hill

Postgame Press Conference



LSU 72, Georgia 67

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with Georgia. We'll ask Coach White for some general thoughts on the game, then take questions for the student-athletes, then finish up with Coach.

Coach, if you'd begin.

MIKE WHITE: Congrats to LSU. You know, advancing in any tournament is significant. Thought those guys deserved to win. I know they've experienced a lot of adversity. We have also. I thought both teams played really hard.

Dug ourselves a pretty significant hole there late first half, early second half. I thought the last 17 minutes of the game or so we played incredibly hard. Left a lot of energy and enthusiasm and positive attitude out there on the floor.

Unfortunately, their 18 offensive rebounds, 25 second-chance points. KJ Williams plays in the paint late in the game, his decisions with the basketball, one turnover, I thought was terrific.

I thought Trae Hannibal was terrific, as well. Four offensive rebounds at the guard spot. Hit a timely jumper near the end. A huge X factor in the game.

We find out right before the game that Fountain is not playing. Talk about take advantage of an opportunity. Shawn Phillips, wow, was a very, very big factor in the game, getting 13 and six offensive rebounds.

The way we finished the season is obviously not what we were looking to do. I do like our approach. I liked our

approach coming into this one. I loved our fight today. This team's overcome adversity all season.

Tough way to go out, but I do feel like we laid a foundation. I'm very appreciative to our seniors. Just had a conversation, obviously, in the locker room. Proud of those guys. They've developed on and off the court all year.

I'm also thankful to our fans that made the trip. Disappointed for them. Obviously, most disappointed for our guys, especially for our seniors.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for either of the student-athletes.

Q. Jabri, halftime, how did you feel like you guys got in that situation? What was the message at halftime? What were y'all able to do to get back in the game?

JABRI ABDUR-RAHIM: The message at halftime was we didn't execute a lot of stuff we were talking about defensively. We let a couple really good shooters get wide-open looks. We just weren't playing hard.

All of the stuff we talk about a lot, we just didn't come out with a lot of intensity.

In the second half, I think we just got urgent and realized it was winning time. I mean, I guess shots started to fall a little bit. When that happens, you get a little more energized. We went on a bit of a run.

Like Coach said, what we did in the first half was a lot to overcome. We dug ourselves into a hole not playing with intensity, not playing with energy and executing some of the things we talked about.

Q. Justin, overall, what are you going to take from this season?

JUSTIN HILL: I feel like we did big things. Looking at the team last year, since they won the games they won, I think we've taken a big step in building a foundation for this program in the future.



Q. What do you guys feel like that foundation is for the program going forward?

JABRI ABDUR-RAHIM: I think a lot of it has to do with culture. We have a lot of really good people in our locker room. It kind of translates to on the court.

We really like the coaching staff. We really like each other. We tried to start the season just by playing hard and playing for each other and being selfless. I think we laid the foundation culturally, then it kind of translated onto the court.

I'm excited to see what we have in store for the future.

JUSTIN HILL: Yeah, piggybacking off of what Jabri said, I think we got to focus more on accountability and focus on the little details. Every play matters. We seen it today.

Going forward, I think we just focus on that, focus on our culture, I think we'll be in pretty good shape.

Q. Jabri, you were on the team last year. When you say 'culture', what are you talking about?

JABRI ABDUR-RAHIM: I don't want to compare last year, but this year I think we just did a lot of stuff that doesn't really have to do with basketball, but it kind of translates. Like Justin said, holding each other accountable, kind of caring for one another, emphasizing the team versus one person. Just coming together as a team and being a close-knit group is something that the coaches emphasized.

It starts from everybody, from the manager, to the oldest senior on the team. I think just everybody being a family. We say it all the time, family. I think we really embrace that.

Coach will tell you we really like each other off the court. We have moments where you can see it lead to success on the court. I think building that foundation culturally is going to help us going forward.

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

Q. Obviously we did not see Kario but a couple minutes early in the second half. What was the reason for that?

MIKE WHITE: These ones are always tricky for me. You try and win the game. I mean, we had several, several, four, five, in the first half, and then one that was glaring early second half, contest, missed blockout. It was a huge

point of emphasis at halftime.

We had a group of five in there early second half that I thought were playing with a ton of energy, and that detail, that level of detail, as Justin just talked about, increased specifically in that category.

We made a run, were deep. The guys that were in the game were playing well. Found some offensive continuity. Were much better defensively in the second half.

Let's ride this group. That's all it is. It could have been easily been Kario and four other guys. It wasn't tonight.

Q. You guys fight and fight, finally get the lead, then that four-point play.

MIKE WHITE: Oh.

Q. Talk about that series right there that turned it all of a sudden.

MIKE WHITE: Yeah, it's the best defensive league in the country. In order to be in the top half of this league, you better be elite defensively. The teams out of this league that will go to the NCAA tournament, at least most, I think there's an outlier in there with pretty good defensive numbers, and the rest of them are elite defensive numbers.

You just don't make those mistakes. It's an attention to detail. It's a consistency. Again, you can't fault the energy level. We had guys diving on the floor, getting two hands on rebounds, keeping balls alive. But it's part of the process, as well.

In addition, we had an errant foul there on a KJ post-up, just sending him to the line. It's what he wanted.

This group never got to a consistent level of defense that puts you in the top half of your league. It's something that we'll continue to preach and stress and drill.

We got to get better offensively, too, in this program. These coming weeks, I'm eager to get right back to it. I'll put a lot more thought toward the big picture, the macro, wholesale things we have to evaluate offensively, defensively, what we do in spring workouts. Have individual meetings with all these guys pretty quickly and figure out where we go next.

But I'm anxious to get back to work.

Q. As you look back on your first season at Georgia, what kind of building blocks did y'all set? What do you think y'all still need to accomplish the goals that

you want to accomplish?

MIKE WHITE: You know what, sometime in the near future we should all get together and I'll have more material for you. Not great material, as you know by now after year one. Only took a year for you to figure that out, all you guys (smiling).

I will have had a chance to put more thought to it. Right now it's like, my goodness, we had that one. It's tough. I feel for our guys. I feel for our seniors. Again, I feel for our fans.

I haven't put a lot of thought towards the whole season, right? That said, though, because I mentioned it on the front end, because I did just mention it to our seniors. I do want our seniors, Mardrez McBride, Braelen Bridges, Jailyn Ingram, Jaxon Etter. Jaxon Etter is the epitome of character, selflessness and culture. And Jailyn Ingram has had multiple surgeries and didn't envision this coming, but had an incredible attitude throughout the whole thing.

Mardrez McBride played at a couple junior colleges, made it all the way back home to represent the G in his home state.

Braelen Bridges has come a long way, he just has. From the first day of practice to today's game to yesterday's practice, he's come a long way.

I'm proud of those guys. The overall foundation, I mean, heck, it probably just starts with the simplicity of we add some wins, something that we can sell in recruiting. The fact that there's some momentum, there's some positivity. We took a step, simply, in the right direction.

I'll have more for you in the future.

Q. You mentioned Braelen. That hook shot came a long way this year. He had a couple looks. He seems to have taken it hard. Talk a little bit about him.

MIKE WHITE: Yeah, he was down on himself late. He was down in the locker room. He was about as down as anyone. He's put a lot of work in. He's come a long way. I mean, this is a guy that went to junior college, like Drez, and redshirted. Here he is scoring double figures pretty consistently in games in the SEC.

He's worked. He's a great guy. He's down. I'm down for him.

He had some adversity at the end of the game. He also made some plays to give us a chance to win. He had some really high-level individual games this year.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

MIKE WHITE: Thanks, guys.

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