

# Southeastern Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Friday, March 10, 2023

## Alabama Crimson Tide

Tampa, Florida, USA

Amalie Arena

## Coach Nate Oats

## Brandon Miller

## Jahvon Quinerly

## Postgame Press Conference

Alabama 72, Mississippi State 49

THE MODERATOR: We're ready to begin with Alabama. We'll ask Coach Oats for some general thoughts, then take questions.

Coach Oats.

NATE OATS: It was a good start to the tournament. We obviously didn't play very well last time we were out at A&M, so we needed to bounce back.

We've bounced back off of losses pretty well all year. I think margin of victory after a loss is 20 plus. We did that again today. The question is can we continue to play like this for the next two days.

But I thought our guys were very focused. They were really into the defensive end, which is what we needed to be. We made a change in the lineup, obviously. Took our Sixth Man of the Year in the SEC and put him in the starting lineup. I just thought we were struggling offensively to start games. We get to the end of the four-minute media timeout, have two points, three points.

Today we started 13-6, so it made sense. I thought Jaden Bradley played well in his minutes, too. Wasn't necessarily a demotion of Jaden, because Jaden came to me last night and said he thought I should start Jahvon. That's the kind of group we have. Guys are willing to do whatever they need to do to help the team be better.

Me and JQ and Jaden Bradley sat down, had a discussion. I think it's better when Clowney is at the five, Brandon is at the four, there's more shooting on the floor. When Jaden is in, you can play to his strengths, get the ball downhill a little



bit, when there's a stretch five in there.

Wasn't that we were displeased with Jaden or anything, I just thought it made sense, and it worked well today.

I thought our guys did a good job opening the game. I thought we did a good job closing the half. I think over the final 12 minutes of the first half, they were 3 for 19. We went into the half great.

Start of the second half wasn't that good. Tolu Smith got off a little bit, then we hung around 20. Hoping not to play the starters after the first four minutes of the second half. We had to bring them in. They did a good job of opening it back up. The back-to-back threes, Clowney was able to hit the one.

Noah Gurley is a guy as a senior, we talked about his leadership all year. I think you see it. For a guy to have some DNPs late in the year for a fifth-year senior, that was a big contributor, started a lot of games last year. To come in and have himself mentally ready to go. This is a team that plays big. Cam Matthews is more traditional four man. We decided to go bigger with Gurley at the four more often. Had great practices. He was ready to go. I think he embodies our team, to be honest with you. Unbelievable culture of guys just caring about their teammates. He's continued to lead, never pouted. We needed him today.

Our second leading scorer, Mark Sears, struggled to shoot the ball today. Don't expect that shooting the next two days. But we needed somebody to step up. A season high of 20 assists, which is the second most ever in the SEC Tournament for Alabama basketball.

Our guys are unselfish, they move the ball, they care about each other. Only had seven turnovers. I thought our guards did a great job of taking care of the ball.

Lastly, it was Charles' birthday today. Our guys are great. They gave him a big, huge birthday celebration this morning, sang to him. Five birthday blocks. I thought he controlled the paint pretty well. He won the hardhat for all the blue-collar points.



A lot of guys stepped up and contributed. Proud of our team. Got one down. We've been here in Nashville before. It's going to be a fun tournament. Whoever we end up playing, it's going to be a tough game tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the student-athletes.

**Q. How happy were you guys to see Charles get eleven, six and five blocks today?**

BRANDON MILLER: I feel like as a team we're happy for him. He turned 21. I feel like my vocals were the best out of the group with singing, but not going to get into that (smiling).

No, I think we're all happy for him.

JAHVON QUINERLY: That's my guy right there, big Chuck.

**Q. Brandon, given your involvement on some level in a fatal shooting, how do you reconcile not missing any playing time after that occurred?**

BRANDON MILLER: Respectfully, I'm not going to be able to say on that.

**Q. Asking about playing (off microphone).**

BRANDON MILLER: Well, man, just really leaning on my teammates really.

**Q. Brandon and JQ, turnovers were so low, I think one of the lowest of the season. That's been a problem recently. How did you limit that?**

JAHVON QUINERLY: I had three today. I got to be better on my part with the turnovers. But it was good to have single-digit turnovers in this game. I think that really had our offense flowing.

BRANDON MILLER: I feel like us limiting turnovers is just another way to win games. When our offense is not working or if we're not getting stops, I feel like that's just another way to win the game.

**Q. Jahvon, in the last month or so, you got a step of quickness back. When did you really start feeling like yourself?**

JAHVON QUINERLY: I think it was just a mindset change. Earlier in the year I was kind of in my head. It was a long, long journey coming back.

This last month or so, I've kind of been out there playing,

trying to forget about the injury, like I'm just hooping. I think it's starting to show.

**Q. Brandon, Darius and Michael Davis were both indicted today on capital murder charges. Just wanted to know what your thoughts are on that.**

BRANDON MILLER: Again, I can't -- I'm not going to be able to say on that.

**Q. Jahvon, when Coach was talking about Jaden coming in, saying you should be in the starting lineup, what does that mean to you? How have you seen him mature to come to that decision?**

JAHVON QUINERLY: Man, it's just the culture we have here. Time and time again... Two years ago, that was the culture with that team. You recognize that somebody's getting it going, a couple games in, you're like, Look, Coach, we might have to make a change or something.

That's just, man, crazy. That's really something that we've embodied as a program since I've gone to Alabama. I don't know any other program in the country that will really do that.

I'm happy for Jaden. He showed a lot with that yesterday. I'm not surprised at all.

**Q. In the indictment, Darius Miles owned a gun that was used to kill somebody. Do you own a gun?**

JAHVON QUINERLY: No.

**Q. Brandon, you mentioned leaning on your teammates during this. Can you elaborate on what that's meant to you, getting through this?**

BRANDON MILLER: I mean, it means the world just knowing I have another family that's away from home. Me leaning on them is just another family figure, so...

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

**Q. You further expand on Noah Gurley and Charles, the birthday boy, he did a great job protecting the rim. Noah being ready to go was a key to the run at the end of the first half to give up the lead.**

NATE OATS: Yeah, I'm real happy for Noah. He's been practicing great. He's been leading even when he didn't play. I mean, I couldn't be happier for him.

He steps up, goes three of four from three, I mean, a guy --



even though he hasn't played as much as he would have liked. Me and him have talked. He understands it. He plays the four. Clowney starts at the four. Probably going to be a first-round pick. Brandon Miller gets bumped down to the four. Lottery pick. Playing behind two really talented guys. He just stayed with it, led the team as a leader, stayed in the gym, worked his tail off.

I mean, I was in the training room two days ago. He came in, full-out sweat, probably three, four hours after practice was over. I said, What have you been doing? He was drenched.

He said, I just got done with a shooting workout.

This is a kid that never dropped his head, never pouted. A real high-character kid. All of our kids are high-character kids. But he's at the top, and I'm really happy for him.

Charles, it's great he had a good game on his birthday. Kind of got on him the first four minutes of the second half. I thought he kind of let Tolu get going. I thought he did a great job in the first half. When he came back in, he had some blocks, kind of sealed the game.

I'm not sure what they cut it to, maybe 14, I think, if I remember right. Then we kind of inserted some of those starters back in. Charles had some blocks. Made a couple threes. Opened it back up to 20.

Guys all gave Charles a lot of love in the locker room when we gave him the hardhat because it's his birthday. Happy birthday, Chuck.

**Q. That was a team that was 23rd in turnover percentage on defense. You only had seven. What do you think was key? How important was it that this first game? The post-season kind of changed the trends that have been happening the past few games?**

NATE OATS: Oh, it's big. We've been talking about getting better starts. I set in the hotel room with our starting group before the A&M game, talked about what we need to do.

That's why I was so moved, pleased with Jaden Bradley. He came to me and said, Coach, I think Jahvon Quinerly should start.

I've talked to him about different lineups that maybe fit him a little better. So just such an unselfish group. They really want to do what's best for the team all the time.

I think Jahvon has been playing really well. Gives us a little bit more shooting when teams can't sag quite as

much.

It wasn't just Jahvon inserted for Jaden. It was more the whole team. We got to get stops, run off our stops. Only having seven turnovers is big because even when you don't shoot it particularly well, we didn't shoot it bad, 35% is not bad, but that was bolstered by Gurley's three of four, Dom Welch's one of one. The rest of the team that typically shot it well for us all year, you take those guys out, didn't shoot it great.

Didn't turn it over, rebounded it enough. A decent offensive game against a good defensive team.

**Q. What were the nature of the discussions? Who was involved in deciding to continue to play Brandon and Jaden Bradley? And was there any discussion of disclosing that they were present at the scene of the shooting?**

NATE OATS: So it's been a difficult situation, as you understand. I mean, we're dealing with a criminal matter. Taking the facts from law enforcement as they do their investigation.

As we got the facts from them, this was a decision made, based on all the facts we had, with, obviously, my boss, Greg Byrne; his boss, Dr. Bell; and the Board of Trustees. And everybody was comfortable, and, I mean, based on the information we had, Brandon didn't break any school policy or team policy, so... I was comfortable with the decision that was made.

**Q. You talked about the starters wanting to get them a break in the second half. How valuable was it for them to get some rest today, but also for some of the backups to get some post-season experience in this first game today? And then, on the line of backups, do you have an update on Dom Welch?**

NATE OATS: We've played these tournaments before where we get to play three straight games. Mississippi State had to go to overtime yesterday, so they had to play their starters extra minutes. I was hoping after we pull our starters after the first four minutes of the second half that we would only have to play them very limited. We were able to do that.

I think we just had to put them in there when it got cut to 14, move it back up to 20. I really wanted to see some bench guys play well. That Nimari Burnett has huge upside. I wanted to see him. He hit the 1-3. He drove it, got a layup. Thought he was pretty good in his minutes. Would have liked to see Rylan make a few shots, get his confidence back.

But Noah Gurley was great. I think we can insert him in any of the next two games. He has the confidence to know he's playing well. Dom Welch, I thought he was good. Different kind of guys we can play in different situations.

But Dom has got a tailbone bruise, so a big-time play taking that charge. Unfortunate that Nimari fouled the guy from behind, would have been a great charge. Embodies what we're about, a kid comes off the bench and gives his body up for the betterment of the team.

Hopefully he can get some treatment and rehab and be ready to go. He's been playing well, practicing hard.

**Q. It's been almost two months since a young woman lost her life on Alabama's campus. In the time since, have you spoken to or attempted to speak to any member of her family?**

NATE OATS: Listen, this whole situation has been, obviously, as you know, hard to deal with, tragic, to have any involvement in a young woman losing her life. What you ask is a private matter; I'm not going to discuss publicly with everybody. A lot of this is just hard to deal with, to be honest with you. But it's a private matter.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

NATE OATS: Like I said, it's a private matter. I'm not going to speak publicly on it.

**Q. In regards to Brandon and Jaden, and you just spoke about school policy, team policy, when it comes to the situation that went on, do you have a policy when it comes to weapons on your basketball team? And did both players have to go in front of the Student Conduct Board in determination that they were going to be eligible to play, or was that left up to the university, period?**

NATE OATS: Yeah, our players are required to follow the university policy on guns, which essentially bans them on campus. So, yeah, we do a policy.

And then with that other stuff, I mean, obviously this is an ongoing investigation, there's a lot of stuff to happen that's not privy to public knowledge. I'm just not able to speak on everything.

THE MODERATOR: We're done. We got to get Mississippi State up. Thank you.

NATE OATS: Thanks.