

Southeastern Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Friday, March 10, 2023

Arkansas Razorbacks

Nashville, Tennessee, USA

Bridgestone Arena

Coach Eric Musselman

Jordan Walsh

Anthony Black

Postgame Press Conference

Texas A&M 67, Arkansas 61

THE MODERATOR: We're ready to continue with Arkansas.

Coach Musselman.

ERIC MUSSELMAN: Obviously we played a very good first half and a poor second half. I give Texas A&M credit for their second half play.

The biggest theme heading into the game was rebounding the basketball. Obviously 26 to 43, we did not rebound the ball.

Second half, the 7-0 foul count took away our aggressiveness I thought defensively. But again, I give A&M total credit for how hard they played and for changing the complexion of the game the last 20 minutes of play.

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

Q. Jordan, you hit the bank shot to give you a 13-point lead. Could you maybe describe the feeling after you hit that shot. Arkansas won 78 straight when they led by 13 or more. How tough was that? Anthony, maybe you could answer that, too.

JORDAN WALSH: I mean, obviously it was a good feeling to make the shot, to be able to have that lead going into halftime. When we got to halftime, I felt like we stressed coming out, being aggressive defensively and rebounding the ball at a higher rate than we did in the first half. That was kind of our main focus going into it.



We just hoped that we could take advantage of that.

ANTHONY BLACK: I mean, that's kind of what we've been doing all year. The last time we played them, did the same thing. We got to stop doing that.

Q. You're going to get good news Sunday, being in the NCAA tournament, March Madness. How good is that?

JORDAN WALSH: I mean, I feel like one of the main focuses going in college basketball is being able to compete at the highest level, which is March Madness. Some say it's the greatest feeling you could have in your life. I'm just glad that we have a chance to be able to get there. I'm just excited for it, I guess.

ANTHONY BLACK: I mean, it's good that we got another tournament to play in, hopefully, on Sunday we'll see that. I mean, that's kind of been our expectation, to be honest, so it's not really...

Q. What did you feel offensively was the difference in shooting in the halves?

ANTHONY BLACK: I think we took better shots in the first half, just easier shots, high-level shots. In the second half, they just started flying around on defense. We just got to throwing the ball away and missing shots.

JORDAN WALSH: Yeah, I feel like we started the game off real aggressive, following the game plan, taking advantage of their weaknesses.

I feel like when it came to the second half, kind of just like let that slip. We weren't as aggressive. We were settling a little bit more. I felt like we could have took advantage a little bit better.

Yeah, that's it.

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

Q. Despite the loss, you've certainly seemed to have this team poised in this tournament to make some

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noise. What's the message going to be this week getting them ready for the Big Dance?

ERIC MUSSELMAN: I haven't thought about that yet. I do know that it's the first time since 2008, 18 years, since Arkansas has made three straight NCAA tournaments. But we are a young team. Every game has its own theme, style to what happens. So does every team each year.

Historically we've been really good in the second half. This season we have not been very good in the second half of games. We'll dissect this game tonight and tomorrow. The players will be off tomorrow. We'll wait and see who we play and where we play. At that point we'll start in preparation.

Both scheme-wise and then also mentally, some of the things we have to do to get ready to play and win and try to advance in maybe the greatest sporting event there is in the NCAA tournament.

Q. What did you see the difference team-wise and with Nick shooting-wise?

ERIC MUSSELMAN: Yeah, I mean, obviously Nick, 1-10, that's nine of our missed second half shots. It wasn't just Nick. I mean, across the board we really struggled to put the ball in the basket in the second half, so...

It's not the first time it's happened in a second half. We're young. I mean, halftime speech has been the same for the last eight years. Adjustment has been the same. We're just a young team. Winning and closing games, it's not easy for teams. Tonight was an example of that again for us.

Q. What did you think was the difference in free throws?

ERIC MUSSELMAN: We didn't have a lot of prep time obviously because by the time we got back last night, having played yesterday does have an effect on you, for sure. But playing with great discipline and not reaching, trying to go vertical was a game plan that I thought we did a pretty good job in both halves.

I thought the first half it was physical on both ends of the floor. Again, I mean, Texas A&M beat us. If you get down 7-0 in the foul count at any level, whether it's CYO, college, the NBA, it affects your aggressiveness defensively, especially a team that shoots foul shots percentage-wise as well as Texas A&M has all season long. They're a great free-throw shooting team and a great free-throw attempting.

Certainly that affected 'cause we did not want to put them on the foul line. That did have an effect on us. I thought we did a phenomenal job blocking 11 shots. I thought we did a really good job of protecting the rim.

But again, they played a great second half, led by Taylor. I thought his second half was phenomenal. We had some guys not play great second halves. There goes the outcome.

Q. Some teams may not make the tournament. How do you feel about all the stuff you had to deal with and you're still going to be in the tournament?

ERIC MUSSELMAN: Yeah, this league, it's really hard, it's really competitive. Great talent. A lot of NBA players play in this league. Great coaches in this league.

Hopefully we've learned throughout. Even tonight I hope that the six freshmen, the new guy, I hope we learn something tonight that we can discuss and try to get better at.

This stings. A&M is a really good team. They were the second seed. For much of the game we had a lead. I mean, we had a lead for 27 minutes or whatever. I think we led 75 out of the 80 minutes that we played them in the two other games. We've proven that we can play with anybody. Both our Alabama games were extremely close.

Then as far as the tournament, certainly, again, first time in 18 years a program like Arkansas has been to three straight NCAAs.

As a competitor, I think you have to let this game sink in before we turn the page. I'm not really going to start thinking about the tournament till we know who we play and where we play.

I'm going to look into this game and see how we can get better.

Q. Ricky didn't have a good scoring game. How tough is it for you to win when he struggles?

ERIC MUSSELMAN: Certainly the two fouls that he had in the first half. Normally I don't play a player when he has two fouls. I did put him back to try to help him get going a little bit.

We need Ricky to carry. He's been our leading scorer all season long. Tonight, again, just the foul trouble I thought affected his aggressiveness.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

