

Southeastern Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Saturday, March 11, 2023

Alabama Crimson Tide

Tampa, Florida, USA

Amalie Arena

Coach Nate Oats

Noah Clowney

Brandon Miller

Postgame Press Conference

Alabama 72, Missouri 61

THE MODERATOR: We're ready to begin with Alabama. We'll begin and ask Coach Oats for a couple general thoughts on the game, then take questions.

Coach Oats.

NATE OATS: If you're going to win a tournament, you're going to have to do it in different ways. We said that. Found different ways to win.

Today wasn't our best. I thought we came out of the gate fairly strong again, but defensively we let down in the first half. Beginning of the second half we weren't great. We were forced to call a timeout on the inbound play. We got after our guys a little bit, they responded well.

It wasn't just not making shots. I know we didn't shoot it very well in the first half. I think we were 2 of 15 from three. Clowney had our only two makes. He's a confident kid.

We tried to pump our guys full of confidence. He continues to shoot even if he's had games where he's gone through a lot of misses. Today he ends up 3 of 6. Happy as can be for it. Mark is struggling to shoot. JQ didn't make any. We're going to pump them full of confidence. Never passing up an open three.

In the second half I think we ended up 6 of 12 from three. Helped us kind of go from a four-point deficit to up where we took the lead, up at 13 one point.

We out-rebounded them by 16. Offensively they do a great job. I thought our defense at the rim, they finished 13 of 27



at the rim, under 50%. We were 19 of 23 at the rim, shot 83%. Even if we're not making threes, to be honest with you, we had way too many turnovers today, we still have other ways we can win the game. On the glass, finishing at the rim. We did a decent job at the free-throw line there late.

It's a game of runs. If you're going to win three in a row, you got to find different ways to win it. Brandon now owns the freshman record for scoring. He's got 645 points. Broke Collin Sexton's record. Collin Sexton had a pretty good freshman year. He's going to have a great NBA career. So want to congratulate Brandon on that. It's a big deal. He's played really well for us.

We've been moving the ball, wasn't happy with our turnovers today. Yesterday we had 21 assists, today we had 18. I think guys are being unselfish. The ball is moving. We're finding guys at the rim. If we could have actually made a shot today, we would have mid 20 assists.

Happy with the unselfish play. A lot of good kids pulling for each other. I thought some guys turned down some shots I'd like for them to take.

Lastly, these SEC championship games don't come often. Last time we were up here was COVID year. Limited amount of fans. I just encourage all the Alabama fans, all you Alabama reporters, let's try to get it out, try to pack this place full of Alabama fans. It's not that far of a drive. Tipping off at noon tomorrow, as many Alabama fans as we can up here to Nashville, support us in the championship tomorrow.

These are not easy to make it to. We've had two tough games to get there. We'll have a really tough game whoever we end up playing tomorrow. If people ask me who do I want to play, I don't think that's a good question because whoever I want to, doesn't matter. Doesn't have any effect on the games.

We haven't beat A&M since we've been here. 0-3 against them. Lost to them our last regular-season game. They're good, tough, cause problems.



We beat Vanderbilt twice, but they're playing their best basketball right now, playing really well. They say it's hard to beat a team three times.

Either way it's going to be a tough game, but we're looking forward to it tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the student-athletes.

Q. Brandon, you got the third foul pretty early in the second half. What adjustments did you make offensively, and how did you get yourself into a rhythm to finish strong?

BRANDON MILLER: I really feel like my teammates really just built the confidence in me, just to be able to take over a game. I feel like my teammates kept putting little words in my head just to build my confidence.

Q. Noah, the last month or so you've been frustrated on offense. Defense has still been good. How did you feel to have a great offense performance today?

NOAH CLOWNEY: I work on it a lot so when it does fall in a game, I mean, it just felt good.

Q. Noah, a lot has been said about Kobe Brown. He didn't play against you last time. You were all over him all game. What do you think that says about your defensive performance today?

NOAH CLOWNEY: I think he's a great player. As far as defending him, I think it was a five-man deal. A lot of the things we do incorporate other people on the floor just to defend one player at times.

We as a team did a great job on him.

Q. Brandon, it looked like you were getting into the crowd, the crowd was getting you jacked up. What did it mean to have so many Alabama people?

BRANDON MILLER: I love it, man. Feel like we had probably the best crowd in the country. I mean, for them to come from Tuscaloosa to Nashville, that's probably the biggest thing I've seen all year. I feel like that's the best thing.

I feel like they're here for us, here to see us play. We feed off them. They give us the energy that we need.

Q. Brandon, Coach mentioned you passed Collin Sexton as the leading scorer. What does that mean to you?

BRANDON MILLER: I mean, it's a great accomplishment. But without my team, I wouldn't have done it without them. Them building my confidence, like I said. Just them being here for me, just really building my confidence to break records like that. That's the biggest thing.

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

Q. You talked about how good they are offensively. Number seven in offensive efficiency. What were some of the points of emphasis for your defense in this game? What did the team listen to well?

NATE OATS: Thought we had a good plan for Kobe Brown. Obviously Kobe Brown and Hodge have been their big scorers. We didn't do as good a job on Hodge. Thought we did a pretty good job on Kobe.

Number one thing is getting back in transition. This team likes to run just like we like to run. If you look at fast break points, they still ended up with 18. A lot of those came out of turnovers. We made a big point of emphasis on not turning the ball over because it feeds their transition. We didn't do a great job.

In the half court I thought we did a really good job. I thought Charles did a great job protecting the rim. I thought Brandon, Clowney and Gurley did a pretty good job when we got switched onto Kobe Brown. We forced them to take rim shots.

Threes, they shot 13 of 27 at the rim, 3 of 16 on their nine rim twos. We wanted to run them off the three-point line. They like to shoot a lot of threes. Still feel like they got too many off. They ended up seven of 25.

I felt like defensively we were able to influence their shot geography the way we wanted it more, push them down to Charles when he was in, take the long contested twos. I thought we did a pretty good job of that. Field goal percentage, defense, pretty good. They only shot 33% from the field. I thought we did a good job of that.

Q. You were pretty animated today, especially in the first half. Stomping your feet, getting after players. Offensive execution was what you were getting after them about most. Take us into what you were seeing?

NATE OATS: Thought our offense was pretty bad at times early. We weren't aggressive enough. We talked about our plan versus their switch. I think we were locked in as we needed to be against their switching.

Yeah, we need to play more aggressive on offense against

the switching. Too passive. We'd come off, they'd switch, back it up, sit there and dribble for a while. Not the way we wanted to play against it.

I was trying to get our guys to be way more aggressive. I thought Jaden Bradley was pretty aggressive for us early. I thought he helped. Gave us really good minutes.

JQ and JB those two guys, it's good that when one maybe struggles a little bit, the other one...

JQ had a really good second half with his assists. He didn't score well today, seven assists, one turnover. He did play well, just didn't score as well as we would like. Jaden did a good job coming in and being aggressive against some of the switching.

Q. Noah Gurley made maybe the biggest shot of the game. Also Sears hasn't been shooting it from three but manufactured nine points.

NATE OATS: Gurley is now 4 of 5 in the tournament from three, which is huge. All the work that he's put in, even when he wasn't playing a ton, just kept working. It's paying off. We needed it.

That three, that put it from what to what? Went from six to nine? That was big because they cut that thing. Six was the lowest they cut it once we built it to 10. Seemed like it was getting too close for comfort. He stretched that out a little bit.

I thought he played great on defense. He almost played 20 minutes tonight. Really happy for Noah. His character, attitude, his leadership. I went up and grabbed him. I said, Look, man, your leadership has been great all year, we need you to lead on the floor. Your leadership in the timeout has been good. We need you to do some stuff on the floor, get a big rebound, make a tough play. He did that.

Sears, look, there's no way he goes cold from three three games in a row. He shot it well for us all year. He was 1 for 8 yesterday, I think, 2 for 17 in the tournament. Way too good a shooter.

I thought his three hit was timely. He went to the free-throw line, didn't let the fact that he wasn't making threes mess with his head at the free-throw line. He was still able to get downhill and finish it. The one finish he had at the rim in the first half.

He's a tough kid. Good for us an defense. I'm pretty confident he'll start making some shots tomorrow hopefully.

Q. Obviously Missouri got to this point after finishing 13th last year. Vandy and A&M are here. Kentucky and Tennessee are out. What does that say about the SEC's growth?

NATE OATS: It used to be one or two teams at the top that were really good way back when, before I got here. I mean, you look at the job Coach Gates has done at Missouri. Unbelievable job. Brought in a fun style, offensive play. They're top 10 in the country in offensive efficiency. Buzz knows how to win, wins everywhere he's been.

The caliber of coaches that have been brought into this league, and I haven't been in this league very long, but every night out you're going against one of the best coaches in the country it seems like.

Stackhouse has done an unbelievable job with Vanderbilt. When we beat them at our place, they turn around, strung off I think five, six straight wins. Almost got to the end of February without a loss. For him to hold the team together... Offensively he's really good, his time in the NBA and G Leagues.

You look at the caliber of coaches we got in this league, teams are good. Athletes are great. Again, I don't know for sure, but it seems to me like there's as many pros out of this league as any other league in the country. We have some of the best athletes in the country to go along with some of the best coaching. You're going to have pretty good teams when that happens.

Hopefully we can translate that into some NCAA tournament wins and have some teams making big runs in March.

Q. I understand the gun laws in Alabama allow somebody to have a gun, and on campus that you can't have a gun. But I'm just wondering, do you know which of your players have guns? Are they required to register them with the athletic department?

NATE OATS: Yeah, look, our players know the university policy. To my knowledge, not one of them has a gun now. But it's -- all the current players on our team have followed university policy with all that stuff, so...

I think that answers the question.

Q. Can you talk about your three-point shooting mentality. You missed the first five in the second half, 2 of 20. Then you hit six of your last seven.

NATE OATS: Yeah, look, we kept saying every timeout,

We are not turning down an open catch-and-shoot three. I thought there was one one of our kids took was a little questionable in the first half off the dribble, highly contested. We're not taking those.

Any of you shooters get an open catch-and-shoot three, I don't care what you are, 0 for 6 -- I was upset that Quinerly turned one down there late in the game. We ended up with a poor shot, shot selection.

Look, my philosophy is shooters are going to shoot. They need to shoot. I need to pump them full of confidence. I am never second-guessing an open catch-and-shoot. Obviously a late game maybe in the last minute when we tell them we're taking free throws and layups, we're not going to take one, but in the course of the game, Sears, Quinerly, Clowney, Brandon, I don't really care, 0 for 6, we're taking them.

I think you see what happened. I knew we were 2 for 19, so we were 2 for 20 at one point. We're going to hit them. I tell them if we're not going to hit them, we'll kill them on the offensive boards, get rebounds, hit them that way.

We also know we can score at the rim. We made 19 field goals at the rim the. The fact that everyone knows we're capable of exploding from three, you still keep the defense spread out, able to get downhill to the rim, score 38 points right at the rim. That was big for us tonight, too.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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