

# Southeastern Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Saturday, March 11, 2023

## Texas A&M Aggies

Nashville, Tennessee, USA

Bridgestone Arena

## Coach Buzz Williams

## Wade Taylor IV

## Julius Marble

Postgame Press Conference



Texas A&M 87, Vanderbilt 75

THE MODERATOR: We're ready to start with Texas A&M. We'll start with questions for the student-athletes.

**Q. Wade, the streak starting about 12 minutes to go in the game. They had cut it to 12, almost got it down to two. And you scored 11 points in three minutes. Was that just the game coming to you, or did you feel at that point you needed to be the aggressor?**

WADE TAYLOR IV: We weren't getting any stops on the defensive end. They cut the lead down, started hitting shots, a lot of threes, a lot of get to the basket with ease. Our low man was pretty late.

But I would just say I was trying to control the game a little bit. That was scoring, trying to get stops, assists. In that moment it was going at the time, so that's it.

**Q. Wade, this seemed like a game that was different from the recipe. Was that something in scouting or...**

WADE TAYLOR IV: Recipe? What recipe?

**Q. More three-pointers. Less free-throw line.**

WADE TAYLOR IV: It was a good rep. Yesterday Arkansas, they wasn't a three-point shooting team. Today Vandy, they run a lot of good plays to get three-point shots.

Just working on our cover two, defensive strategies we're going to need going down the line.

**Q. Wade, you're one of the guys from last year's team that made it to the conference championship. Back**

again. How does it feel to be back?

WADE TAYLOR IV: It's a blessing. We worked very hard to get back to this point. On December 25th, being 6-5, nobody thought we would be here. A blessing. We just got to complete the job.

**Q. Wade, you got the rematch with Alabama tomorrow. Handled them well last week. What about that game excites you?**

WADE TAYLOR IV: Just another chance to make history. Alabama is No. 1 in the conference championship. We're going to go another night, film session, recovery, go tomorrow and win another game.

**Q. Julius, a quick turnaround. Alabama, how do you stack up against them?**

JULIUS MARBLE: We stack up pretty good. We played them last week so we have some familiarity with them.

I mean, I think we'll be fine.

**Q. The threes early, how much did that open up the space down low?**

JULIUS MARBLE: Yeah, I mean, I think I opened it up for everybody, honestly, because I got the first couple baskets (smiling). They started hitting threes. So yeah, no, I think I kind of opened up a little bit, started feeling it. I probably took a little more shots than I would have in the first half, but yeah.

**Q. Julius, that hook shot is old school. How did it come about?**

JULIUS MARBLE: I've probably had a hook shot since I was in third grade. I was the biggest guy on the court so it was the first shot I learned to do. Something I mastered all my life at this point.

**Q. You did a great job of getting to the free-throw line against Alabama. Key to the win a week ago. What did you do to be able to go 28 from the line?**



WADE TAYLOR IV: Just to get defensive stops on the defensive end so we could play in the broken floor. It's easy to get to the free-throw line when the defense is not set. Just trying to get stops, play downhill.

JULIUS MARBLE: Yeah, that's an emphasis for us, is to get to the free-throw line as quick as possible. Get to the bonus. We shot 28 free throws and made 27.

**Q. Your thoughts on the first half dunk, the windmill?**

WADE TAYLOR IV: It was a sight to see. We always joke and talk about how he's trying to leak out to get a dunk. He actually did his job this time and was rewarded with the dunk. Fun to see. He was happy about it.

JULIUS MARBLE: Exact same thing. That was going to be my response. Usually he gets in trouble for those. Coach always has to say something about it in film the next day. He got a good one day, got a dunk out of it, so...

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

**Q. Different look to the scoring production today. Was that something that the game gave or something you saw in scouting?**

BUZZ WILLIAMS: I would say a combination of both. I thought our staff did a really good job in a short turnaround. We haven't played these guys in seven weeks. I would say they run the most complex offense in the league. I think their team is completely evolved into something that it wasn't with the injury to their post player.

They're playing with four shooters always. Most of the time they're playing with five. If 42 is not in the game, every player on the floor can shoot threes. In the last five games, 44% of their shots have been from three.

It is going to be a different game. It's not going to be a smashmouth game like yesterday's game was because they stretch the floor so much. They want to play fast even though their pace of tempo throughout the year is still considered slow. That's because they're playing different.

They won 10 out of their last 11 games in the league. I think they lost one game in February, that's it. So I think the pace is going to be different because of that. I thought that our plan, they executed at a really high rate, and we were able to get I think five turkeys in the first half. That always makes your offense look better to force point because you're playing in a broken floor.

**Q. Not a game-specific question, but how good is basketball in the state of Texas right now, grassroots, high school, college level?**

BUZZ WILLIAMS: Yeah, I think it's really good. I'm probably biased just 'cause I'm from there. I think it's always been really good. Obviously it's heavily populated with really good players. Throughout my career, because I'm from there, no matter where I've been, we've always recruited.

Similar to what's transpired across the country, I think as grassroots has become more and more part of this, grassroots is going on now, so there's really not an off-season for players anymore.

20 years ago there was some level of break, similar to what Coach Saban always says when they're playing in post-season. He feels as though he's behind in recruiting. It for sure happens in basketball, as you know, because as the rules have changed, regardless of your feeling towards those rules, the calendar hasn't changed.

The growth of grassroots has only grown. It's hard, particularly for the head coach, to go on the road in January and February to high school games.

I think the state is populated with really good players, but also I think it's populated with really good coaches, whether they're scholastic or grassroots. Obviously at Texas A&M, we want to be in a position to sign the best and coach the best. But a lot of those kids have been coached. IV is a perfect example, Manny is a perfect example. Those guys were coached long before they ever got to Texas A&M. In this day and age, with the transfer portal, upon arrival, regardless of your age, you need to be able to make an impact.

**Q. Buzz --**

BUZZ WILLIAMS: Did you say they almost brought it to two in your opening question?

**Q. No, I said they almost got it to 10. They had two shots --**

BUZZ WILLIAMS: If they're recording it, you should listen. You said two.

**Q. Well, if I did say two, I meant 10.**

BUZZ WILLIAMS: I know what you meant, I'm just saying I'm trying to help you.

**Q. Thank you for the assistance. I appreciate it. Do**

**you feel the need or the instruction to say go to Wade because he's been such a...**

BUZZ WILLIAMS: I think he understands time scoring momentum arguably as any fourth semester college player in the country. Not just because he's the point guard. I think he has an elite feel.

Yes, I understand he can score. Yes, I understand he's fun to watch. What makes him so special is he is comfortable on that invisible line of should I shoot, should I create for someone else, should we go faster, should we go slower.

I can't remember exactly what happened. Maybe it was an official review. I asked him and Boots, Do you want me to call timeout, or are you going to stop the shenanigans?

Coach, we got it.

Okay, we have timeouts. If you want to run the timeout, I'll call the timeout. But we have to shore up what's going on over this last four- or five-minute stretch. He just understands that. The head coach of Texas A&M, her name is Corey, and she really doesn't agree with the acting coach on this timeout usage. But it's because she doesn't come to practice every day.

IV is really the coach. IV, should we call timeout? He just knows and has I think it's innate, he has an innate feel for what is best for the team.

**Q. Nate Oats sat up there and made an impassioned speech for Alabama fans to pack the arena. I guess it's your turn now.**

BUZZ WILLIAMS: He did?

Well, I pale in comparison to anything that Coach does. What I would say, though, and you've seen it for yourself, I think what's transpired in our program relative to the support should give credit to the administration because that started in the NIT this time last year.

I think that was the foundation of when things begin to turn. Then I understand the results of our success has helped in conference play.

But where things are in our program relative to support, upon arrival, and what has transpired literally over the last year, is remarkable. I don't know the numbers because I try not to study it.

Whatever the numbers were, last Valentine's Day in regards to fans that attend games at Reed Arena, through now, I would say they're 40 to 50 percent better. I think

that's the students. I think that's the season ticket holder who now show up. I think it's a lot of never bought a ticket, never bought a package of tickets. I think it's the marketing. I think it's the administration.

But I think it all started in the NIT. If they can't make it, that's okay. We know they're supporting us, watching from TV. We appreciate their spirit through the TV.

How far is it from Tuscaloosa to here?

**Q. 750.**

BUZZ WILLIAMS: Is that right (smiling)? We need to tell the Chronicle to buy you a plane ticket. That's what we need to make a passionate speech about (laughter).

**Q. You talked about the Alabama matchup. How much of the review in the next 24 hours is going to be reviewing last week's tape, seeing how Alabama has changed in the tournament so far?**

BUZZ WILLIAMS: Yeah, I'll be honest. I'm probably one of the worst at trying to get ahead. Since we've been in Nashville, I just tried to prepare for the next game. Obviously on Wednesday we don't know who we're playing. We have to wait a while on Thursday to find out who we're playing.

I honestly can't tell you what's transpired with Alabama since they've been in Nashville. I think I could probably give you a pretty good account for what happened I guess it was seven days ago when we played 'em, our preparation and what our plan was.

We'll have to spend a few hours studying what has changed. Based on what I remember, I don't know that a lot has changed tactically in how they play. Maybe they're utilizing their personnel a little bit. I'm not sure when the last time there was a regular-season champion in the SEC that only lost one game, but I know it happened before you were born, if it did happen.

I think the success that they have had speaks for itself. The No. 1 seed, for sure. Are they the No. 1 No. 1? I don't know. You'd have to ask whoever is on the committee this year.

But their body of work speaks for itself. What has changed? I can't answer because I won't start on it till I shower and eat a hamburger.

**Q. Followed you when you were at Marquette, Virginia Tech and now here. How important is the culture of your program? Played against Alabama five years**



**ago, the culture of your program really seems different but special.**

BUZZ WILLIAMS: Yeah, that's very kind of you. I'm not very good about talking about myself.

I would say a few things:

I think you can always judge coaches at the highest level based over a long period of time. I think the best way to do that is to look at their conference record. That's when it's good on good, no matter what the level is.

We had a losing record. We were 2-16 in year number one at Virginia Tech. You probably know that. We finished in last place in year number two here. Those are the only two losing records we've had in conference play. There's 80 years of experience on our staff with guys that have been with me. This is my 16th year.

I can't take credit for the daily habits of our program because a lot of that is carried out in the same message by people that have been around me a long time.

I think the other thing that gets underrated and maybe not as quantified in recruiting is the character of the parents of the children. I think the consistency of how you're raised to some degree will determine who the young man is on a daily basis.

We do not have the best players. We have never had the best players. We do not have the best coaches. I'm for sure not the best coach. But I don't think our program is built on I'm trying to be the best coach or this player is trying to be the best player. We're trying to be the best team that we can be.

I think that's based on what you do every day. We couldn't do those things in COVID, and we were bad because I think if I have a gift, what my gift is, is building trustful relationships with people. If you're going to restrict the time I can be around people, and you're going to restrict the time that we can work together, we're not going to be any good.

I think as we have grown programs and been a part of building programs, I think our success has gradually improved because of those relationships and because of the work.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

