

Southeastern Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Thursday, March 14, 2024

South Carolina Gamecocks

Nashville, Tennessee, USA

Bridgestone Arena

Coach Lamont Paris Collin Murray-Boyles

Ta'Lon Cooper

Postgame Press Conference

South Carolina 80, Arkansas 66

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by South Carolina.

We'll ask Coach for some general thoughts on the game.

LAMONT PARIS: I thought it was, man, such a fun time of year. The atmosphere was really good in there. It was just a good college basketball game.

I thought our guys had a really good effort from start to finish pretty much. We had a couple lulls here and there. Just thought it was a tremendous effort the way we shared the ball, our overall energy and how we played. Just was real happy with how we performed.

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

Q. Ta'Lon, how important is this tournament to you guys?

TA'LON COOPER: It's really important to us. We came up short in one championship. We're here to prove we are a championship-contender team.

Q. If you've had time to think about it at all, looking at the Auburn matchup tomorrow, a game you lost by 40 there, is there any kind of extra motivation?

COLLIN MURRAY-BOYLES: Auburn is a very good team. They really got us out the first time. We're going to come with the mindset that we play with against every team: do our best, follow our rules, listen to Coach, play off each other, play with good ball movement, move so we don't get stagnant.



They do a really good job of pressure. If we do all our main things, I think we have a pretty good chance.

Q. Collin, what made you so effective today?

COLLIN MURRAY-BOYLES: My teammates really just getting in the right spots, hitting me when they see I got a good chance to get around the basket and score a lot.

I really credit them. Also Coach for writing up these plays so that we can, like, get open, have multiple options. I was just hitting shots today, so that's always good.

Q. I think six points to end the first half, then the first 10 to start the second. What changed? How did you seize control?

TA'LON COOPER: Our main thing is defense. We're a defense-minded team. Coach came in and told us we need to get stops. The more stops we get, we just deflate them. Our offense going to work for itself if we play defense.

COLLIN MURRAY-BOYLES: Just coming in with a different mindset. We started off flat. So every time we come out of halftime, ramp it up because the other team is definitely going to pick it up. Just compete the best you can for the last 20 minutes.

Q. Ta'Lon, was the mindset to pound the ball inside from the get-go, or was it after some outside shots didn't fall?

TA'LON COOPER: Most definitely. Our bigs were scoring around the basket. The best basketball is inside-out basketball. I think that's the mindset that we had.

Q. You were describing getting into the paint, 14 of the 17 in the second half were layups. How were you able to get the ball in the paint? Is that something of being more physical, getting the passes down to the big guys?

TA'LON COOPER: I would say our players and how



Coach drew them up. It's bound for us to get the ball inside. Getting stops, pushing in transition, inside-out threes are the best threes. Just keeping the game simple.

COLLIN MURRAY-BOYLES: When we in practice, we got to rip drive, rip hard, never get pushed off your way with resistance.

Just attacking strong, making a strong move at the rim.

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

Q. Because he didn't play his first game till December, start in January, caught fire here the last month or so, do you feel like you have one of the best-kept secrets in some ways, maybe not so much a secret, in Collin?

LAMONT PARIS: Yeah, I mean, I said this I don't know how long ago. I keep saying it. It hasn't changed really. But his ceiling is so high, he's got an unbelievably high ceiling. I don't even think he's close to it still.

He continues to achieve and continues to grow more than anything. He continues to grow. Some of the shots he made today were off-balance, moving away from the basket. It takes incredible touch to finish some of those.

Yeah, sure, I guess it's a secret. I mean, I don't know how it's a secret at this point. He's been playing really well. Our team's been winning a lot of games. He's a key part to it on both sides.

I'm telling you, defensively is where he really stands out. He's so active. He anticipates at a high level. He's got tremendous feel. Then he's got the athleticism both vertically and from an agility standpoint that allows him to make plays and recover when he makes mistakes typically.

He's a high-level player.

Q. Looking ahead at the Auburn game. What did you learn from the loss at Auburn?

LAMONT PARIS: Yeah, I mean, we sat down and watched the film. There were a lot of things. I almost threw the film out just because it was an anomaly in the way that they performed as shooters. They had I think nine made threes out of their four and their five. They weren't just stare-down threes.

There wasn't a whole lot. I didn't yell at the guys. I don't think it was from lack of effort. I think they outplayed us. At their place it may have been an uphill battle either way. They outplayed us. Then they shot the ball incredibly well.

It turned out to what it was.

There's nothing I'm going to do, there aren't enough fixes, to not lose by 40, to go from losing by 40 to winning the game there. Aren't that many things.

We got to do what we normally do: play our way, defend at a high level, finish plays off with a rebound, be aggressive on the offensive end. Hopefully we'll just play better and to some degree hopefully they won't shoot the ball like that. That would be some real bad karma if they could do that twice in a row against us (smiling).

Q. It came out earlier that you and South Carolina have agreed on an extension. What does that mean for you and what does it mean for the administration to have trust in you to lead the program?

LAMONT PARIS: I've got a lot of pride in what we've done, what we've built. I'm incredibly excited about being able to be the coach and represent this university and this athletic department, and more specifically this basketball team.

It's a real thrill for me to be able to coach these guys. I love where I am. And they like me, too. What else was there to do but to make a good deal (smiling)?

But no, I'm really fortunate and blessed that, one, I get to do this as a profession. I get to hang around guys like the two guys that were out here, have some sort of small impact on what their college experience is going to turn out to be. I take a lot of pride in that.

I'm even more blessed to be able to do it at this institution, around the people, in the state that I am. I'm really excited. Really, really excited about moving forward.

This was a no-brainer, at least on my part. I think it was a little -- we had to nudge Coach Tanner a little bit maybe. No, I'm just kidding (laughter).

It's such a great match, the meet, the fit, the community, the other coaches. I'm very grateful. I'm grateful to our board, to Ray Tanner, to our president, and hopefully we can continue to grow for a long time.

Q. Trevon was their leading scorer. You held him to two points. What was the key to shutting him down?

LAMONT PARIS: I think we did a decent job the first time we played them at their place, then he cut loose late in the game.

The main goal, this is going to sound elementary, we were

really trying to stay between him and the basket. Sometimes that means there's a tasty morsel, I call it, to our guys. You want to reach for that thing, you think you're going to steal it. You have to lay off that thing, be focused on staying in front of him.

If you're focused on staying in front of him, he's an aggressive guy, some of the shots he's going to take are difficult. He's such a good player, he can make hard shots and he does make hard shots. The percentages are in your favor.

Where he really gets cooking is if you get out of position, you reach and gamble. I think he's impossible to stop if you do that.

I think we did a good job of being really solid defensively with him. We showed some help when we could to try to get him slowed down. We tried really hard. We tried really, really hard.

Q. I think it was after the Tennessee game you were talking about building a program, equated it to building a house, the foundation, walls. Did you know at that time the contract extension was something you were going to do as soon as it came about versus a month since your name has been floated around for other jobs? Did you know the foundation was being laid for you to stay?

LAMONT PARIS: Yeah, I mean, I knew the foundation was really good. It is. It's rock solid. It's steady. It's up to code in every single way. So over the next years we'll be continuing to bring in more materials and vet those out and make sure those are the right materials we need to do that, too.

I didn't float my name around. A lot of people were floating my name around. I guess that's what happens this time of year. It's fun, exciting, a lot of things that are going on. It makes the number of text messages I get out of control.

We've been so focused on a mission that we have here with this team, so enthralled in trying to get better, to get to the next thing, that's what we were really focused on.

In fact, when it was first presented to me, my natural instinct was to kind of push it back a little bit so we could continue to do that at full throttle, right? Then I realized that you can multitask if you really want to do that.

We were able to move forward on that. I'm really, really excited about that and then still quickly be able to get back to pouring more into our preparation and getting these guys ready to go out there and show what they can do.

Q. It's been a close battle at the top of the SEC. Ideally you wouldn't have to play an extra game, you'd want the double bye. Now that you played this game, won by 16, are you appreciative for the confidence this game could have given you guys?

LAMONT PARIS: Yeah, yeah, it's only bad to play this game if you lose this game. If you win this game, it can work, especially when you play well. I thought we played well today in a lot of different ways. Our general body of work was really good.

It can work to get you going. You don't play till Friday, that's a long break. One of the longest breaks you have had all season outside of your bye week.

It was good to get back into it. We're in the flow. You get a feel for it. You watch a couple of games yesterday. I think it could really work to your benefit. Hopefully it has. We played really well today. The guys will get rested, we'll watch a little tape tonight. Hopefully some of the guys that did some pretty good things will carry that forward in terms of confidence as we prepare to play a really, really good team tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

LAMONT PARIS: Thanks.

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