

# Southeastern Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Friday, March 15, 2024

## Georgia Bulldogs

Nashville, Tennessee, USA

Bridgestone Arena

## Coach Mike White

## Noah Thomasson

## Justin Hill

### Postgame Press Conference

Florida 85, Georgia 80

THE MODERATOR: We're ready with Georgia. We'll ask Coach for some general thoughts on the game, then take questions.

Coach.

MIKE WHITE: I thought it was a high-level game, very competitive. Two teams that played really hard. I thought the difference in the game were just a few of our turnovers which led to a lot of fast break points for Florida. 23, to be exact. Obviously the differential on the glass. I thought we did a very good job in the first half defending glass.

They're bigger. They're a team that's one of the best teams in the country obviously on the offensive glass. I thought we fought them at a really high level for 20. Gave up 12 in the second half, which led to some second-chance opportunities, of course.

That said, though, I thought our guys played really hard, put ourselves in a position to potentially advance again. But we wish Florida the best. I think they've got a chance to make a run.

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

**Q. What would you say was the key issue? What happened late in the game that sort of got them to get control back? Having to leave the rest of your season in somebody else's hands.**

NOAH THOMASSON: Credit to them. They made some big-time shots down the stretch. They got some offensive



rebounds that kind of hurt. But they're a good team. Sometimes when you don't make those stops and get those rebounds, it can hurt you.

Yeah...

JUSTIN HILL: I feel like we let big-time shot makers get good looks. Like Noah said, credit to them for knocking it down. When they didn't, we didn't do a good job on the glass. But credit to them again.

**Q. What allowed them to be successful on the glass? What was the change in momentum?**

NOAH THOMASSON: Like Coach White said, they're tall, athletic. Two guys that are really tall and physical. They do a good job of subbing those at all times. They got some offensive rebounds that didn't go our way, so yeah.

**Q. Can you both address whether you have any eligibility left, if you're going to try to stay in college, if so are you going to hang at Georgia?**

JUSTIN HILL: I'm for sure going to try to stay in college. Right now we're focusing trying to get into the NIT and focusing on our post-season.

NOAH THOMASSON: For me, this is it. Hopefully Sunday we get our name called to play again. If not, I'm forever grateful for this opportunity. I thank Coach White. A chance to play in the SEC is a dream come true. I'm a guy that had zero offers coming out of high school. And going to junior college -- I mean, people know my story. I'm forever thankful for this opportunity. I'm always glad to say I'm a Georgia Bulldog.

THE MODERATOR: Fellas, we'll excuse you. We'll continue with questions for Coach.

**Q. One of your favorite questions. You got the tech tonight. Obviously you have a size disadvantage with these guys. All your bigs had trouble. Were you having to overcome more than just being smaller overall? Your tech in particular affected the game?**



MIKE WHITE: I don't know if it affected the game or not. I don't know. I was displeased with some calls. I voiced my opinion, which is very prevalent in this league. I walked away. A few seconds later the whistle blew and I was charged with a technical foul. That's it.

**Q. What did you do wrong?**

MIKE WHITE: I would assume voicing my displeasure.

**Q. You mentioned Florida is a team that has the capability of making a run. What do you think could enable that?**

MIKE WHITE: I think when they're playing well, they're one of the better teams in this league, which makes them one of the better teams in the country. When they're clicking on all cylinders.

We tried to muck it up and junk it up with some stuff we hadn't done defensively. I thought we did a pretty good job of it. You look down, they still had 85.

They have bigs that pass it. They're elite. As good as I've competed against on the offensive glass. I mean, they execute well. They get good looks. They can score. Guys can drive it, shoot it and post it. Yet, when they shoot it, they're as good as any other program in the country at going to get another opportunity.

They guard you. They sit down and guard you. I sit here and talk to our guys with live-ball turnovers, the costly turnovers, points on the other end. They had something to do with that. They have an ability to turn you over with their guards, speed and hand activity.

They're very, very good.

**Q. You played 'em tough all three times. Why do you think you match up? Is it that muck-it-up kind of thing?**

MIKE WHITE: Why do you think we match up so well, you could say. Do we match up well? We're 0-3 against them. I think have you two teams fighting, competitive teams. Those games just happened to be competitive.

We were like that against a lot of teams this year. I shouldn't be talking in past tense because I hope we have an opportunity to continue to play in the NIT. But potentially we'd be talking about playing in that other tournament if four, five of these games had gone like the other way, like the game in Athens, like the game in Gainesville. Tennessee at home. South Carolina at home. Alabama at home. We took some steps this year being a

lot more competitive, of course.

Florida is a better team. Those other teams that beat us, they're just better. But until the ball stops bouncing, we'll keep swinging away at becoming our best. Maybe our name will be called in the NIT and maybe we can advance.

I know one thing, our guys will work, show up for practice. If we find out Saturday or Sunday we're playing, we'll have a good practice on Monday. That's what this team does.

**Q. Specifically does this team deserve an NIT bid?**

MIKE WHITE: Yeah.

**Q. Would you take it if it was there? How bad do you want it for having this young team?**

MIKE WHITE: In the portal era, when you have individual meetings with all these guys, it's a two-way street. What's the expectation? What are you looking for? What are your other options? Staffs have options and players have options. It's just what it is.

You recruit to a certain extent, but you also want guys that really want to be where they are. You want guys to really be a part of your program.

We'll figure that out. Whether they be freshmen or sophomores, juniors, seniors, what have you. Some of these seniors with an additional year of eligibility, of course.

Yeah, I'm not going to sit here and lie to you. I don't know enough about it. Haven't studied it. We were locked in on trying to advance here. Even when I've been on the bubble for NCAA tournament stuff, it's like people are paid to make those decisions and do that job.

I don't know who deserves to be in the NIT. Would we be excited to be in it? Absolutely. I don't care what tournament it is, we would love to compete. These guys would love to compete. At least I'm assuming they would right now. That's the feeling I get.

It's weird to sit there in the locker room postgame and not know is this the last time you're going to address your team. It's unique. But I'm hopeful that, yeah, the way we addressed our guys as a staff a few minutes ago wasn't the last time.

**Q. This has been new ground for you. Tough year for you. How frustrating has the year been? What's the year been like for you?**

MIKE WHITE: It's what I signed up for. It's what these kids signed up for. We can talk a lot about a lot of our close losses. We had close wins, too. We stole a couple with close, end-of-game shots.

I'd rather have the problem we had this year than the alternative, which was last year where you have a handful that you had zero chance, where you were uncompetitive, non-competitive rather. We put ourselves in a position this year.

Frustrating to lose. I'm as competitive as anybody. But again, I really like our guys and their work ethic and their approach to practice every day. We just got to stay the course in this program and get to the point where you're winning a few more of those close ones and we'd be sitting here talking about a different type of post-season.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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