

# Southeastern Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Friday, March 15, 2024

## Florida Gators

Nashville, Tennessee, USA

Bridgestone Arena

## Coach Todd Golden

## Will Richard

## Zyon Pullin

Postgame Press Conference

Florida 102, Alabama 88

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

Coach.

TODD GOLDEN: Incredibly proud of these guys and their teammates for the effort we had tonight. Obviously concerning start going down 8-0 in the first two minutes. After that I thought we played fantastic the rest of the way.

A combination of these guys executing our defensive game plan and limiting their three-point attempts and makes, then just offensively the way we played for each other, sharing the ball, getting downhill.

I think we went on a 17-0 run to end the first half, something along those lines. Great job finishing possessions and making our free throws to never allow the game to get tight.

Alabama is a great team, but we beat them pretty comfortably tonight, and I thought it was a great effort from our group.

**Q. What got going? What happened positive in the 21-2 run, besides that, what got you going?**

WILL RICHARD: Yeah, for us it was just defending, getting clean rebounding, getting out in transition. We got comfortable once we defended their first shot. Once we got clean rebounds, we were out running. That's what we like to do.



ZYON PULLIN: Yeah, piggyback on what he said. Limiting them to one shot, then run them off the three-point line. Like he said, get clean rebounds, push the pace.

**Q. Zyon, after the night you had last night, being in foul trouble in the second half, how important was it for you to get going in this one?**

ZYON PULLIN: I think it was just letting it come to me. I think just fixing those correctible things, limit the bad fouls. Even got one today.

I think it was just let the game come to me. Don't try to force anything. Not playing as much the other game. That's it.

**Q. Can you speak to the lift that Tommy and Alex gave you guys. What was the message after the first timeout.**

ZYON PULLIN: Yeah, those guys played huge. I think they've been playing huge all season when the minutes come. Made a lot of big plays. Second chance and all that stuff. Some big finishes down the stretch and stuff like that.

What was the other? The 8-0 run, it was just staying together. I think we got some looks we liked. Trying to get stops.

WILL RICHARD: Yeah, those guys have been huge for us. They're very talented. They play so hard. We're not surprised at all to see them come in there and have that kind of impact on the game.

The 8-0 run, our message was stay tough, stay together. Alabama is a good team, they're going to make their runs. We're a good team, as well. We're going to make ours. For us, it's just staying together.

**Q. Coming into this tournament, it seemed like something you were focused on was getting back to your old self. How important was tonight for momentum?**

WILL RICHARD: Yeah, tonight was very important. Just getting back to what we know we can do for everybody. Playing our role, playing hard, playing together, having fun out there, trying to win.

ZYON PULLIN: Yeah, I'd say the same thing. Definitely big to get a win like this in this fashion. I think it's just staying together and do what we're supposed to do.

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

**Q. You signed an extension before this tournament. How good does it feel coming off that to not only win yesterday but confidently beat Alabama like this, show what Florida basketball could be and is right now?**

TODD GOLDEN: Obviously it feels great. Appreciate the trust and belief that our administration has in myself and our staff, what we've built in a short period of time.

Obviously last night was a tricky game. It went back and forth. But to push through was a little bit after relief.

This game, to be honest, just less pressure coming into this game. Not saying complete house money, but obviously a really good opponent, a loss doesn't hurt you and a win helps you in a big way.

I felt like our guys played like that after the first couple minutes, felt like it was about us, staying the course.

Obviously it feel good to have a couple wins after that sign of belief in what we're building here.

**Q. You got great vet play from Walter and from Zyon, especially at the free-throw line. Can you speak to what those two young kids did energy-wise during the run.**

TODD GOLDEN: Yeah, I think ZP hit it on the head a little bit, they've been doing it all year. I go back to maybe the Virginia game as the one time where they didn't have a great effort out there.

Since then, I think one of the biggest strengths of our team is the fact that we have a great starting front core with Tyrese and Micah. And then when we bring in Tommy and Condo, there's really no drop-off. We're able to continue our stuff. They put great pressure on both backboards, especially on the offensive glass. They play so hard, it's infectious. I think they raise the bar for the older guys at times in terms of setting the tone with how hard they play.

They have been doing this for us all year. It's a big reason

why we've been so successful.

**Q. You were up 15 points at the first half. With that lead, it's easy to take your foot off the gas. What was the message at halftime?**

TODD GOLDEN: Listen, Alabama is not the type of team that you can ever take a breath. When you play them, regardless of whether we had the 15-point lead or not, we knew we were going to have to keep scoring, staying aggressive and playing hard for the remainder of the game if we wanted to win.

Alabama, they scored 55 in the second half. Fortunately we scored 54. It doesn't really affect us much. But we knew we couldn't go into the second half and think about starting to bleed clock or slow it down. We wanted to stay super, super aggressive, which I think we did a really good job of doing over the last 20 minutes.

**Q. You've talked about Nashville being an opportunity to return to yourself as a team, wash away the Vanderbilt loss. How important was tonight?**

TODD GOLDEN: All these games are really important, you know? I feel like last night we were getting back to it, but we weren't all the way there. A little shaky first half. Better in the second half.

Once we started asserting our will on the glass in the second half, that felt like the team we'd had for the first 30 games of the regular season.

Tonight, after the first two minutes, I felt like we were the team who we've been for the last 30 games. Really the last month and a half of conference play where we really stepped it up.

Just a physical team that plays hard, with no fear of failure. I think our guys did a really good job of that tonight. Even when we got the big lead in the second half, we never relaxed. We kept pushing it, kept staying aggressive, kept getting to the foul line, never really allowed them to make it a game.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

TODD GOLDEN: Thank y'all.

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