

Southeastern Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Wednesday, March 12, 2025

Nashville, Tennessee, USA

Bridgestone Arena

South Carolina Gamecocks

Coach Lamont Paris

Jacobi Wright

Collin Murray-Boyles

Postgame Press Conference



microcosm of who these guys are as competitors and getting the game back to a manageable place to where we ultimately really believed that we would win the game, so...

THE MODERATOR: Questions for either of the student-athletes.

Q. For both players, what was the difference in your mind to make the run and make the game close?

JACOBI WRIGHT: I think the biggest thing was our defensive mentality. We knew we gave up too many in the first half. We had to really tighten up on the defensive end second half to even give ourselves a chance to be in the game.

I think we did a really good job at that. We got it where we wanted it. We just didn't finish it out.

COLLIN MURRAY-BOYLES: Piggyback off of that. This is a tough group. We're never going to get deterred from our objective of winning the game. I think it showed in the second half. As we saw, we got up in the first half, really tightened it up. It really led us to come into about one point. We had a lead at one point. That just shows how resilient this team is, like Coach said.

Q. So many one-possession games at the end. As y'all look back and kind of evaluate those games, what is one thing that needs to change for next year?

COLLIN MURRAY-BOYLES: Just knowing our objective and what we need to do instead of having those close games where we might mess up on one play, try to get it back, but the other team had a full head of steam. Just making the right play at the right times.

Q. Coach Cal was just in here. He was saying South Carolina, if you're in a different league, your record is much better. I'm curious how you will reflect on the season.

COLLIN MURRAY-BOYLES: I would say this record that we had doesn't reflect the team that we had. This is a

Arkansas 72, South Carolina 68

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by South Carolina. We'll ask Coach for some general thoughts on the game, then take questions.

LAMONT PARIS: I told the guys in the locker room that I'm not sure what the favorite day of the season is. There's a bunch of candidates. First day, league game, all that, tournament time. I know what the worst day is.

It has arrived.

But really proud of my team, of the team of guys that are in there and the way that they responded, the coaching, the way they allowed me to coach them.

People talk about being resilient. Someone goes on a two-game losing streak, they win a game, somebody says, What did you learn about your team? How resilient they were.

This is a resilient group to have a lot of close calls and not have the successes that they wanted to in terms of wins, and still know and believe that that's a real thing for us. Then to go to practice every day with that in mind, come out in the games and play the way they continued to play.

Really proud of them for that.

We got behind in this game. We dug too big of a hole ultimately as it turns out. Got the thing turned the way we needed to, had some opportunities, maybe ran out a little bit of gas at the end.

Again, I think the way the game was played was a

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really, really good squad. Even rivals last year's squad. This is a really good team. We just couldn't figure out late-game situations. Especially in away games.

I would say we wouldn't be hanging our heads on this year. There's a lot to learn from this year, especially going into next year.

JACOBI WRIGHT: Going off what he said, I think we could have been just as fine in this conference, to be honest. Like Coach said, we were in a lot of games. Came down to a few plays. We make those go our way, the season would have been different.

I don't think the conference was the problem.

Q. Jacobi, you're a four-year guy here, started a bunch of games. Aggressive today. Your thoughts on kind of how you finished off the season, what this program has meant to you?

JACOBI WRIGHT: Yeah, it's been everything. Two staffs, but this staff for three years. I'm around them more than I'm around my actual family every day throughout the week. This is like my family.

I have a bond with all these guys and these coaches for the rest of my life. The program is in great hands. I'll be coming back to the games, and I expect to see the Gamecocks doing big things from here on out.

Q. Collin, have you made a decision on whether you're coming back next year or entering the NBA Draft?

COLLIN MURRAY-BOYLES: That's a discussion for my family and coaches, my inner circle to discuss later on.

THE MODERATOR: We'll excuse the student-athletes.

COLLIN MURRAY-BOYLES: Thank you.

JACOBI WRIGHT: Appreciate it.

THE MODERATOR: We'll continue on with questions for Coach Paris.

Q. You were able to erase a pretty big deficit, get it down to one. What do you attribute your ability to be able to get back in this game in the manner you?

LAMONT PARIS: I agree with Collin. I think a lot of it was just defensively there was a different level of, I don't know, not only attention to detail, but I think just in general our urgency, there was a different urgency.

I told the guys at halftime if 23 was the number of points that they ended up scoring in the second half, then I really, really liked where we were going to be if that was the number and that that wasn't a hope for me, that I hoped we would hold them to 23, I believed that we could have held them to 23 in the second half.

That was a real challenge. Your mind as you go out there should be focused on that type of effort and commitment to was happening on the defense end. And they did.

That was part of it. Also, because of some of those turnovers, we got good looks in transition. We did stuff in the halfcourt, too. We had a lot of plays we could have made right around the basket and some other things. I don't think from a performance standpoint we broke any sort of records.

The guys really stuck with it. They stuck with it. Just continued to get a stop. I don't know how many stops we had in a row. It seemed like a bunch. We needed a bunch. I think it started with the defensive side with us to really sink into what was happening, what was going on in ball screens, how quickly we had to make some of our decisions and rotations.

Unfortunately we didn't do that in the first half a little earlier. It changes the landscape of what you're doing in the second half.

Q. You heard what Coach Cal mentioned when I told the players. He says that your record might not equate to how good you guys are. Have you had time to think about that? On the worst day of the year, like you say, if that's any solace.

LAMONT PARIS: Yeah, I mean, these guys are competitors. It's funny you hear him say that, right? They don't want to be in another league. You guys would have been good in another... What does that even mean? We're in this league. This is the best league in the history of college basketball they're saying by any metric you would like to choose, including your eyeballs.

They wanted to be in this league. This is the league they're in. There's another world. There's not another world where we need to play in a league in order to win games. There's a world in which we play in this league and those games go our way. Last year we were 8-2 in similar games. This year we weren't.

There were some things that we didn't pick up quickly enough in order to win those close games. There can be reasons why some teams win a lot more of those games. Some teams don't. Experience in certain positions might



be part of it.

I don't think I would do the disservice to these guys of sort of... I don't know if we played - no disrespect for the So Con, I was in it for five years - if we played in the So Con, we would have a better record. We're in the SEC. We play SEC teams. We played a lot of SEC teams in a way where at one point in the game they thought the game was over. They thought they were going to lose the game. We weren't able to get to the finish line.

Q. Do you have any personal feel on what Collin is thinking? When you have your opportunity to talk with him and his family, do you believe he's ready to go ahead and make the step to the next level? With the way things are now, the deal you could offer him, do you think it would be enough to entice him to come back?

LAMONT PARIS: Yeah, I mean, I don't know what he's thinking, first. Second of all, we just got done with a difficult season that our guys should get a lot of credit. I mean, I don't know if people know anybody -- it used to be 18 to 22. Now you say it's 17 to 26 is the window of the age of these guys.

I don't know if you know many young people in that group. Generally speaking, they're pretty quick to pivot if there's adversity in front of them. This team had a lot of adversity, and they refused to pivot anywhere.

I give them a lot of credit for that.

Like, I don't know. I haven't really thought about any of that stuff. There will be a lot of people that will be making a decision on whether they're going to go to the draft or stay. Certainly there are more incentives to stay in college these days than there have been.

I've always believed, this is about these young men, trying to help them. When their opportunity is the right opportunity, they should do exactly what's the best that they believe is the best for them.

If I can provide a little advice for him, it won't be slanted in any direction. That's just not who I am. I'm not that selfish.

If I can provide any intel or advice that will help him ultimately when it comes time to make a decision, I will do that.

Q. You obviously mentioned you'll have your end-of-season meetings with the guys. What is the process for you when you're trying to figure out who's leaving, how you want to figure out the roster, who might be coming back?

LAMONT PARIS: Yeah, it's completely different than it was way back 365 days ago. Obviously, when you look back two, three years ago, things are completely different.

Decisions on both sides are being made and are based on different things than they have been.

The one thing that's a little bit unfortunate is a lot of these decisions might end up being... There probably are some business decisions that are going to be made across the country. Does it make it feel a little more transactional? Absolutely.

In some circumstances it will make those meetings easier. So we'll start those. I don't even know when. It will be soon. They're starting sooner and sooner. We'll start those meetings soon and we'll, like with anything we do, lead with honesty. People will come to conclusions and decisions.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

LAMONT PARIS: Thanks.

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