

Southeastern Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Wednesday, March 12, 2025

Nashville, Tennessee, USA

Bridgestone Arena

Vanderbilt Commodores
Coach Mark Byington
Tyler Nickel

Devin McGlockton

Postgame Press Conference



win every game, but especially in the SEC tournament.

We all wanted this one really, really badly. When things aren't quite going your way, shots aren't falling, it just adds that much more frustration. You have to try to move to the next play, but it's definitely irritating.

Q. Tyler, how is it kind of balancing making sure you guys have that sense of urgency that you need but also not making it to where it's affecting you guys and you're almost wanting it too badly?

TYLER NICKEL: Yeah, that's just part of the game. We all want to win really badly. Coach was probably right. Felt like we were pressing a little bit because of how badly we wanted this one.

It's part of the game. Everybody wants to win really bad. Kind of like you said, you have to find the balance of playing free and confidently but also smart and doing everything you can to win the game.

We were just in a tough spot today. We all wanted it, but just couldn't get everything clicking all the way.

Q. This was the last game, last chance you had to prove yourselves before Selection Sunday. What is the feeling going into that? Anxiety or worry?

DEVIN MCGLOCKTON: We don't have no worries. Our play will just say for itself. We had a tremendous season. That's what we got to go off of.

TYLER NICKEL: Yeah, going off of what Dev said, think we had a really strong regular season. We had some really meaningful wins. Our conference is amazing. Like, this is by far the best conference in the country.

Knowing what we did in the regular season, I think it should speak for itself.

Q. Devin, you came to Vanderbilt from Boston College playing in the ACC. Not every league in the country that you're an NCAA tournament team facing another

Texas 79, Vanderbilt 72

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Vanderbilt. We'll ask Coach for a thought or two on the game, then take questions.

MARK BYINGTON: Yeah, a tough afternoon. I thought Texas played really well. I thought we were ready to play. The first half was just frustrating. I was frustrated. The guys were frustrated.

We couldn't settle into the game. It's one of those things where almost think we wanted two back. We were out there missing threes, missing shots, missing plays we normally make. I thought they had a game plan that we were trying to adapt to of just driving the ball. They got to the free-throw line in the first half, did a good job of creating separation.

I knew our guys would bounce back in the second half. I thought we did a good job of fighting back, giving ourselves a chance. But they made the plays. They're a good team. Every team in the SEC.

They're good. You got to play pretty well to be able to beat a team in this league, and we didn't this afternoon.

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

Q. Tyler, you talked about yesterday about not being complacent. How difficult was it in the first half when the shots weren't falling?

TYLER NICKEL: It's just, like Coach said, really frustrating. We all wanted this so bad. I mean, you want to

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likely NCAA tournament team in the first round. How difficult has this season been, and how much has that prepared you for March Madness?

DEVIN MCGLOCKTON: SEC, like Tyler said, is the best league this year. Every night is a battle. That's definitely prepared us to take on any team. We're not scared of any team.

Yeah, definitely prepared us for playing anybody. We're ready for anybody.

Q. What do you think it's going to mean for a lot of the guys on this team that came from different places, joined a brand-new team?

DEVIN MCGLOCKTON: I mean, a lot of us came from -- not a lot of us came from winning programs. I felt like we had a successful season this year. That's meaningful for a lot of us. We're just going to keep building on it for next year.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you. We'll continue with questions for Coach Byington.

Q. Are you still confident in your team getting selected for the NCAA tournament?

MARK BYINGTON: Yeah, I'm sure that's the question on everybody's mind.

What the Selection Committee does is they look at your entire season. When you do that, our top-25 wins, our quad one wins, being in this league, showing how good of basketball we can play. We beat a lot of teams that are probably going to be 1 or 2 seeds this year.

We're a little bit banged up right now. I anticipate us being fully healthy in the next couple days. Then we will look like we looked maybe a week and a half ago.

We've played great basketball the entire year. But I think we had a stretch there in February where I think we were one of the best 20 teams in the country.

We'll get back to that with the next opportunity.

Q. You talk about maybe wanting it a little bit too much in that first half. How difficult is it this time of year when one or two shots don't go or...

MARK BYINGTON: Yeah, it's the excitement of tournament basketball. When you know if you don't win, you go home, you're out of this tournament.

It is pressure. But being in that situation, we need to embrace it. Having our guys fully focused, I thought they were. I thought they prepped great.

We come out in the game, we started well. Then I look up and it's 13-7. I kind of look at our guys' faces a little bit, they were frustrated. Then our execution got bad. That's when I thought we started pressing and started doing some things that were out of character.

In the second half, we got back in character. Played hard, but came up short.

Q. A few games ago you got to the point where you were feeling pretty good about your tournament chances. Does the dynamic change when you're going against these teams that have a little more urgency?

MARK BYINGTON: Yeah, I mean, it's definitely something we talked about and we thought about really in the coaching staff room, not so much with the team.

We had a stretch there, we finished playing Missouri, we played six straight ranked teams in a row. I don't know any other teams in the country outside the SEC that ever have that issue.

We finished that stretch. That's when some injuries came about. We looked a little tired after that stretch. Arkansas, got us at home. I thought they played really well. We're leading the second half at Georgia last game. We played good basketball. And then we're facing a Texas team that's fighting for their life, and you could tell that.

There's a lot of teams in the SEC, almost every single one of 'em is playing for something. We've been playing for something. Texas is playing for something. Even the 1, 2 seeds in this SEC tournament are trying to be 1 seed on the line or win the SEC tournament.

We're in the same boat. We were playing hard. We've talked about this for a month now, we're in a must-win situation. That really hasn't changed even when we won three in a row, then this last stretch here we haven't won.

This team, when they get the next opportunity, this will be a great lesson to learn for us, and we'll be better from this. Getting healthy, learning from this, the next time we'll be much better.

Q. You talk about the next opportunity. With this being a team that doesn't have a lot of experience, how do you manage that to where you take this as a lesson going into the NCAA tournament next week?



MARK BYINGTON: Yeah, it's controlling the things you can control. Tournament basketball is low turnovers, it's defense, it's rebounding.

The big difference between our game, our first Texas game and this one, was the offensive rebounding. The first half they got 'em, we didn't get 'em. And we missed plenty of shots that were opportunities for us to get rebounds.

It's something we've been good at. We weren't good at it today. Just executing was poor in the first half. That's on me. Just having our guys get comfortable in a situation. Almost rather them feel pressure than to be the opposite word of being relaxed and feeling like we made it.

Feeling the pressure, I wanted that, because hopefully that gets us in tune and gets us ready to play.

Q. Teams want to be playing their best basketball at this time of year. You lost the last few games. How do you go about reenergizing these players?

MARK BYINGTON: We got to get healthy. Grant Huffman, not having him, I know his stats don't stick out to anybody, but he's our best defensive player. He also spells A.J. and gets these guys out of the game a little bit and gets them off the wall.

MJ Collins tried to fight today, couldn't play. One of the my best defensive guys, had big games this year. Those guys have minor ankle stuff, they should be back.

Our kind of positive thing, our best thing this year was strength in numbers. Sometimes you run into these SEC teams, their five might be better than our five, but when we got to eight or nine and kept playing hard and kept bringing numbers in, that was our thing.

We'll get back to that in the next one.

Q. Do you feel if you play next Thursday you have everybody available at a generally high percentage?

MARK BYINGTON: Yeah, we're close now. I am not the best guy if you ask me what the day of the week is. I actually thought today was Saturday. I'm a little bit off (smiling).

I do know this, we have a couple days off here. The injuries, the guys will be back. We've shown how good we can play. When we got our guys, got our numbers, there's going to be teams like I said, on the 1 and 2 lines, we beat 'em. We beat I don't know how many top-25 teams.

Our good is good. We weren't there today, but we'll be

back to it.

Q. Obviously there's a lot of people out there that are pretty confident your team is going to make the NCAA tournament. Less confidence surrounding Texas. What can you say about their squad and their tournament chances?

MARK BYINGTON: Yeah, I mean, you just look at some of these teams and you look at how talented they are. The coaching staffing the players...

Going through this gauntlet, other leagues don't even have a chance to experience. It's quad one games, great environments. The gyms are sold out, they're packed.

The mental part of this league is probably the most difficult. You can play really good basketball and lose. Maybe you do that two times in a row or three times in a row. Other leagues kind of got a benefit. They got a quad two, quad three, quad four game in there. They can kind of gain their confidence, resettle themselves.

This really tests your resiliency in this league. You can't get down. You might play good and lose. We had a stretch there we lost three straight, and we played Auburn, we're beating Auburn in the second half. Everybody knows how good they are. Then we go down to Florida, at Florida, winning most of the game. We play at Tennessee, we're winning 38 minutes out of that. Could have easily won that game.

All ended up being losses. What you can't do is let your team get down. We had a good comeback after that. We beat a bunch of teams in a row. We'll do the same thing.

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