

Southeastern Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Wednesday, March 11, 2026

Nashville, Tennessee, USA

Bridgestone Arena

Kentucky Wildcats

Coach Mark Pope

Denzel Aberdeen

Otega Oweh

Postgame Press Conference



Kentucky 87, LSU 82

THE MODERATOR: We will begin with an opening statement.

DENZEL ABERDEEN: I'm glad to be here. Just being at an SEC tournament is amazing, something I experienced. A dream every kid wants to dream of. We're open to take any questions (smiling).

MARK POPE: He's a man of very few words.

THE MODERATOR: If you would go ahead with your opening statement, then we'll take questions for the players.

MARK POPE: Proud of our guys. Listen, fun game. This LSU team is really athletic. They've been in every game they've played in. I thought they played great tonight. I thought they came in with a great game plan.

Proud of our guys for being ready to go and competing. I thought the guys started well. LSU was tough for us to guard. The guys did a nice job. Staff did a nice job making just enough corrections and guys stepped up and made big plays for each other.

I thought O was great. He started out the game, grabbed a couple huge defensive rebounds to set the tone for us. Unbelievable decision-maker. Just the force he is offensively and defensively.

I thought BG was tremendous. He gave us a real boost after Malachi's two fouls in the first half, then kind of getting knocked out in the second half. He didn't get knocked out. He did not get knocked out. He just got knocked down.

So proud of the guys.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Could you talk about the contribution you got today from Mo. Seems like every team needs a Mo Dioubate.

OTEGA OWEH: Every time Mo is out there, I feel like he really sets the tone for us. I feel like you kind of said it, every team needs a bruiser, somebody going to give it they all. Mo has done that all year. He don't care about stats, how the game is going. He's going to go out there and make his impact on the game.

I think that's every team's dream player. Mo helps us out in a bunch of ways.

Q. Huge performance by Brandon Garrison. What were your reactions when he hit those back-to-back threes?

DENZEL ABERDEEN: Yeah, he came and he stepped up big-time. He always comes to the game ready 110%. He's not backing down to any challenge. I'm just proud of him today for him coming up and stepping up.

OTEGA OWEH: Two quick fouls, he just really made an impact defensively. I feel like that's where it started. Obviously once you get a couple stops, some blocks, rebounds defensively, I feel like offensively the game starts getting a little easier.

He really just had a big impact on both ends of the floor.

Q. When did both of you realize that Kam was available to play? How do you think he contributed in terms of adding to the rotation?

DENZEL ABERDEEN: To be honest, I didn't even know he was going to play today. I'm glad he did. He came in, stepped up big-time. He guarded. Hit a big-time three. I'm just proud of him and his journey, trying to get back to us as quick as possible. Been in and out of the training room



a lot. I'm proud of him today for coming in.

OTEGA OWEH: Yeah, I think I knew he was playing yesterday. Obviously he comes in and trains every single day trying to get back. I feel like that really shows the type of player and person he is. I mean, anyone could just say they're going to call it out for the season. I feel like he worked really hard to get back and get in game shape.

He was really big for us today I feel like defensively, and he made that big-time three. So yeah...

Q. Slightly off topic. Former Kentucky legend Bam Adebayo scored 83 points in an NBA game last night. Did any of you see that and what your reaction was?

OTEGA OWEH: I didn't see the whole game. I saw the fourth quarter actually. It was crazy. It's dope knowing another Kentucky guy went out there and did that, made history again.

It was really cool just watching it live. I didn't get to see Kobe's 81-point game. Seeing that was kind of like the next big thing, I'd say.

MARK POPE: Were you born when Kobe had that game? What year did Kobe do 81?

OTEGA OWEH: I don't think I was born.

MARK POPE: '06.

OTEGA OWEH: No, I wasn't (smiling).

THE MODERATOR: Gentlemen, you're excused. We'll continue with questions for Coach Pope.

Q. Am I right, every team needs a Mo? What does he bring?

MARK POPE: Mo is such a great teammate. He leads in ways off the court also. He cares about his teammates deeply. He thinks about his guys. He's growing as a leader. Clearly his impact on the court is great. It's been great for us this entire season. He just brings us a physicality. Guys know it.

I have guys on the staff, team, We need to get Mo back in the game, get some physicality in the game. He's a gift to us, for sure.

Q. In regards to Kam again, just having him in that rotation gives you a lot more flexibility. How did he end up today? What will he add moving forward?

MARK POPE: We're excited if he keeps responding well, him just getting into a flow of the game, us learning to have him on the court again. It's been a long time since we had him in the rotation.

Going into the game, we talked about it a lot. We just felt like he was at a place where we could throw him out there. He hasn't made it through a live practice yet, a whole practice.

He has a unique ability to have a positive impact on the game, especially defensively with his length. He's pretty assignment sound. He gave up one today. He was pretty good. Banged a three for us, which is super helpful.

Also just getting some extra minutes from another space is really important for us, especially when we're going back to back to back to back. It's great to have him back. I'm very hopeful that his foot will respond well tomorrow. We'll just see.

Q. Brandon Garrison had the back-to-back threes. I think he made two the whole season before that. Is that something you were expecting?

MARK POPE: He's been telling me all season, Coach, I'm not going to make any shots till the post-season. I'm just going to save them. Apparently he knows more than I do (smiling).

It's interesting, because you know BG. If you know him BG, sometimes personally he can put on this little maybe also shy persona. He has zero part of him that's shy on the court. He was great tonight, man. He really had a terrific game.

My favorite play of the game, he's seven for nine from the field, was the dunk that he missed. He was so physical and determined to get to the rim. He went back and got his own miss off the dunk and got the bowls.

When BG is operating like that, when he's that physical and intentional, he's special. Take the threes, lose the threes. He was a huge factor for us in this game.

Q. Does Brandon have the green light or...

MARK POPE: He's always had the green light. When he took the first one, you could here of all BBN saying like, Shoot it, shoot it. We all know. It's awesome.

Q. Andrija started out so aggressively. In a lot of these games he'll come out with a bang, kind of disappear. What do you see going on with him?

MARK POPE: He was really good at the start of the of this game. He was really important for us. Him and Mo are working out a pretty good dynamic. We need massive production from this four spot. We need it. They both bring very different skill sets to the table.

But it's nice to be able to maneuver between the two of them. A.J. had to play some five today, which is stretching him out of his comfort zone. But, man, he'll probably have to do that for the next four days.

He's growing every game. He's becoming a little more confident, a little more comfortable. He's going to continue to have a big impact for us.

Q. Were you able to see any of Bam's game? What were your thoughts on him?

MARK POPE: I haven't seen any of it. In the last 24 hours, we outscored Bam by four. We're proud of that (smiling). I can only imagine the headlines if we scored 83.

What an incredible performance. I don't know Bam personally, other than maybe a passing hello. But you talk about the guys that represent the world of sports in a brilliant way, incredible human being. I'm happy for him. What a performance.

Q. Early thoughts on Missouri. You probably didn't scout them this week. Any thoughts?

MARK POPE: They're really good. They've been playing great basketball. They have tremendous size on their front line. They're so physical and so big and so skilled actually, can hurt you in a lot of different ways.

They made shots against us when we played them at home. Made some plays late that really hurt us. They're a good team. Really well-coached. Coach does a great job. It will be a great challenge, just like every game in this tournament is going to be a challenge.

Thanks, guys.

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