

Southeastern Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Wednesday, March 11, 2026

Nashville, Tennessee, USA

Bridgestone Arena

LSU Tigers

Coach Matt McMahon

Max Mackinnon

Jalen Reece

Postgame Press Conference



Kentucky 87, LSU 82

THE MODERATOR: We'll begin with an opening statement from Coach McMahon and then take questions for the players.

MATT McMAHON: I thought it was an entertaining college basketball game. I admire the fight and resiliency of our players. I thought they prepared the right way all week and came in here ready to compete and play at a high level. Played with great togetherness.

Unfortunately weren't able to knock down enough shots in the second half or get sufficient stops. Great credit to Kentucky. Oweh, just such a difficult cover. So good in the midrange. Of course Garrison made two threes, 14% on the season, steps up and knocks down two huge ones to start that little run for them.

Really proud of our players. I thought Max and Jalen here were terrific for us. Unfortunately weren't able to do enough to come away with the win.

THE MODERATOR: We'll take questions for the players.

Q. Max, you had a big-time second half. What led to that breakout?

MAX MACKINNON: Everyone screened for each other. I knocked down some shots. Obviously sucks coming up short. I would take a win any day, and I mean that. So credit to my teammates.

Q. When you were so effective during those periods in the game, was it just a matter of you being in the zone or did you see something that Kentucky was doing

that allowed you to exploit that?

MAX MACKINNON: I think I can get by anyone. My first step obviously, not the most athletic, but once I get in the paint, trying to figure it out, play at my own pace.

I just saw some gaps and attacked.

Q. Jalen, you had I think one of the more improved seasons from LSU in terms of learning how to score, protects the ball? As a freshman, what led to a drastic improvement for you?

JALEN REECE: My coaches and my teammates, they trusted me to do what I had to do. They put the ball in my hand and said go run the team and go show everybody what you can do.

Q. Max, this could be your last game as a senior, last game for LSU, emotionally how do you feel? What do you want to tell LSU fans?

MAX MACKINNON: I think Coach always says it. This was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for me. I'm grateful to put on this jersey and play at this level. I just can't thank this man next to me. I think everyone wants to say something on Twitter. Everyone wants to say something. Everyone's got an opinion. We lost our two best players at the start of the year.

We fought. This guy never changed. Every day he made me a better player. It's going to help me for my future game. But I just want to say that he was the same guy every day: energy, he pushed me to limits I didn't think I could get to. Never thought I could play at this level.

I want to credit Coach Mac, he changed my basketball and he's changed my future for opportunities ahead. I just want to credit that.

Q. In a game that's close all the way post-season, every possession counts, where do you think the game really started slipping away from you guys?



JALEN REECE: I think it started slipping away, we had careless turnovers that we could have avoided. They capitalized off our turnovers and mistakes. I think we played hard the whole game. It was close. Just didn't go our way.

MAX MACKINNON: Same thing. We had some open looks. Wish we could get those back. Trust those guys any day of the week to knock down those shots. Just turnovers. But it's March. It's what happens.

THE MODERATOR: Gentlemen, thank you. We'll continue with questions for Coach McMahon.

Q. Coach, I think on the broadcast, SEC Network, said that Rob Miller broke a team rule and that is why he was out. Can you explain why he was unavailable?

MATT McMAHON: He's suspended for violation to team rules and was not with us on the trip.

Q. I think Max touched on about the injuries, how the season unfolded. How do you describe just how the season sort of developed and why the team lost today?

MATT McMAHON: Yeah, I thought Kentucky was really good offensively. We talked about that stretch where Garrison hit two big threes. They got out in transition some. We were trying to contain their transition game. They ranked top 10 in the country there in efficiency in the open floor.

I thought offensively execution was pretty good on our part. Issue when Kentucky is scoring it as well as they were, we go 0-9 from three in the second half. I thought we got some pretty good looks, unfortunately unable to knock those down.

Great credit to Kentucky. A game they needed, and thank you found a way to make the plays to get it done there in the second half.

I thought our players came to play. Competed at a high level. They were connected as one. Thought the spirit was where it needed to be. Kentucky was just the better team at the end of the day.

Q. Were the injuries, would you say that's the biggest reason for LSU's bad season?

MATT McMAHON: I think that's part of college basketball. It's unfortunate, but it happens. I'm very proud of the players that were resilient in their fight.

We had some obviously disappointing results throughout the season, excuse me, throughout SEC play. I thought our guys always responded, always got off the mat and kept fighting, trying to find ways to win games.

Unfortunately today, Kentucky, they were the better team. Therefore, they're moving on to the next round.

Q. For fans that have seen you coach four years, four disappointments in terms of not making the NCAA tournament, what is your message to them for why you should stay as coach?

MATT McMAHON: I think, T.J., the same answer I gave you three days ago in Baton Rouge. It is college basketball. I've been blessed. This is my 30th season getting to do this, be a part of college basketball. Have nothing but appreciation and gratitude for this opportunity.

Disappointed in the results over the last two months, that we weren't able to find ways to win more games. Certainly that's my responsibility.

But I love LSU. I love our core group of returning players. I think we have an elite leadership team, administrative team. I'll certainly respect whatever decisions they make moving forward.

But I'm really proud of our players for how they came to compete today, and give great credit to Kentucky for getting the win.

Q. When you see players like Max thank you and express such sincere thanks for what you've done for him personally and through his career, what just goes through your mind? How does that reflect on your coaching experience in general?

MATT McMAHON: I think still at the end of the day college basketball has certainly changed, the landscape of it. But you still got to remember why you coach. That's certainly a big part of it for me. Hopefully you're able to make a positive impact on young people, help them grow and get better.

It's a lot more fun when you go 31-2 or you're in the NCAA tournament. But this is the reality of life, too. You have to be able to help your players navigate some of these challenging times and hopefully make a positive impact on and off the court.

So it's been a blessing getting to coach this team. Really thankful for the six seniors and their contributions here at LSU.

Q. As a coach, was this among one of the more challenging seasons for you in terms of the entire situation you had with your team?

MATT McMAHON: T.J., I'm not trying to pass the buck here. I just haven't sat down and really broken down the season in its entirety. I think when you're in it, you're just trying to find ways, regardless of wins, losses, injuries, no injuries, you're just trying to find ways to help your players get better and help your team get better and find ways to win.

There certainly were plenty of challenges this season. That's part of coaching, that's part of college basketball. Really thankful for our group. We'll look forward to wrapping up with them. I'm sure we'll break down and kind of map out where things got to be better and where we can make improvements as a program.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, coach.

MATT McMAHON: Thank you.

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