

Southeastern Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Thursday, March 12, 2026

Nashville, Tennessee, USA

Bridgestone Arena

Kentucky Wildcats

Coach Mark Pope

Collin Chandler

Mouhamed Dioubate

Postgame Press Conference



Kentucky 78, Missouri 72

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Kentucky. We'll begin with an opening statement, then take questions.

COLLIN CHANDLER: I thought we did great today from the tip. Our first four minutes we did a great job at setting the tone. Our guys came out and was physical. Missouri is a great team. We knew it was going to be a battle. Everyone is battling for their season here in Nashville. I think we did a good job at responding to their physicality.

Props to them, but we're really proud of the way we performed today. Yeah, open it up to questions now.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. You were up 16, lose the lead. So many times you see that team can't come back and win. How did you do that?

COLLIN CHANDLER: I think for us, it's just attention to our details, staying together. We're in constant communication. We're huddling after every dead ball, in timeouts. I think we do a great job at staying together, staying composed. I think we did a good job at showing that today when the momentum was on their side, being able to reverse it. I think we did a good job at that.

Q. Mo, it feels like in big moments you're always stepping up. Is that something that's always come naturally for you as a leader or over time you had to start stepping up?

MOUHAMED DIOUBATE: Those are the moments I look forward to. Late-game situations. I understand that my

team needs me in those moments. Those are, like, the moments where I shine. I've always been good at closing games.

I know what I bring to the team. When it's crunch time, I try to step up every time I can.

Q. Coach talks about writing this beautiful story to end the season. Which one of you can write the better story and what would it be?

COLLIN CHANDLER: Mo is the poetic one (smiling).

Yeah, I think it's just been a season full of experiences because we faced a lot of adversity. I think, in my opinion, that adversity is coming to help us right now. We're going to continue to use that this time of the year.

I think we've done a great job at just in a lot of games finding ways to win. I think we did that again today. That's the biggest thing for this time of year, is finding ways to win.

Q. Mo, I've been a fan of your Ramadan TikTok stuff. People give a ton of response to that. Has that been cool for you, to get fans a sense of what you go through?

MOUHAMED DIOUBATE: Yeah, I enjoy doing those TikToks. I got a lot of fans. I'm a private person. A lot of things I do my fans don't see. Ramadan, it gives me a chance to connect with my fans, let them know how my day are. It gives me a chance to grow my stock and everything.

I want to let everyone know what I go through every day, how the process is, stuff like that.

Q. What time do you get to eat tonight?

MOUHAMED DIOUBATE: 6:51.

MARK POPE: The film study gets brutal now after the game. He's battling through it. It's awesome.



Q. Collin, you have kind of struggled offensively the last couple of games. Today you broke through. How good did it feel to have the three go down? There's a fan theory about whether or not when you wear an undershirt you don't play as well, but if you don't, you have a great game.

COLLIN CHANDLER: I don't know about the whole undershirt thing.

Yeah, someone might call it a struggle offensively. I think it's been a great learning time this last week and a half for me. There's a few moments in the season where I feel like you're learning a lot. So with scouting changing, I think it's forced me or allowed me to get more creative and find different ways to impact the game.

Early in the game, I was trying to get out in transition. Later in the game it was finding my moments, finding my spots where I could impact the game in a positive way without forcing anything, doing what we do as a team.

Q. Adversity has been the theme all season. You played Mizzou earlier in the year. Went the same way, but didn't end in y'all's favor. Did it help you prepare to overcome it today?

MOUHAMED DIOUBATE: I think adversity only makes it stronger. It makes it even hungrier to get the win the second time. There's no such thing as a good team that doesn't go through any adversity.

I think a lot of those losses brought us together. I think at this point in the season we learned so much from our losses. Now we're using it to better us, get wins, so...

Q. Florida tomorrow. This is a team that you have already faced. What is it going to take for you to beat the No. 1 seed tomorrow?

COLLIN CHANDLER: We played them a few times. Obviously we know them. We haven't spent a single second talking about them the last few days, the last week. We haven't mentioned Florida once.

We got to go back. We were focused on Missouri completely. Now we can put a bow on that game. We're going to go back and talk about Florida these next 24 hours for what we have tomorrow.

MOUHAMED DIOUBATE: I think we got to be the more physical team tomorrow. We got to be the ones that impose our will early. We got to win the rebounding battle and be the most physical team, just play our game, play together.

I think we'll be all right.

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

Q. You were up 16, lost the lead. A lot of teams panic. Hard to reverse that. How did you do that?

MARK POPE: Our guys are good. Listen, we've been really blessed to be all over the map in games. Up big, down big, sways big. Our guys and staff are good at staying focused in the moment, understanding what's happening.

Credit Missouri. We were in a place where we felt comfortable. They just said we're going to bully you inside. They bullied us inside. The guys, our guys, are pretty well-trained. They've adopted trying to stay as steady as they can, focus on finding answers and solutions rather than getting sideways with scenarios. They did a good job with that today.

Q. I know you're a big numbers guy. Do you regret not so much focusing on the numbers but maybe talking about the numbers, especially in regard to the fatigue aspect?

MARK POPE: No.

Q. The bigs for Missouri had a really good stretch in the second half. There were two plays where you got big stops. Talk about the two plays and how important they were.

MARK POPE: Yeah, again, it's a part of our guys that is pretty good about trying to be constructive and trying to find solutions.

We gave O free range to go. Really concerned about the weak side, figuring it out. BG stepped in. BG is an elite-level defensive player. He's got a little bit more size than Mo, which is really important.

Mitchell, credit him, what an unbelievable career he's had. He'll have a great run in the NCAA tournament. Tried to put the whole team on his back to try to make it work.

That minute BG was elite, Otega was unbelievable. Gap helped both times. Picking and choosing his spots. Our weak side covered well. That's what you have to do to guard a guy like that that's really on fire.

We were hesitant to go all out and just go double team to get the ball out of his hands because it leaves so much of the court open. We banged the second three, I kind of

shook my head. He makes threes against us. He made one off the glass from the top and one that was net. Credit him for a great game.

MARK POPE: Thanks, guys.

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Q. Tomorrow will be the third time in three days. How much can you tell us about the recovery process, what you will be doing?

MARK POPE: Yeah, our guys are pretty dialed in. They'll be done with media in a few minutes here. We'll get back to the hotel and we'll meet the same as we did yesterday. Meet and take our first shot at the whole scout as soon as we get back and eat. Guys will go through treatment. They'll spend hours, literally hours, going through treatment to get ready. Then we'll go to battle tomorrow at the same time.

It's nice these days are so fun because you're just on a schedule and it never changes. We hope it keeps going for a few more days.

Q. You said full scout is going to be tonight. Immediate thoughts on Florida?

MARK POPE: Yeah, we know Florida well. We haven't had the success we wanted to so far. They're a team that you have to manage in transition first and foremost. You have to manage them on the glass. If you don't do those two things, you don't have a chance.

Then there's a bunch of other things on the list. There's no secret about how the way they play. Just really good at it. Really in our league, nobody's really found an answer to that yet. We're hoping we'll have some success tomorrow.

Q. I think this is the third straight game with nine or fewer turnovers for you. How big is it to be playing with that discipline?

MARK POPE: It was important for us. Us being 18-9 was probably the most important part of the game. There were times we got a little reckless to the rim. Overall our decision-making was better.

It's a pretty good prep for Florida's rim protection. Their rim protection is the top in the league. They trick you into going there and using possessions that would be best shared with a teammate. They're really good at it. Their size is elite, physicality is elite. Our guys responded pretty well.

We had some possessions we'd like to take back. For the most part it was pretty good.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

