

Camping World Maui Invitational

Tuesday, December 1, 2020
Asheville, North Carolina, USA

Alabama Crimson Tide Coach Nate Oats

John Petty

Postgame Press Conference

Alabama - 86, UNLV - 74

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with an opening statement from coach.

NATE OATS: Much better. We stressed closing the half, opening the second half. Those are big, last four, first four. I think we ended that first half on a 12-6 run. Started the second half on a 6-0 run. Forced them to call timeout. So 18-6 kind of over that span, which is a lot better than last night.

So our big thing was we just need to play harder. Like, I thought some of our guys are figuring out how hard they have to play in a Division-I basketball game to get a win. You can't afford to relax for a split second or you're giving up a three. The kid Grill, we gave up 27. We gave him 7 threes. Like, that wasn't good enough. I thought we did a lot better job, he had three I think before the first media timeout. So we did a better job as the game went on on him. We made some matchup switches and I thought our guys that played played hard. I thought even Rojas there in the second half defensively gave us good minutes.

But it was nice to finally make some shots. Petty got out of his slump, hit, I think, what, he had a combined 21 points in the first two games, and I think he came out and played a lot more like what he's capable of, got 22 points and six assists with only one turnover. So really happy with the game he played.

Herb was pretty good. A lot better than he had been. I thought Bruner, even though he didn't score well led us in rebounding, led us in blocks, steals. I thought he played really hard and gave us some good minutes. So a lot of good efforts out of a lot of our guys.



Q. We didn't see Keon Ellis out there tonight. Was that more of a coach's decision? Was he dealing with an injury? What went into that?

NATE OATS: He's got an illness. It's a non-COVID-related illness. He's tested negative on all the COVID stuff, but he was, he wasn't feeling very well, so just we wanted to keep him away from the team and so he's kind of back isolating in his hotel room back at the hotel. So hopefully he's over it, maybe a quick 24-hour thing, we're hoping, and maybe he can get back.

But we really don't want him to get around the team and get it spreading around the team, so we, Dr. Bitner and Clark, our trainer, decided to keep him away from the team for right now.

Q. Just want to ask you, you mentioned some of the guys, but just what did you thought you got from Josh Primo tonight? I know he came off the bench early and got going from deep. What did you see out of him tonight?

NATE OATS: Yeah, he's showed a lot more what he's capable of doing. I liked his energy. I thought he played pretty well on defense too. But he can make shots. He can finish. You know, shooting 3-6 from three, he helped our percentage. We shot 38 percent from three, which is a lot better than our first two games.

So with his 3-6 and Petty's 6-10, we -- and Schack goes 3-7, those three guys made some shots tonight. I think our bigs Reese and Bruner will start making some shots and kind of helping us out in that area too. But I was really happy with the minutes Primo gave us and he'll continue to get more minutes if he continues to play like that.

Q. You mentioned that run right before halftime. What was the message to the guys at halftime because you really came out hot there to start the second half?

NATE OATS: We talked about our, at the under four media in the first half, we talked about our close. I think it was a 12-2 run that we gave up last night, so we talked about let's try to flip it. Let's try to get a 12-2 run ourselves. It wasn't bad. It was 12-6 run. We ended the first half on

that and at halftime we talked about the first four minutes of the second half's going to determine which way this game goes.

So I thought our defensive energy was great and I thought that we hit some shots and came out on that 6-0 run and we kind of let them back in for a minute there and then I think we kind of pulled. It's a little bit of a game of run sometimes.

So I thought that start of the second half was huge to show we were ready to play, ready to play intense basketball in the second half.

Q. JP, how good did it feel to come out starting on all cylinders tonight, man, hitting your first couple shots? And then coming back from last night, I know it didn't start the tournament the way you wanted to, but how good did it feel for you guys to have the night you had tonight?

JOHN PETTY: It felt great to just come out and finally get in a rhythm, finally make some shots like we're capable of. Last night even though we didn't start, we got together as a team like we were supposed to. We talked about it and we just asked each other to look each other in the mirror or look ourself in the mirror and ask, like, which way do we want this season to go. And as one of the older guys on the team, I feel like all our guys came out and responded well to that tonight.

Q. John, just an effort level, was that kind of addressed because after hearing from Coach yesterday, of getting to that second effort, if you will, tell me your thoughts on what was the difference yesterday to today.

JOHN PETTY: That was most definitely. That was probably the No. 1 priority from yesterday to today. Coaches challenged us to respond to us, the coaches and us as a team, we knew that our effort wasn't where it was supposed to, where it was, how we practice.

So like I said, we had a talk last night. We told each other to look ourselves in the mirror and just ask each other, like, where do we want to go with this? So we came out tonight and responded well and our guys brought energy, and like I said, Coach always tell us, you take care of the energy, everything else takes care of itself, so it showed tonight.

Q. For either one of you. Going into halftime the score was tied and the game was fairly close up until you guys started to make that run. What adjustments, specifically Coach or John, did you guys makes an a team to go on that run during the second half?

JOHN PETTY: The adjustment just, we just had to put in another level of gear. We know we got another gear of energy and we knew we could get to that level to push the lead, so we, like I said, the coaches on the bench challenged us and told us we got to take it there. If we want to win this game we're going to have to take it to another level and that's what we did.

NATE OATS: I went in at halftime. We usually give the players the first four or five minutes together before the coaches walk in, and I went in to grab my kind of note pad to write notes, I heard the players talking about, we got another level, we got to turn this up to another level. I think they did. I thought our defensive energy picked up. We forced some turnovers, forced some misses, got some rebounds, got out in transition. We hit a few transition threes, got to, I don't know whether Herb's dunk came in the middle of the run, but thought we got some transition buckets there in the second half that kind of helped break that thing open for us.

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