

# Asheville Championship

Sunday, November 12, 2023

Asheville, North Carolina, USA

Harrah's Cherokee Center

**UAB Blazers**

**Andy Kennedy**

**Eric Gaines**

**Alejandro Vasquez**

Press Conference



UAB - 66, Maryland - 63

THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon. Welcome to the Asheville Championship. We'll start with opening comments from Coach followed by questions.

Coach.

ANDY KENNEDY: Yeah, first of all, I want to thank the organizers of the Asheville Championship for allowing us the opportunity to participate. It's hard for us to get Power Five games, and not only did we get one, but we got the gift of two, and thank goodness we didn't fret them both away.

Great environment, quality competition early in the year. It's the reason you do these things. You can learn a lot about your team, and we certainly learned a lot about our group over the last 72 hours. We've been talking about we're close. We are close. We're a possession here, a possession there from sitting here at 3-0.

But there's nothing we can do about that except learn. I think our guys took that challenge and finished the game in the fashion that it deserved. The guys put themselves in a position for a quality win and thankfully we were able to capitalize.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks, Coach.

Questions?

**Q. Can you brag on Eric a little bit, the way he played today?**

ANDY KENNEDY: I like the made free throw better than the miss. Yeah, I thought he was great. He had a couple careless turnovers early. At four turnovers at the half, he

finished with four. He's our primary ball handler. He's been in these situations for a multitude of years now, and Maryland is a physical, physical team. That's Big Ten basketball. They're physical, they throw bodies at you, and obviously they have an abundance of size, and I thought he did a great job of maneuvering through that, putting us in a position where we could make plays and, again, in the second half, thankfully we started knocking down some shots and that was the differentiating factor.

**Q. Eric, I saw you kind of had a conversation with yourself after that missed free throw. In that moment, how do you compose yourself?**

ERIC GAINES: Just listen to Coach. Next-play mentality. That's all I can do. I missed the first one, let it get to me for a little bit, and then next play. Had to make the second one, made it. We win the game.

**Q. Coach, 34 points off the bench against Clemson Friday night. 28 points from your bench again today. Tell us about how important those guys have been.**

ANDY KENNEDY: Well, a lot of it was attributed to the young man to my right, Alejandro Vasquez. I thought he was terrific. We've been searching. When you bring in nine new guys, and he was a Junior College All-American, as was Yaxel, as was Chris Coleman, and it's just a different ball game when you're immediately getting out of the gate against a quality Bradley team, and then you come play a team that will finish in the top half of the ACC and a team that will finish in the top half of the Big Ten. It's just a complete different level of competition. It's taken us a little while to make that adjustment, but I thought he was tremendous, most especially in the second half when we outscore 'em by nine points. We finally were efficient somewhat at 48 percent from the field and, again, we got a number of different guys that are capable of playing and tonight we had a number of different guys step up, starting with A.J., and then I thought Yax, it was his best game as a Blazer. He's a guy that we're really going to be depending upon, four big blocked shots, eight and six, him and A.J. were huge off our bench.

**Q. Coach, I know this is a hectic weekend, but**

**ASAP** . . . when all is said, we're done.®  
sports

**Saturday did you have any time to check out Asheville?**

ANDY KENNEDY: I'm going to tell you, the Hilton Garden Inn is nice. That meeting room, just off the restaurant, that's where I spent the majority of my time. I don't know, is there a police station down there? A lot of fire trucks, ambulances? A lot going on down there.

No, I haven't been to Asheville in quite some time. I played, way back when, in Raleigh at NC State, and I've been here a couple times. Great town. Great town. Great tournament. Great turnout. This was a win/win for us, most especially when we were able to finish the game.

THE MODERATOR: Any other questions?

ANDY KENNEDY: Hold on, one thing. Y'all didn't ask A.J. do you mind if I ask him one? A.J., what do you think about your first Division I win at UAB?

ALEJANDRO VASQUEZ: Very excited, honestly. Just happy that all our guys is on the same page now, finally get this to stop the bleeding.

ANDY KENNEDY: That was a good answer. Thank you.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports....