

# American Athletic Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Thursday, March 10, 2022

Fort Worth, Texas, USA

Dickies Arena

**UCF Knights**

**Johnny Dawkins**

**Darius Perry**

**Darin Green Jr**

Postgame Press Conference



UCF 60, South Florida 58

JOHNNY DAWKINS: Well, I think it was a great game. It's always expected when you're playing your rival, and we've had two really good games this year versus USF. The first game they did an outstanding job. I thought the second game we responded, and this game right here I thought both teams played very well and we came out with the win.

**Q. Hey Darius, could you walk us through the final possession where you hit that three to make it 60-58?**

DARIUS PERRY: Coach Dawkins drew up the plan in the timeout and that was the shot I was supposed to take and my teammates had confidence in me to knock it down, so that's what I did.

**Q. What kind of adjustments did you feel like you had to do in that first half to come back and tie it up towards the end to get the momentum at halftime?**

DARIUS PERRY: I think we really emphasized on the rebounding discrepancy. They were leading on the boards early on and we had to fix that in the second half. Also getting stops, I don't think we were getting a lot of stops in the first half. The second half we started getting two, three, four stops in a row, and that's what really helped us to take the lead and break it open?

**Q. Looking down at the stat sheet, rebounding battle was 49-36 even though the rebound totals were very different?**

JOHNNY DAWKINS: It showed our guys have a lot of

heart. I thought they kept fighting through the adversity. Kept fighting through the fact that they were relentless on the boards and our guys just kept battling, kept battling and we made the plays we needed to make. I thought we were better in the second half rebounding the basketball, not giving them as many second and third shot opportunities. They had a few but nowhere as many as they had in the first half. So I thought we did a better job making that adjustment at half time.

Our guys just kept battling. But we knew the type of game it was going to be. UCF does a really good game. They're a big physical team. They play that way for 40 minutes. You have to embrace it and you have to make plays and I thought our guys did.

**Q. Coach, you had to grab your heart a little bit watching that last couple of shots by South Florida, a little déjà vu from Sunday. What were you thinking when you watched them take their shots?**

JOHNNY DAWKINS: Exactly what you were saying right there, "not again." But, no, you just want your guys to be in position, try to challenge thoughts like that at the end. I thought we did. You never know, sometimes guys will make shots under those circumstances. We were fortunate tonight where the two shots that they had didn't go.

I thought our guys played their hearts out and there's no better way than winning with a defensive stop to end the game. I love our guys for that. We talk about that all the time, we want to win on defense. That was a chance to show we could do it and we accomplished it

**Q. Darin, you had 11 first-half points, no points in the second half. What changed defensively from South Florida the second half on you?**

DARIN GREEN JR: They definitely started top-blocking me, not allowing me to come off screens. I have to do a better job of that, setting my man up and things like that. But we got depth on our team that they made up for it on the offensive end

**Q. And Darius, you split with Memphis this year. What is this team, your team, going to have to do to come out with a victory on Friday night?**

DARIUS PERRY: I think we just have to play harder than them. I think they're a really scrappy team that plays really, really hard. It's going to be a war who plays harder that decides who wins the game. I think all we have to do is play harder and smarter than them

**Q. For Darin and then Darius, talk about Mbacke and the impact he had inside. He had five blocks, eight rebounds. How big is it to have a guy like that behind you to clean up any guys that come and challenge the rim?**

DARIN GREEN JR: Mbacke is a big part of our team, especially on the defensive end. If we get beat off the drive, we almost don't worry with Mbacke down there he had five blocks today. He's done it multiple times for us. It's good to have Mbacke down there

DARIUS PERRY: I think the same thing. He's a huge part of the team. He makes a big impact when he's on the floor. Does a lot of things that may not even show up on the stat sheet. It's a blessing really to have him on the team. He's one of the better bigs in the country defensively.

**Q. Darius, you got a couple buckets in that second half. Did that get you going in your rhythm offensively?**

DARIUS PERRY: It was the stops for me. I like the defensive end. I think we played some really good defense that led to me to be able to get those buckets early in the second half

**Q. Coach, you had seven turnovers in the first half but three in the second half. Was it just a case of the guys settling down after a first half playing that first game of a tournament? What changed there in the second half?**

JOHNNY DAWKINS: I think that was it. I thought some of the turnovers we had, they definitely were unforced. We were rushing, forcing some situations out on the floor. We weren't letting it come to us. I thought the second half we let the game come to us. The ball flowed a little easier. Guys weren't pressing with the basketball to make plays and I think we had a better rhythm because of that

**Q. Quick turnaround now you got Memphis you're familiar with. Take us through the process between now and getting ready for Memphis.**

JOHNNY DAWKINS: Well, the first thing we want to do is have our guys get off their feet. That's important. We'll stay here and catch our women's game, at least try to watch the first half. Have our players do that to support our women's team and their game coming up. And then we'll go back as a staff, we'll start watching more tape. One of my assistants already has the scout, so he's already prepared. So we'll start going over that, continuing to kind of learn more about them as I watch more this evening.

Then we'll bring our players together and we'll show them exactly what we want to do as far as from the game plan, execution that we want. And so they can refamiliarize themselves with exactly who Memphis is now and what they're doing

**Q. Coach, Darius Johnson, Tyem Freeman came up big for you in this game. Talk about what you saw in them.**

JOHNNY DAWKINS: Kind of what DG was saying and Darius Perry was saying, our depth has been a strength of ours and we expect guys to step up. We know we have good players. I think we saw that again tonight. Tonight it was DJ making some plays for us. Ty gave us a huge lift in the first half and continued to be aggressive in the second half. That's what we expect from those guys. Someone always has a chance to make some good plays for us, and tonight I thought both of those guys did.

And they should. They're no longer freshmen anymore. This is the end of the season. These guys are older players now. So we should expect them to come out and make those type of contributions.

**Q. One more, you split with Memphis, what was the difference in that loss at Memphis? You played much better in the home win.**

JOHNNY DAWKINS: The difference was I thought they played well. I thought they got healthy. They had some guys returning that we hadn't played against that year. Williams was one of them. So we're weren't familiar with him this season, he wasn't in our first game. I thought he gave them good energy. Gave them a good lift. He's a veteran. Been with them last year when they won their NIT championship. He has a lot of experience. I thought he gave them a big lift.

Now we're more familiar. We'll familiarize ourselves watching tape in our preparation. But they're a very good basketball team, they're experienced, play well, have a lot of talent but so are we. We're excited about the challenge of competing against them tomorrow.

**Q. You talk about depth and you're going to need everybody against Memphis. What's the status of Mahan for tomorrow?**

JOHNNY DAWKINS: Mahan's status is day to day for us. I'm not sure exactly. I'll have to wait until the trainer explains to me exactly where he is and what he's doing. I don't want to say something that I don't know because he's getting to a point where he's close. I'm not sure if he's quite there yet, but I don't want to say something that I don't know until I talk to the trainer.

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