

# American Athletic Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Saturday, March 16, 2024

Fort Worth, Texas, USA

Dickies Arena

## USF Bulls

**Amir Abdur-Rahmin**

**Selton Miguel**

**Chris Youngblood**

Postgame Press Conference



UAB - 93, South Florida - 83

THE MODERATOR: We'll go ahead and get started with an opening statement from Coach and then take questions for the student-athletes.

AMIR ABDUR-RAHIM: First off, all praise to the Most High. It's been a great experience, you know, me being in my first American Athletic Conference tournament, but more importantly, it's been a great experience and I'm just thankful for God's presence and His guidance to allow me to be here with this group of guys. It's a really special group that have nothing to hang their heads about. They have had a phenomenal year. For a team that was picked ninth, I guess, or whatever it was in the pre-season, for to us win the regular season by two games with two weeks left says a lot about this group of guys, their resolve, their persevere, their connection. So we're not going to hang our heads. We're going to walk with our heads high and to God be the glory.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please?

**Q. Obviously a very physical game. Was that the game plan coming into the game, was to be physical and drive to the paint, or what was the game plan coming in to counter UAB's offense there?**

AMIR ABDUR-RAHIM: The game plan was to be who we've been all year. Defensively, we try to be a physical team -- not try to be, we are. We are. We were the league's best defense. I thought today we did the job we were supposed to do.

And UAB, credit to them, they did a really good job of

taking advantage of their size in the post and creating second-chance opportunities. They were able to get 16 points off of second-chance opportunities and we needed to do a better job of taking care of the ball. When we take care of the ball, we're pretty good. But to have -- we only had -- I say we didn't take care of it, we only had eight turnovers, but they had 14 points off of those eight turnovers, so we needed to be better in that area.

But the game plan was to come out and play hard. I'm not disappointed whatsoever in our guys' effort. We were shorthanded today. No excuses, man. We had guys step up and play. I love being the coach of this group.

**Q. You mentioned the shorthanded. Corey Walker's status, obviously didn't play today, how is he doing?**

AMIR ABDUR-RAHIM: He's doing better. He's doing better. It's just we're always going to put our student-athletes first. It's not about a game, man. This is a game, you know. What we wanted to make sure was that everything was all right. We got some tests ran on him last night. Things came back, but we needed a more important test that we weren't able to get done until earlier this afternoon. But he's doing well and he'll be with us on our way back to Tampa.

**Q. Jayden Reid today was outstanding. Andy had a lot of praise for him as well. Can you speak to Jayden Reid today and his effort?**

AMIR ABDUR-RAHIM: I say this humbly, and I say this not to take anything away from whoever won the award, but Jayden Reid -- and you call me bias, but Jayden Reid is the Freshman of the Year in our conference, okay? Jayden Reid played a major factor on a team that won the regular season championship.

I think the conference tournament are fun. Don't get me wrong, I really do. I don't want to take 'em away. But to be consistent for two and a half months and, again, win the regular season by two games with a week and some change left or whatever it was, and for him to play the role he played, he should have been Freshman of the Year in our league. But he was Freshman of the Year in my book,

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so I'll take it all day.

But he was phenomenal today. He had to be. Again, he and KP both, they play really heavy minutes, just because would we were shorthanded, and he did a great job.

**Q. I know you're very proud of your team and probably don't lend too much credence to what the bracketologists say, but they say now that you're out of the tournament. What's your response to that?**

AMIR ABDUR-RAHIM: With all due respect, I don't know who the bracketologists are. I guess they have a team somewhere sequestered. But what I would say is this: If you want to see what South Florida's all about, if you want to see if we're one of the best 68 teams, put us in one of those first four games, put us against your best team. Put us against your best team. Whoever it is in that first four, come see about us, because this ain't the same ole South Florida, okay?

This group of guys, they just went 24-7, I guess it was, in the regular season, 16-2, and we were 73 in the NET. Again, this is -- I'm saying this not to take anything away from any of the other teams in our conference, but we got just as many Quad 1 wins in RPI as Florida Atlantic, we got just as many Quad 2, just as many Quad 3s, and I think more Quad 4s, right? But you don't look at Quad 4s.

But again, the last thing I would say is this, we're in the NCAA, right? This is the tournament we're talking about getting to. This is supposed to be higher education. What are we teaching our kids by saying, hey, be consistent for two months, be the most consistent you can be, grow, continue to come together, all right, and we won't reward you for that. What are we doing, guys? Like come on, man. All right, be better, bracketologists.

**Q. Hard to follow-up that, but I did have one follow-up. Sam and Jose, what happened to them during the course of the game? You were shorthanded.**

AMIR ABDUR-RAHIM: I don't want to get fined. I'm going to pass on that question.

(Pause.)

AMIR ABDUR-RAHIM: I got a question. Is that okay?

THE MODERATOR: Sure.

AMIR ABDUR-RAHIM: This first one is for Selton.

Selton, for people that say we're out of the tournament, what would you say to them about our year and why we

should be in the tournament?

SELTON MIGUEL: I would say, just like you said, we went 24-7. It's not easy to do. 16-2 in conference. I don't think no other teams did that in any conference. We had the 15 largest wins in the country. So I would just say that you should look at what we did, not the conference, because a lot of people were saying our conference this, our conference that. We got one of the best teams in the conference.

Like I said, like, we got FAU. It was the favorite the whole time. We beat them. We got Memphis. We beat them. They was ranked top 25 the whole time. So you should look at it in total.

AMIR ABDUR-RAHIM: For Chris, all right? Man, really good year by both you guys, but Chris, talk to me about the group of guys you get to go to battle with every day and what people could look forward to seeing that group in an NCAA Tournament?

CHRIS YOUNGBLOOD: This group showed humility, consistency and toughness throughout the whole season. No matter -- even we start off the year 2-4 with some bad losses -- well not bad, respect to other teams -- but some losses we didn't prefer. We could have easily folded. We went and knocked out 15 games in a row, stayed humble throughout all that. So just a tough, humble team that's going to give it to you the same way every night.

AMIR ABDUR-RAHIM: And the last thing I'll say to that, I can't think, I don't know how many it was, but we, guys, we had a six-game win streak and then we had a 15-game win streak. So we won 22, if you count yesterday, 22 out of our last, what would it have been 20 what?

CHRIS YOUNGBLOOD: 24.

AMIR ABDUR-RAHIM: We won 222 out of our last 24 games. With all due respect to the bracketologists, and you guys got a job to do, you guys are great, don't get me wrong, I've been watching the brackets since I was a kid, but a team that wins 22 out of 24 games you're going to leave them out of the NCAA Tournament? God bless you guys.

**Q. Obviously throughout the entire year the "same old South Florida" nomenclature kept popping up. To give you kind of a little bit of platform, what's the message going forward for USF fans next year?**

AMIR ABDUR-RAHIM: The message is always going to be the start, to God be the glory. But after that, get used to this. Get used to this. Because every night we're going to

put a team out on the floor that recommends our campus, that represents our community and they play their hearts out. That's what it's about. Again, I'm in the business of molding men. I just so happen to have the title of head coach. I'm in the business of molding men. So every day that we take the court, every day they go to class, we're trying to teach habits that are consistent across the board. I shared this yesterday, Chadwick Boseman, you would rather find purpose than find a job, because purpose crosses disciplines. Habits, they cross disciplines. Doesn't matter what you decide to do. Chris and Selton both are going to be successful basketball players. They are already are successful collegiate basketball players, they're going to be successful professional basketball players. But whenever that catches up with 'em, whenever Father Time says, Hey, slow down, can't run that fast anymore, can't jump that high, they're going to be successful husbands, they're going to be successful fathers, they're going to be successful entrepreneurs or CEO's of Fortune 500 companies, because the habits that they have learned to build through this game, they cross disciplines. And that's the message. Get ready, stay ready.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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