

# GEICO Players Era Men's Championship

Monday, November 24, 2025

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

MGM Grand Garden Arena

## Alabama Crimson Tide Coach Nate Oats

### Postgame Press Conference



Gonzaga 95, Alabama 85

NATE OATS: Got to give Gonzaga a lot of credit, they played hard. Big, physical. Anytime we made a run, they had an answer. They're obviously one of the better programs in the country over the last 15, 20 years, and they figure out how to win games, and they're doing it on the O-boards.

We gave up 25 second-chance points. It's hard to win doing that. So season high for offensive rebounds for them. And you know what? We've kind of shown that if we're not really locked in to taking care of the defensive glass, that we're susceptible to that. It's happened. Purdue destroyed us on the glass.

The two big games we've won, we outrebounded St. John's, or maybe even if I remember right, and we won the game. Against Illinois, we only lost the glass by two, and we won the game. Tonight we lose the glass by 12, and on top of that, we can't make a free throw, didn't shoot it well, lost the turnover battle, and we end up losing the game to a pretty good team.

But they play hard. They get on the glass. Got a lot of guys that can go rebound. Tyon Grant-Foster, their starting three has five O-boards. We emphasize our guards, got to rebound it better. And starting backcourt at zero rebounds at the half, and how we ended up with three and Labaron ended up with zero. Amari didn't have a rebound at the half. He's got to get in and help, kind of late there.

But it's not just our bigs and they're not -- Taylor didn't have a rebound at the half. We got to get more out of him. But it's everybody. Everybody has got to contribute. We're not a very tough, physical, rebounding team right now. Until we get that way, we're going to have a hard time consistently beating the best teams in the country.

**Q. I think it was a two-point game when Labaron had his last make, 67-65, and then they went on a stretch and opened up the lead a little bit more. What do you think they did defensively to make life more difficult for him from that point on?**

NATE OATS: They came out of the one timeout in the zone, and he turned it over. He's got to be better. He scored it well tonight. Everybody knows he can score and get in the paint pretty easily. He can finish at the rim well.

I thought our bigs did a good job in ball screens and sealing them off to give them some pretty easy layups, he converted. He made a couple threes early in the game.

They adjusted a little bit. They went zone. They switched some. We're going to see that. St. John's I don't think switched a whole lot. We weren't really ready for it, and they switched the whole game on us.

I think we're going to see different coverages, and especially in ball screens, than maybe what some teams typically do just because he does a good job. I think he was carving them up a little bit there with their quick show and back, and they adjusted went to switching.

And I don't think we did a great job attacking the switching, I don't think we did a great job attacking their zone. And they did a good job switching stuff up. And he got slowed down there. But we can't. He did score 29. We can't ask him to score 40 to win the game. It would be nice if he grabbed a rebound or took care of the ball better. He can't have six turnovers either.

But we have to get more help for him. And some of that's on him. He has to set his teammates up a little bit better to score and help them out a little bit. I think we have one of the better shooting teams of the country, and we didn't shoot it well.

We have to find better threes for our shooters. Part of that's on them. Part of that's on him. Part of that's on our guys that are screening. It's a team thing to get our shooters better shots.

**Q. Nate, in going through the tape and the film in recent days prepping for this game, and then seeing**

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**Gonzaga in the flesh up close, what stood out to you about how they play? And they got a bunch of guys who are like 23, 24. They got a lot of old guys as well. In facing them here, was some of that really evident and tangible?**

NATE OATS: Yeah, they got tough, hard-nosed, hard-playing... we showed video of them, Tyon Grant-Foster just destroying people on the glass. Multiple boards just keep coming. Seven rebounds, five offensive boards, scored 21 points. He hit the one three. He's not like a -- no disrespect to him. I love how hard he plays. He's killed us twice now. We played him when he was at Grand Canyon. I think he had 29 on us.

But it's not like he's overly skilled. You're not all that worried about his three-point shooting. He just plays hard like he's a veteran that knows how to get it done. If you're not going to box him out, he's going to go get an O-board. He's quick off the ground. He's athletic. We missed multiple checkouts with him, and you try to tell them, but when he comes every time, if you box him out half the time, he ends up with five O-boards. That's what he had tonight.

But they do have older guys. They're experienced, they know how to win. We did a pretty good job on Ike to start the game out with, and I thought Aiden did a really good job on him, and he ends up with 21 and 11.

Pretty good night for himself, and I thought we were doing a pretty good job for a good part of the game with him, and then we had too many guys not do a great job. I thought Aiden Sherrell, probably his best game. Nice we were able to keep him in the game. He stayed out of foul trouble, and thought he played pretty well, particularly defensively.

But Ike still ends up with 21. Huff still ends up with 18. Grant-Foster ends up with 21. So their starting front court, really, with the way they play, all three of those guys are in the front court, they got 60 points there. We didn't get as much.

Aiden played well, but we got 16 points out of ours. If you throw our three in there, our three, four, and five, our starting three, four, five had 16 points, and theirs had like 60. Our front court is going to have to pick it up, be better. I thought this was Aiden's best game, but they're pretty good up there.

**Q. Nate, you mentioned Grant-Foster. At 6'7", what kind of dynamic does that add to the Gonzaga team, and how does that complicate defending them?**

NATE OATS: You end up with the way we play, we play

three guards most of the time. Guarding them with a guard, and our guards are missing back shots.

On the other end, we'd like to spread them out. They kind of like to score it in the paint. They hit six threes, four of them came from Venters, one guy, and we didn't do a good job on him either. They ran some good actions, and our game plan discipline wasn't great on the defensive end.

But they're going to try to beat you in the lane, and they did. They outscored us by double digits in the paint, 25-10 on second-chance points. And I think Grant-Foster is a big part of that. He drives the ball downhill, gets on the O-boards. And if you're going to play three guards like we do, you got to have some tough guards.

And Amari is pretty tough for us. We ended up playing him a decent amount. He played 30 minutes, but he didn't really rebound in the first half. When we've been able to beat St. John's and Illinois, Amari's had 10 and 11 rebounds. Tonight he had four, which is solid for a guard, but we need him to be a double-digit rebounder for us to win these big games and rebound it better.

So we're going to keep harping on it. We're going to be one of the better teams in the country, but we're not going to be able to consistently beat these good teams if we can't consistently rebound it better than we are right now.

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