

GEICO Players Era Men's Championship

Monday, November 24, 2025

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

MGM Grand Garden Arena

UNLV Rebels

Coach Josh Pastner

Postgame Press Conference

Maryland - 74, UNLV - 67

JOSH PASTNER: Okay. First off, you know, credit to Maryland. Good win for Maryland and Buzz. Secondly, regarding us, you know, we had some opportunities there just to kind of pull away when we were up six or seven multiple times, and we just -- it was a fast break, missing the fast break or missing some open shots.

And then I just felt we got -- towards the end there, we just -- our numbers caught up to us and not having the size that we needed inside there.

I felt the zone gave us some good minutes and was good for us, but I felt offensively, obviously, missing some open shots that we had some looks at, and we just haven't shot the 3-point shot well this year, which has been really disappointing because I know we're a good shooting team.

Six games in, it hasn't been that way. But I do believe at some point we're due for a breakout on that from 3-point shooting.

Jacob, I was putting him in the starting lineup, wrote his name on the board, and they came and told me he wasn't able to play because of his calf. So I was like, man, just another thing with an injury.

So right as we were about to tip off, I had to make a change. We put Tyrin in the starting lineup there. So we really thin, not having Jacob or Emmanuel, and obviously Ladi had been out ten days. They did clear him today to play limited minutes. And Ladi's a good player, but I felt he was obviously -- he's not in basketball shape that he needs to be. And part of that is he hasn't practiced in a while.

I keep going back to we've just got to get healthy, and got a great opportunity tomorrow versus Alabama. Our guys



fought, played hard, competed, did some great things defensively. And just had some opportunities where the shots didn't fall for us.

And credit to Maryland on that. We've got to keep getting better, and have another opportunity tomorrow.

Q. Josh, could you see your team's defense coming around these last couple of games, and more importantly, in practice the way they defended as well as they did tonight?

JOSH PASTNER: Yeah, we spent a lot of time on us defensively, and I felt that we've gotten better at it. We really have. And I think we can be a really good defensive team once we get kind of our main guys back as well, too. So we'll continue to improve on that.

I thought defense wasn't the issue today. We had some chances. As you know, we just missed some great looks. We had some great wide-open looks, and had a couple of fast-break opportunities didn't convert on. That's just part of the game. Sometimes just a make-and-miss game. But defensively we've gotten a lot better from where we started. And we've really improved and we've just got to continue on that improvement as we move forward.

Q. Did you play as fast offensively as you'd like?

JOSH PASTNER: Well, I don't think we played as fast as we would like. Obviously there were some times there where they got into the press, which slowed us down a little bit. But we also had good pace. We also missed a lot of shots. We missed a lot of shots. And I thought we had some great looks. Credit to Maryland's defense, but we had some great looks that we just did not put the ball in the basket.

To this point, we haven't been a good 3-point shooting. If you asked me that at the beginning of the season, I would have told you that would have been one of our strengths. It hasn't been right now. I still believe in our shooting. It's going to happen. We've just got to continue to gel and have great chemistry with each other and play with each other more and get healthy.

I keep saying the more we play together, and hopefully by the time we get to conference play, we are healthy. And by

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that time, I think we can be a really good basketball team.

Q. The first time UNLV's been in this tournament. How important is it for the team to do well with such a talented group of teams here?

JOSH PASTNER: Yeah, we want to do well because we want to do well because we want to win at the highest level. And that's important to us. And we just gotta keep competing and staying after it.

This is a great tournament. We're very honored and excited and enthused to be part of it. Got another great opportunity tomorrow night against a great Alabama team that's obviously going to be ready to go after a tough loss against Gonzaga.

Q. You mentioned you just couldn't extend the lead at all. Were you getting the sense that it just wasn't going to be able to last, you just couldn't push it out?

JOSH PASTNER: Well, I knew because of our numbers that when we had those opportunities and we were up there, we just needed to get, just to extend it, to really maybe just give us a real comfort.

And what happened is they hit a couple of 3s. We missed some great looks. It was almost like a five-to-six-point swing. We'd miss a 3, and they'd come down and hit a 2. Or we missed a layup or a wide-open shot, and they would come down and hit a 3. And those are big momentum shifters there.

And then, obviously, we got hurt on the glass. One thing in the zone, as good as the zone is -- and we were smaller playing in the zone because our numbers made us be small. We had no choice. So we were smaller in a lot of areas. But because of that we got hurt on the glass. And we really haven't been hurt on the glass this year. Today, our lack of size showed up on the zone defense where they hurt us on the glass.

Q. Are you not allowed to be frustrated at your players anymore, the tech?

JOSH PASTNER: I wasn't even talking to the official at all. I was mad at Kimani for fouling. We had him in a trap. You guys know how much I'm on them about not fouling. So I'll just leave it there.

Q. What's the next 24 hours going to look like for you guys as you prepare for your first back-to-back of the season?

JOSH PASTNER: Yeah, we've got to get back. I've told

the guys we have to really, really hydrate. We've got to let this one go, we've got to get ready to play tomorrow. We'll meet at noon for a meal, have shoot-around at 3:30, pregame meal at 5:00, and get on the bus at 7:15 and get ready to play at 9:00 versus Alabama.

There's not a lot we can do. We're really banged up. We don't have a lot of depth right now at certain spots. Guys have got to hydrate and be ready to go.

Q. You mentioned a lot of missed opportunities that could have led to more scoring chances, but how did you feel about the overall ball movement of the team tonight?

JOSH PASTNER: I thought for the most part we played unselfish. That wasn't the issue. I thought we moved the ball. I just thought there were some times where we had open looks. We had good shots and they weren't falling. Sometimes it can get a little demoralizing. You know what I mean?

And we got what we wanted in some areas, and when they're just not falling, and also we were lacking a little bit of a post-presence in there at times.

So we needed to make some of those 3s to give us some cushion. And it allowed Maryland to continue to pack it in, to not have to extend. Al Green made some 3s late, but obviously it was a little bit later than -- but it kept us around but we needed someone to stretch there, whether it was in the first half or we could have maybe extended it, or even in the second half we had some chances. It's a make-and-miss game, and we just didn't make the shots that were open tonight.

Q. And with Naas coming from Alabama, is there any insight from him into Nate Oats and his team?

JOSH PASTNER: No, Naas is -- it's really his freshman year. He obviously didn't play last year at Alabama. He was a redshirt freshman, and the year before he was injured. So he's really been out for two years.

But, I mean, there's not that much insight. We have a good feel on Alabama, and I'm sure they have a good feel on us. We're just going to have to get out there and produce and hydrate and hydrate and play our tails off and hopefully make some shots.

Q. I know this was more just demoralizing, kind of just a sigh of, you have got to be kidding me. But when you take a look at this game, you're 3-3 going into tomorrow night. What are some of the silver linings that you're trying to take out of this?

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JOSH PASTNER: We wanted to win the game. All I can tell you is, we're going to be a good basketball team. I thought we've gotten better from where we started at the beginning of the year.

Obviously it's a challenge for us right now because of our depth and the amount of injuries that we've dealt with. But I think, as we continue to improve and continue to get better, we're going to be a good basketball team.

We've just got to get healthy and get together, and we'll continue to fight and improve. And our offense -- we have a good offense. We have good, talented guys. Once it all comes together and we start being a better shooting team and figuring a couple things like that out, it will just open up everything else for us.

Q. Speaking of your shooting, you mentioned Al Green. What kind of confidence boost do you think he got hitting those 3s late?

JOSH PASTNER: That was great. He hit some big 3s late for us. We needed that to -- we needed a floor-spacer there. So hopefully that gives him really good confidence. I mean, we brought him in to be a really good shooter. He's been a good career 3-point shooter. So hopefully he can continue that. I believe he can. We need that for our spacing, otherwise teams will continue to pack that in, and we need, for our spacing, we need to open some things up by making some shots.

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