

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Round - Alabama State vs Auburn

Thursday, March 20, 2025

Lexington, Kentucky, USA

Rupp Arena

Alabama State Hornets

Tony Madlock

TJ Madlock

CJ Hines

Amarr Knox

Media Conference

Auburn - 83, Alabama State - 63

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Alabama State Head Coach Tony Madlock and student-athletes Amarr Knox, CJ Hines, and TJ Madlock.

We will kindly ask Coach for an opening statement.

TONY MADLOCK: What a great run, man. We are so -- I'm so proud of these guys and everything that they stand for. Just, again, just so proud and happy for what we've done for the city of Montgomery, for Alabama State University, for all the HBCUs to get to the dance, win a game.

Then had some moments in this game where we made Coach Pearl call timeout. So we had a couple chances there early.

Again, just so proud of these guys. We did some things that hadn't been done at Alabama State in a long time by winning the game for the first time in school history. Again, proud and excited for the future.

Q. This one's for all the players. Looking into what this season has meant to you guys, how much do you guys -- how much do your fan support mean to you guys, especially after that game when you guys were able to listen to the school anthem?

AMARR KNOX: Well, it was big time. Our fans, they supported us the whole time. As we started to win, they



started to come around. They were just there for us, and they helped us win a lot of games. We appreciate them a lot.

CJ HINES: Our fans, they do a wonderful job supporting us, coming to the games, the SWAC Tournament that was there in Atlanta. Some fans was here. Even on social media, fans in the SWAC, not just Alabama State, a lot of fans want to see us succeed. I'm just thankful for that.

TJ MADLOCK: We've got the best fans and the SWAC, HBCUs and the world, they've been supporting us since day one. We've been getting a whole bunch of texts from all of them, and they have a lot of faith in us and they believe in us. So, yeah, big shout out to the fans.

Q. You all made that run late in the first half, then you stepped up to the line. What was running through your mind as you were stepping up to the line there in the first half with that chance to take the lead?

AMARR KNOX: I was just trying to play my game, do whatever it takes to win. The game of basketball is always a game of runs. So we knew that we were going to make our run soon.

I should have made them two free throws. I definitely should have made those. But as a group, we all came together and started flying around and just started to hoop.

Q. TJ, playing with your dad this season, what has it meant -- what did it mean to be able to play with him and be able to be coached by him as one of the better coaches in the SWAC?

TJ MADLOCK: It's been real. He's been coaching my whole life. Even when he wasn't my actual coach, he's always been my coach. He's always given me the knowledge and the wisdom to be a good basketball player on and off the court. So it's been amazing.

It was always our goal to make it to March Madness, so to finally be here, to do this together has meant the world.

Q. CJ, what was it like -- did you all get a sense early on when you all were putting them under pressure, feeling the crowd in there, it seemed like everybody



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was kind of rallying around. Did you get a sense of that on the court? What was that like feeling the energy in the arena?

CJ HINES: Yeah, it was a great feeling, making the run, coming back, making Coach Pearl call a timeout. We knew we could win that game. It was just a wonderful feeling to be in that moment.

Q. I guess if you could talk about the difference between the two halves, how you all were able to challenge them in the first half, and just what did they kind of do in the second half to kind of pull away? Was it a matter of adjustment, or was there a point where you could just see things kind of shifting?

TJ MADLOCK: I think it started at the end of that first half. We were down one with about 1:30 left, and we ended up being down 10 at halftime. We didn't really need that run from them to go into halftime.

It was our energy, our energy in the second half, they just brought a little bit more than us.

Q. For Amarr, you've had quite a week. You got the team here, hit the buzzer beater, didn't last past the first weekend, but what can you talk about in terms of making a shot like that, how you'll remember it? I guess your girlfriend made one the night after to take her team in the tournament. What are your reflections on that?

AMARR KNOX: It's a great feeling for real. Couldn't have done it without these guys beside me. It's just like we needed to win that game, and we won the game. It was an excellent feeling.

For her to be able to win her game as well, it was tough. I wasn't expecting it. I'm proud of them, proud of us. It's just a great feeling.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks so much for your time. You guys can be excused. We'll go ahead and take questions for Coach.

Q. Just for the whole state in general, it just seems like every year it gets better and better in basketball. I know it's tough to reflect right after a game, but what you guys have done is really special. What does that mean to you and your program?

TONY MADLOCK: You're right, it's so special. Again, it is so hard for an HBCU team to get to 20 wins because you just have to fight. You have to fight through that nonconference schedule, and then when you get to league

play, the SWAC is a really good basketball league.

Every night, every Saturday, every Monday, you are fighting to try to figure out how you can stack up some wins because most of us going into league play, we have a losing record. So we have to try to find a way to fight and get your team to play extremely hard.

We were able to do that. We got hot. Before tonight's game, this afternoon's game, we had won 10 of our last 11 games. So we all talked about during that first part of February, let's get hot, let's get hot, and we were able to do it.

It means a lot for the state of Alabama, it means a lot for Montgomery, and of course it means a lot for Alabama State University.

Q. Coach, you heard me ask your son this, but I want to ask you, coaching your son for this long and now being able to see him go out as a senior in this way, what does that mean to you?

TONY MADLOCK: Oh, it's unbelievable. He has had a great career. He is that guy that fell right into that he's only getting four years. You all look around the country, and there's so many guys that's playing six years with the COVID stuff. He missed all that. He didn't start at a junior college or a non-D1. So he only played four years.

For him to have over 1,600 points, over 700 rebounds, over 300 assists in exactly four years, it just says what kind of player he has been for his college career. I'm just a proud dad.

Q. I was just curious, Bruce Pearl talked a lot yesterday about the resources and the investment that these SEC teams have put in. We're seeing that gap kind of grow between the big Power schools and maybe some of the non-Power 4 schools. Where do you think that leaves some of the schools like the SWAC and other schools in non-Power conferences? Do you try to compete with those guys in March knowing what that resource gap is going to look like even further moving forward?

TONY MADLOCK: No idea, but it's one of those deals, again, why they're at the level they're at, and we're trying our best to continue to grow. It's ways that we've got to be able to, I think, help the NIL and those types of things. Of course we're not close to what they're able to do, but we're just going to try to continue to grow.

We have to adjust to the times, and hopefully our administration and our conference can continue to help us



so we can continue to grow.

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