

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: Second Round - Creighton vs Auburn

Friday, March 21, 2025

Lexington, Kentucky, USA

Rupp Arena

Auburn Tigers

Tahaad Pettiford

Denver Jones

Dylan Cardwell

Media Conference



like that was the main message at halftime. We came out in the second half and picked it up, and that's the reason why we was able to separate. We just gotta be better, just like Dylan said. And we just know that's not going to be tolerated in the future of this tournament if you want to have success.

Q. Denver, what stands out to you about Creighton's guards and the variety of guys that they have got there defending them. They had a guy that had 29 and another guy hit a ton of threes yesterday. What stands out about them?

DENVER JONES: Honestly, I feel like their movement. Just watching film on them last night and a little bit today, this morning, watching their movement, seeing how much they move without the ball. And obviously it's going to be a little bit more of a challenge because we're known for playing basically 40 minutes, 10 in 10 out or 5 in 5 out.

So that's going to be the main challenge, just being to run with those guys and play Auburn defense.

Q. Dylan, I've heard frustration from you after the last couple of games. When was the last time you felt like this team played forty minutes of what Auburn basketball can be?

DYLAN CARDWELL: In this arena when we played Kentucky was, I think, one of our most complete games from start to finish. Especially being down a man in Denver and having to have guys step up and Miles Kelly go off for 30 as well as Chad going off for 20. That was our best game as of late because we guarded a team that averages 91, 92 points per game, we held them to 78 or 80. I'm not the sure.

But we played our best defense against one of the best offenses in the country. That's the last time I feel like I was satisfied in our effort and energy, and we haven't been up there since. So like I said, tomorrow will be a statement.

Q. Tahaad, BPF of the game praised your defense and your rebounding. You've played a lot of basketball as a freshman. How much more comfortable do you feel on that end of the floor as compared to the beginning of SEC play?

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Auburn student-athletes, Dylan Cardwell, Denver Jones, and Tahaad Pettiford. At this time we will take your questions.

Q. For Dylan, we hear talk a lot about not playing hard enough or not having enough intensity. Knowing that everybody out there wants to play hard and wants to win, what exactly does that entail, do you think?

DYLAN CARDWELL: You know, first of all, all glory to God. I'm thankful to be on this stage right now, it's a dream come true to be here in March Madness.

But for me, it's having a sense of urgency and not wanting our season to end, diving on the floor for loose balls, boxing out for rebounds, little things. Things you can control. We can't control if the ball goes into the basket, but controlling our effort and energy, so making sure our effort and energy is up to par.

And we want to play each and every game that way. We don't want our season to end tomorrow or next week. I'm interested in playing April 7th.

Q. Was that just not there last night?

DYLAN CARDWELL: It wasn't there at all. We had a team meeting last night and one this morning, and we will be ready for tomorrow.

Q. Same question for Denver.

DENVER JONES: Pretty much what Dylan said. Yesterday was bad as far as our effort and energy. I feel



... when all is said, we're done.®



TAHAAD PETTIFORD: I feel a lot more comfortable, especially getting a lot reps in practice and having guys like Denver and Dylan around me, helping me, trying to teach me how I can be on the defensive end, showing me spots I can get better at.

So I feel lot more comfortable now and I feel like playing against the teams we play all year prepared me for moments.

Q. Dylan, with Louisville not playing, it's going to be Creighton that changes the crowd. What do you say to the fans that make the trip?

DYLAN CARDWELL: It goes back to Auburn history. With Louisville being out, it's more seats for Auburn fans. Come on down tomorrow so we can feed off your energy. We will have a historic win tomorrow, hopefully, Lord willing. But, people, buy those tickets.

Q. Dylan, I'm sure you've watched a little bit of film last night and this morning. What stands out to you about Ryan Kalkbrenner?

DYLAN CARDWELL: He reminds me of Walker Kessler. I think we were all in high school at the same time, so I'm familiar with him. But he reminds me a lot of Walker Kessler, being 7'2", and being able to catch lobs and finish and catching high and finishing. He's just a great player.

The thing that intrigues me most about him is his ability to drive. At 7'2", it's not something that you really see. I love it for him that he's able to drive right down the slot. It's interesting. He's an interesting player, interesting dynamic. He's someone that at 7'2", you're not used to seeing a move like this.

Interesting to play against him, especially with us on offense. He's a great defensive factor. There are so many comparisons to Walker Kessler that I see, and I'm excited to be able to play against him.

Q. Dylan, you're a big guy, Jamiya is a big guy. When you have somebody like Ryan Kalkbrenner on the other side, do you look forward to those battles? How much has the SEC helped and might it be Johni who is more on him? Has that been figured out?

DYLAN CARDWELL: We don't know who is going to be on who, but no matter who we're playing, whether it's Alabama State or Creighton or Auburn Montgomery, it doesn't matter who you throw in front of us. We're going to be excited to play, because at this point anybody can get it.

For us I think the SEC has helped us in our preparation. We haven't seen anybody as tall as him, but we have seen players as physical. And I think from a physicality standpoint, we're prepared for it. But as far as his length and size, we're prepared -- we haven't seen anybody quite like him.

Q. Denver, Miles picking up right where he left off. The last time you all were in Rupp, hitting all those threes early. He tied an Auburn tournament record yesterday hitting threes. How much of a benefit is that or a boost in the offense to know you have a dude who has been locked in in this building when it comes to shooting the ball?

DENVER JONES: Obviously y'all don't hear what we say on the court. But I reached out to Miles, because I knew Miles was hot. So I was like, yo, Miles, help me out, give me a few more assists. I know, when he shoots it, I know it's going in every single time. And having him out there and having defenses respect him, it's opened up a lot for everybody else.

I feel like it opens up for us guards and opens up for the bigs down low. So it's really important. When he's hot, you know what I'm sayin', he can do anything, and we can do anything.

Q. Tahaad, I'm sure you haven't had many games probably like the Tennessee game in your life. How important was it for you to come out here yesterday and have a good game and kind of wash away the nerves?

TAHAAD PETTIFORD: It was very important, just knowing how much of a factor I am to the team. Just not being able to produce and be productive for my team in a game like that and not help us win really hurt a lot. So I wanted to make sure that something like and that type of pain didn't happen again.

THE MODERATOR: Appreciate your time, guys. Thanks so much.

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