

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Round - Georgia vs Gonzaga

Thursday, March 20, 2025

Wichita, Kansas, USA

Intrust Bank Arena

Georgia Bulldogs

Mike White

Asa Newell

Silas Demary Jr.

Media Conference

Gonzaga 89, Georgia 68

THE MODERATOR: Georgia Bulldogs of the SEC are with us. Head Coach Mike White, flanked by Silas Demary Jr. and Asa Newell. We'll begin with a statement from Coach and then questions.

Coach.

MIKE WHITE: Tough day for our program, for this team, for these two guys. Didn't see that coming. Didn't anticipate that outcome. Obviously especially the first ten minutes of the game.

Gonzaga is really good. Perhaps under-seeded. Anxious to watch their next game. They're terrific offensively. They were prepared defensively. We got off to a really rough start with some live ball turnovers with them converting from two and from three. Dug ourselves a big hole, and in the second half I thought we played more it our identity. I thought we played a lot better in the second 20.

Unfortunately, they made some timely shots. They just did. They finished off five or six pretty good defensive possessions by us with a made 15-foot floater or a made contested three, and we just couldn't chip away at it more than we would have liked.

But I can't fault in the second 20 our effort, our intensity, our resilience like this group has been all year. They're a top-10 offense, and they proved that today. We wish them the best.

At the end of the day I just told our guys this is my favorite



group that I've been around as a whole in terms of people. We've just got a really special thing going with our culture, with our connectivity. These guys have really strong relationships with one another, and I can't -- I'm down for these guys. I'm disappointed for them because they've worked really hard, gotten better. Just didn't see this coming like this.

Love coaching these guys, these two in particular, as much as anyone that I've coached. Asa Newell could have gone anywhere in the country, and he came to University of Georgia to help Georgia get to an NCAA Tournament, and that's what he did.

Silas Demary in the past month has played as well as just about any guard in college basketball. Decided to elevate his play, be more aggressive offensively. Probably should have been all-league, should have been All SEC Defensive Team. These guys continue to grow throughout the season and get better and better.

I could talk about the rest of the guys on the team as well. I would love to have that opportunity. I'll do it with you guys when we get back home, but I'm proud of our group. Disappointed that it's over because I love our group.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Mike, you talked about the first ten minutes. Do you think that was a product of nerves, this team never being in this moment before or Gonzaga's skill or just maybe a mix of the two? What do you think was the issue in those first ten minutes of the game?

MIKE WHITE: A couple of empty possessions early complemented by their urgency in transition offense, complemented by a couple of shots that were pretty well-guarded that go down and all of a sudden you find yourself down double digits without having scored a point. You know, those empty offensive possessions early, again, with them making shots and them scoring on the interior, you could just see it with our body language. We were a little bit different than we were mid-second half when we were trading baskets.

But a big part of that, again, in our guys' defense, we have one guy on our roster that's been to an NCAA Tournament,



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and we just played a team that's been to, what, nine straight Sweet 16s. How do you get to nine straight Sweet 16s? You get to tournaments consistently and you win, and you get winning experience, and you have continuity, and you get better, and you establish your culture, and you establish your winning program, and Gonzaga is up there with some of the best programs in the country in terms of their consistency at or near the top of their league and their consistency with their runs in NCAA tournaments.

That's our aim at the University of Georgia. We took a step this year, and our aim is to continue to take steps.

Q. This is for Silas. Obviously today didn't go the way that you wanted it to, but moving forward, what does Georgia have to continue to do to make this a more regular occurrence where you guys are getting in the Tournament and building those steps to making not a Gonzaga-type run but getting to a standard like that?

SILAS DEMARY JR.: I would probably just say keep the confidence going. Obviously this year nobody expected us to be here, so I think just building off this year and knowing the confidence that we can get here, believing in our coaches, and then mainly believing in ourselves. I feel like if you don't believe in yourself, you're never going to get anywhere in life.

I think just being able to get back to the drawing board. Obviously it's tough when we lost today, but learn from it and then when guys come in next year, the next recruiting class, and the freshmen that come in, be serious from the jump. June 1st, we got to be locked in. Our main goal is March Madness, but like we said, our March has been growth every day, one day at a time.

I think if we can incorporate that next year, not looking ahead, I think that helped us a lot this year, and it will help us a lot in the near future too.

Q. Asa, what are you going to take away from this year at Georgia? It's probably going to be your one and only.

ASA NEWELL: I would say the college experience was amazing. Wearing the G on my chest, it's something I'll never take for granted. I'm just so blessed to have teammates and a wonderful coach like Coach White helping me through the process. I just take it all in.

Q. To follow up on that, Asa, what was it like having Jaden out there for that last minute? And, two, what does the decision-making process look like for you going forward?

ASA NEWELL: Yeah, the moment with my brother, you know, it's just a beautiful moment. I got to share some of my last seconds of the team's last seconds in March Madness together. It was just a beautiful moment. Something that if a picture comes out, I will probably put it on my wall in my house. The next process is just talking to my circle and praying to God.

Q. Mike, I think it was 27-3 when you called the timeout. Did you contemplate, given what you said about the body language, calling something earlier to get your guys refocused?

MIKE WHITE: I did. We had a couple of stops there where I thought we had some numbers. I guess I just took -- I thought a couple of those possessions, one or two of those possessions, we might have got a score to settle us in a little bit. At that point, though, it was time to take one.

Q. Mike, I guess I'm in the hindsight 20/20 club. You ran into a team that was shooting lights out. Hindsight being 20/20 and looking at it, what could you or what would you do different? I mean, it's an unfair question, I know, but just reflecting back on that start to the game.

MIKE WHITE: No, Mike, you are doing your job. It's a good question. In our guys' defense -- and we talk about this in scouting all the time. If this happens, it's on us, right? We've got a group that's incredibly bought in, starting with these two guys.

We've got to do X, Y, and Z, and these guys are going to try to do X, Y, and Z to the best of their ability every single time. These guys are high-character people and high-character players. We wanted to protect the paint. Their efficiency in the paint, their two-point percentage, their two-point prowess all year is off the charts. They shoot the three well, but they don't shoot it often. So for 72 hours our stress to these guys has been forcing skips and forcing the bigs to pass it. They made us pay. They did.

Those bigs are so skilled, they pass it. Their touch is so good with either hand. Their ability to draw fouls and the amount of them, the depth. When you try to take that away and they complement that with shooting 12 of 20 from three, they're very difficult to defend.

Q. Mike, you talk about setting a culture and how this team has done that. Going forward, what do you want to see, and what do you need to do to help make this a more consistent process in terms of getting to the NCAA Tournament?

MIKE WHITE: We just have to continue to recruit



high-level players and high-level people, protect our culture every day, continue to get better, continue to develop people and develop players offensively and defensively. I think we generated some excitement this year with our recruiting base. We've got a lot to sell at the University of Georgia. We'll continue to sign guys like these two guys. We'll build off of this.

Q. You said, Mike, that this team is one of your favorite in terms of the people and just this group. When you have a moment like this where obviously dreams fall apart and everything like that, just what's your message to the team? What do you say to them?

MIKE WHITE: A lot of the stuff that I've said right now, but I took it a step further personally with our guys behind closed doors in the locker room. I love these guys and talked about each guy individually and what they mean to this program.

I thanked them for playing for one another all year, for being in my opinion -- I'm biased, there couldn't have been a more resilient team in college basketball this year. Two four-game losing streaks happened to the second youngest team in the SEC. A lot of teams would have laid down. Not only did we find a way to win big games down the stretch and get better throughout the year, we had great practices every day.

Everyone in our locker room is better than they were in June. They just are. Not because we're doing something special, because it's the type of people they are.

Just continue to come to work every day. Get better and battle, compete with one another, challenge each other every day. We're going to continue to do that at Georgia, and good things will happen.

Q. Mike, kind of looking to the future, again, before too long you guys will be recruiting, the transfer portal, roster retention as well. How valuable do you think this season can be in selling that vision to future players and what you guys want to do for next season?

MIKE WHITE: Sure, we did it, right? You would like to sell a Sweet 16 or a Final Four, and maybe we're able to do that one day, but it starts with selling NCAA Tournament and selling Silas Demary and Asa Newell and their teammates. These are the positives that these guys accomplished this year.

You can come to Georgia and do something similar. We just went to the NCAA Tournament. We're trying to advance, as opposed to these past few years where it's

been, we're hoping to get to the tournament. We need your help.

These guys got it done. I hate it for them that it's over. These two guys next to me accomplished a lot, and they got Georgia to the NCAA Tournament. We got the highest seed that we've gotten in a long, long time. Broke some records, ended some streaks, started some streaks, you name it. You could put together ten or 12 bullets on a page that these guys accomplished this year.... our NET, our KenPom, our offense, our defense. These guys have accomplished a ton, and they should be proud. They've laid a foundation.

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