

Southeastern Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Friday March 15, 2019

Mike White Andrew Nembhard Keyontae Johnson Florida

Florida-76, LSU-73

THE MODERATOR: We will begin with Florida. We will take some opening thoughts on the game from Coach White.

MIKE WHITE: Big win for us. Thought we played really well, as we have against those guys three times. Three great battles this year. I guess in battle number three we were able to do enough down the stretch to get to our 11th SEC win. It's pretty significant in a league that's as good as this league.

It's been a great year for this league top to bottom. LSU is one of the best teams in the country. Obviously a very big win. These two guys have been tremendous to coach thus far in their early careers. They've developed throughout the year. They've gotten better and better. They both exude accountability and toughness. Both of them were tough as nails today, made big plays down the stretch offensively and defensively.

Kevarrius Hayes was tremendous again. Gets better and better the latter part of his senior year. It's a good story. He's worked his butt off and deserves it. Jalen and KeVaughn stepped up for us as well.

Naz Reid is a handful, to complement the rest of their guys, Tremont Waters.

We did just enough to beat a very good team.

THE MODERATOR: We'll take questions for Andrew and Keyontae.

Q. Could you go through the play for the winning shot. Keyontae, I believe you started the play with a drive from the wing. Describe the play.

KEYONTAE JOHNSON: I was just driving and I see Naz come up to set a charge. In my head I was



thinking what Coach White said: Play off two feet. Passed it to Andrew and he hit a big shot. I know he was going to hit it because he's been working hard every Sunday. I just had confidence in him. I'm glad he hit it.

ANDREW NEMBHARD: Originally that wasn't the play we drew up, but they got to a 1-3-1. We had to scramble. It was a good drive by Keyontae. Found me. I had to let it go. I'm happy it went down, for sure.

Q. Andrew, Coach White has been talking you up so much ever since the get-go. He's talked about how confident he is in your ability. Describe how validating it is for you to be able to come through in the clutch for him.

ANDREW NEMBHARD: Very validating. We worked together since June, July when I got here. He's helped our team so much from where we started. It's just great to finally get a win that we deserve for him, for sure, for all the work he puts in.

Q. Does your mindset change at all, you came into the tournament it was one game at a time, try to win one game, get into the NCAA tournament, but now it seems like the mindset has changed. You can win this thing. Talk about that.

KEYONTAE JOHNSON: We all preach: One game at a time, don't think a game ahead. Stay in the moment. I feel like everybody is on the same page, just trying to get a win as a team together.

Q. Keyontae, the alley-oop dunk, how did that fire you and the team up? I noticed the frustration on your face when you were missing the free throws. Was that weighing on you at all?

KEYONTAE JOHNSON: The coaches kept preaching to me don't feel down on yourself when I'm missing shots and stuff. I was trying to, like, not let that get in my way of playing the game, keep playing each possession one by one. When that dunk happened, it boosted me up a little bit. I just started contributing for the team more. Just pulled out the win.

THE MODERATOR: We'll excuse Andrew and Keyontae. We'll continue with questions for Coach White.

Q. You said yesterday you didn't know if your heart

could take another one. Did you tell Andrew that? Did it surprise you they ran a 1-3-1 again?

MIKE WHITE: It didn't overly surprise us, no. We talked about it. We have just kind of a base spacing look that we try to get into when we see a 1-3-1. We talked about the fact we may have to get into it.

We got into it. Obviously your guys have more freedom at that point when you're in a spacing concept against a defense like a 1-3-1. They just made very good decisions, two freshmen. We moved a little bit, Andrew got it to the corner, Keyontae made a huge play, a sound play. He's learned to slow down a little bit offensively.

The goal when he got on campus was to speed up defensively, was to play with more of a motor and a higher level of intensity, and he did that. But I think that carried over to the offensive side. It took him a while to play with two different tempos. He's playing his best basketball right now, two games in a row on a huge stage. The game has slowed down for him offensively.

Made a great decision. Andrew has worked hard on his jumper.

The first part of your question?

Q. You said yesterday you couldn't take a third overtime. Did you tell Andrew that?

MIKE WHITE: Absolutely not. It's crazy how these three games have played out. Then you mention the changing defenses. We had two possessions late in Gainesville where they jumped in a 1-3-1, and that led to the go-ahead three. In overtime, they came out of a timeout and jumped into a 3-2 zone. They've done a very good job of changing defenses all year. They had an unbelievable run in SEC play. We wish them the best in the NCAA tournament.

Q. What was the message at halftime down 10, getting destroyed inside?

MIKE WHITE: A lot of it, it wasn't just simple smashmouth basketball. We were getting dominated on the interior based off of actions that we defend every day. We were not defending at a very high level in the first half. We had two or three defensive transition errors. We had some ball screen coverage that we messed up. I mean, we defend it every day. We set a lot of ball screens.

It was discouraging, the defensive level of intensity and accountability in the first half, we watched it all with the guys as we always do, there wasn't really a lot that needed to be said at that point. Kevarrius Hayes has gotten to the point where he really runs our locker room. I stopped talking, allowed him to get into our guys a little bit. He's a guy that rarely makes a

defensive mistake, especially based on effort or where you're supposed to be.

I thought we really locked in in the second half, defended at a much higher level. That said, it's easier to do that when you make a couple shots early second half as well. I thought we settled in really on both sides.

Q. I know what you're going to say, maybe you'll surprise us. Does your mindset change now?

MIKE WHITE: I'm sorry, our local people know this. I'm the worst at giving you something creative to write. I mean, I'm as boring as they get and cliché. Honestly, I asked Denver, my bodyguard, on the way down here, our sports information director, I honestly did not know, I promise you, who we played tomorrow. I did not know. The whole thing was Arkansas. That was it. I mean, the whole prep was Arkansas. Then you have whatever we had, I don't know, 21 hours, whatever it was, for LSU.

Fortunately we played LSU twice lately. For both of us, we had a quick turn. We're very familiar with one another. Then we'll find out later who we play. That's it.

If I'm not doing that, I don't know how I can educate our guys on doing it with regard to the day-to-day grind at our level. Also the moment-to-moment play-by-play, timeout-to-timeout grind within a game. That's it, the next play, the next game.

Q. When you did start your LSU prep, did you prep for Javonte Smart?

MIKE WHITE: Yes, absolutely. Expected him to play and found out at some point this morning he was going to play.

Q. KeVaughn didn't have the game he had yesterday. The play he made, grabbed the rebound, for him to strip that out, unKeVaughn-like play.

MIKE WHITE: Harsh. It was a tough play for him to stick his nose in there. He's a reserved, laid-back guy. Always been a challenge. He's been open about it, I've been open about it, the challenge to get him out of that comfort zone, make those type winning plays.

It's fitting. Again, at the bottom of the ninth of his senior year for him to make a play like that in a win like this, I'm really pleased with his effort and his willingness to make that type of play. Obviously he gets fouled, he's money at the foul line, the best in school history.

I did like his aggressiveness throughout the game. I've

said this for a long time, I don't know that it definitely spreads to our other guys. I like to think it does. It spreads to me. I feel better when he's letting it fly, it looks clean coming off his hand.

I thought from the jump, he was pretty aggressive. He took a couple aggressive shots. Again, I like to think that spreads, especially with our younger guys. When they feel like he's feeling pretty good about himself, surely they feel a little bit better about themselves, especially on a stage like this.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

MIKE WHITE: Thanks, guys.