

March 13, 2014



UConn: 72
Memphis: 53

An interview with:

UConn

THE MODERATOR: We'll get started. UConn Head Coach, Kevin Ollie, Student Athletes, Shabazz Napier and Niels Griffey. Coach?

COACH OLLIE: The game was played at a high speed and I thought our guys came in with the right mind-set and that mind-set is togetherness. We shared the basketball. We put on the board that we wanted to get 15 plus assists and we hit 15. Our defense was phenomenal from the tap, and we didn't give them anything easy and the biggest thing we had on the board was transition defense and we held them to 8 transition points and when they played in the LX Center, our last game against them, they got 20. So I thought limiting them to 18 points in the paint, and then also 8 transition points in the paint allowed us to get out on the break and we shared with the basketball and Niels phenomenal, but everybody down the list came in and contributed you know Shabazz with his leadership also and Ryan with his floor game had 6 assists and it was a phenomenal game and we have to fuel back up and get ready for Cincinnati because you know what type of game that's going to be, it's going to be a war. We gotta have that heart, we gotta have that hustle. The same thing we had tonight to beat a great team like Cincinnati.

Q. Niels, can you talk about your night and what you were feeling coming into the game? Obviously you were feeling the shot that you were putting up with authority, but what was going through your mind as the game went on?

NIELS GRIFFEY: This game was similar to the Louisville game, coming into the game.

They had a home crowd and we knew that we had to be -- had to give them a different game than the Louisville game. So we really came in with a good mind-set, really energetic and like Coach said, we had to stick to certain points that we were emphasizing. That was rebounding and getting back in transition.

I think we did a great job staying solid, especially in the first half, where we had a couple of runs. I think that was the main thing that our team did really well tonight.

Q. Shabazz, you guys shot 55% in two games here. What is it about this building that brings out the best in your offense?

SHABAZZ NAPIER: I don't think it's the building, I think it's the way that Memphis plays defense. They definitely double a lot of pick-and-rolls, which leaves guys like Niels open and DeAndre and Lasan open and you got some good shooters. If you give them time to shoot the ball, you can see what happens. Niels was 6 for 8 today, he's been the greatest shooter, he has this whole year and if you leave him open, which is astonishing, coming into this, a lot of people around the country know Niels as a shooter, but the way they play defense they double a lot and leave shooters open and we're not afraid to pass the ball at all so Niels got the shots and knocked 'em down and kept it rolling.

Q. Was y'all game playing against sophomore Shaq Goodwin -- seemed like when he had the ball in his hands y'all threw two or three guys at him?

SHABAZZ NAPIER: We didn't want them to score in the paint as much as they have. We know Shaq Goodwin is definitely a great talent and we dug down a little bit. We wasn't doing anything different than we did last few games with them and we manned up and we told the big guys as soon as we see them in trouble we're going to go give help but our guys did a great job on him, definitely getting him in foul trouble and he was definitely

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playing DeAndre and playing DeAndre on the perimeter is definitely tough for a big guy and we got him tired and kept moving from there.

Q. Kevin, you shook the lineup up a little bit, starting Niels and Phil tonight. Particular reason for that?

COACH OLLIE: I just wanted to do something different. Those guys were still going to play, Lasan came here and gave us a great effort and Amida came in and gave us great effort, but I wanted to change it up and get Niels out there so he could spread the floor and get more space for my guards. I know Louisville, they tried to wear Shabazz and Ryan Boatright down and we wanted to give them more space and Niels made me look like I was a good coach so thank you, Niels.

Q. Niels, what was it about your defense that made it so tough for them to score?

NIELS GRIFFEY: Memphis is a great team and they score in the paint, so we focused on clogging up the whole paint and helping guys out as soon as the ball came in there and make them make their shots from outside.

That was one of the keys we thought about.

THE MODERATOR: Gentlemen, thank you very much.

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MEMPHIS

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Memphis, head coach, Josh Pastner and student athletes, Geron Johnson and Nick King. We will start with your comments, Coach?

COACH PASTNER: Gotta give UConn credit and Coach Ollie and their program. They played great, they've got a great team, great program and they deserved to win. Secondly, we stunk, no other way to look at it. We played poorly. Obviously when we lose a game all responsibility has to go to the head coach so I will take full responsibility.

I've said that before, it's going to be hard for us to win when our four senior guards combine for, you know, 10 for 38. We're not going to win that way.

With only 2 or 3 assists out of those four guards, it's just not going to happen. Again, anytime we lose a game it's got to fall on the head coach, when we win a game the players got the job done. It was a bad performance and we gotta now be ready to go for next week, we will be in the NCAA Tournament and we have to correct a couple of things. I did not see this one coming. We had a great week of practice. Guys were ready to play. They were fired up.

I just did not see this coming. I felt the first half, the majority of the game, but especially the first half we played not to lose instead of playing to win. When you play not to lose against a really good team you end up losing. We played timid and, you know, just one of those things.

Q. Josh, they got a lot of wide open looks. Where were the defensive breakdowns? What was the problem?

COACH PASTNER: Well, they got a couple of them off of second chances. They got one the first part of the game by Griffey and at the end of the half they got one, Ryan Boatright hit one off of a second-chance rebound. We had breakdowns on containment, there was that time when Ryan Boatright took Chris Crawford basically from one end to the rim on that. It was just one of those nights. There was just breakdowns on a lot of areas on containment and things. They hit a couple of tough shots, they're a great 3-point the shooting team, but like I said, first and foremost it's gotta go to the head coach so any of the losses have to be put on my shoulders and obviously we didn't do a good job and we will have to get better and get ready for next week.

Q. Did you feel like there was a lack of fight, a lack of hit back there in the first half?

COACH PASTNER: You know, Jason, I felt we played not to lose. We played not to lose. You can't win if you play not to lose. That was the whole halftime speech, the whole talk was guys, we're playing timid, we're looking like we're paralyzed out there in a lot of the things we're doing. We have a glaze over our eyes and I don't know why. Like I said, we had a great week of practice, guys were ready to play. We just came out and we played very passive, very, very passive for -- I don't have an answer why we played passive, we played extremely passive and when you play passive against a very good team that's what happens.

Even defensively, our ball screen coverage we tried to start the game doubling on Napier which I felt for the most part we did a good job on Napier but then first game Daniels has a career night against us. Second game, Napier has a career night against us, and then this game, Griffey has a career night against us, so just one of those deals.

Q. Josh, they were talking about how their game plan defensively was to close the

middle, not get your bigs to post, and dribble drive penetration was tough, so in that case it has to be outside shooting or you're in trouble?

COACH PASTNER: If you're not making shots -- we couldn't score the ball. They clogged it in and that's what teams are going to do against us and we're going to have to make some threes. We can't go 10 for 38. We missed a lot of layups, a lot of layups, and when you miss layups and a lot of open shots it makes it hard to score. I've said it for a long time now and I'll say it again, you're going to have to make shots.

Unfortunately I felt from the very beginning with our team that we were going to be a great three-point shooting team and the floor spacing and then-- but we have not shot the three from my expectations or my thought process that we would be shooting this year. So I knew teams were going to pack in on us to make us shoot three's, but from the preseason and what we shot last year, the percentage, I thought there was going to be no doubt about it, and we have not shot the ball well. And when you pack it in -- and they did a good job on Austin and Shaq and they clogged up dribble penetration, we had some open shots we missed and we missed a lot of layups and those are back breakers.

Q. Geron, how disappointed are you about the way you guys played tonight?

GERON JOHNSON: I'm very disappointed with myself, the way I played the first half, and lackadaisical, and Coach made the game plan up right and senior guards, we got to prolong our season and hold ourselves accountable to make shots. I told Coach, there is no sympathy, nobody is going to give us any sympathy but we have to get to the drawing board and be ready for next week as we get into the NCAA Tournament.

Q. Will you watch the rest of the tournament?

GERON JOHNSON: Will I watch the rest of the tournament? No, I'm not. I know we're better than that and the country knows we're better than that and it's over now and we put the wins behind us and put the losses behind us and you gotta get back to the drawing board and play hard.

Q. Josh, Kevin Ollie complimented Ryan Boatright on his floor game. What was it

that made it so hard for your guys to stay in front of him?

COACH PASTNER: He played well but in the end Griffey makes those three's and we don't make shots. Ryan Boatright is a very good player and Shabazz Napier is a very good player. We can dissect all we want to dissect. We missed a lot of shots, we shot 26% from the field. You're not winning; it's over. Start the bus and go home because you're not winning when you shoot 26% against a good team. Then defensively we did not do a good job. They shot 53%, so that's a bad combination. We can look all we want to look into. We've got to be able to score the ball.

We're not winning games scoring 53 points, not with the offensive fire power we have. And with our bigs, Shaq has to play better, Austin has to play better, but to loosen things up we have to have our perimeter guys make shots. Those shots are important for us just to loosen stuff up. That's why we were able to beat SMU the second half, we just couldn't score the ball tonight; whereas, against SMU we made the shots in the second half. Louisville, same thing. You look at our losses, we couldn't score, and our wins we were able to make three's. Gotta be able to make three's.

Q. What will you tell your guys from here?

COACH PASTNER: Well, I told our guys in the locker room, and anyone that knows me, I'm an optimist. I'm not a guy that -- I tell it like it is, and there is no time for fluff. I'm not a big rah-rah speech guy. I told the guys, hey, this was embarrassing for us, and, again, I take full responsibility. I don't blame players, it's on the head coach when we lose games and when we win it goes to the players. So I take full responsibility, but I told our guys, look, this is embarrassing, this is not good.

The only way to really make it up is, you know, to have a good week next week, try to win two games. I told our guys, I've said all along there are three seasons. I thought we had a very good regular season, very, very good regular season, one of the few teams to stay in the Top-25 from the start to the finish, swept Louisville, won Old Spice, had Top-25 wins. We did a lot of good things.

Second season, conference tournament, we grade ourselves with an "F." So to balance it

out and leave a good impression we need to do our job next week and try to win two. Not just one, but we need to try to win two.

Q. Geron or Nick, what is it about the UConn team that you guys are 0-3 against them?

NICK KING: UConn is a good team, don't get me wrong but most of the time I think it's on us. We had a lot of defensive breakdowns by the players. The coaches drew up a great game plan, we had too many breakdowns, mental breakdowns on defense and couldn't knock down shots. I believe that's what it was.

Q. Josh, all season long you bounced back from adversity, every time. You haven't lost two straight. I don't know what happens in between but you do a good job of getting the guys ready again. Will this be tougher to bounce back from, being the tournament, hosting the tournament and having lost the way you did?

COACH PASTNER: Well, Greg, if anyone's got the "woe is me, sorry for myself, blame game syndrome," you're not coming to the Tournament, and I don't want that around.

We don't have time for that. I told the guys we all got to take accountability and responsibility, starts with me. We don't have time to bury our heads and feel sorry for ourselves. We will bounce back. We gotta find a way to win not just one next week, but two. And I recognize that and these guys recognize that. We gotta get the job done. Whether we're a 1 seed, 9 seed, 16 seed, whatever we are we have to win two. Doesn't matter.

GERON JOHNSON: We will win two games next week, that's what I'm going to say. I got faith in my team. We can play with anybody in the country. I know Coach doesn't like that, but we're going to get to the drawing board and we are going to work hard, and you can put my statement on that, and we will win two next week. We can go from there.

COACH PASTNER: I don't mind him saying that and for us to win two next week he's going to have to be great, as will everybody else, we just gotta get the job. We got to produce on the floor and we have no option but to win two next week. We're going to find a way to do it. It's going to be a heck of a tournament whoever we play, so I think it's wide open but we're going to have to find

a way to get the job done. We will get back and correct what we need to correct.

Q. Guys, it seems like when you get into the lane, y'all like to get in the paint to get y'all points. Seems like when y'all drawing contact you weren't getting the calls that seemed like you should have gotten.

COACH PASTNER: No, we went to the free-throw line 37 times, UConn went 13, had nothing to do with the officials. We didn't make free-throws. When you're shooting 20 of 37, not winning the game. We went to the free-throw line, we drew contact we couldn't score. We missed free-throws, layups, layups, layups, open shots, makes it hard but nothing with the officials whatsoever.

THE MODERATOR: Guys, thank you.

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