

**Sun Belt Men's Basketball Championship
March 15, 2014**

**Game 5 – (1) Georgia State vs. (4) Arkansas State
Post Game Quotes**



Georgia State Quotes

Opening Statement from Head Coach Ron Hunter: "I thought our guys did a really nice job defensively. We challenged the team before we left Atlanta. We said that we are 80 minutes away from being in the NCAA tournament, and that we had to play 80 minutes of great defense. I knew that we could score, but I challenged them to see if we could play our best defense in back to back games. These guys are a little tired, but defensively we were all over the place. To hold a team that normally averages 80 points a game to 45 is pretty impressive. We spent the entire week working on defense; these guys are mad because we didn't do much offensively. We know that the offense will come for us, so we just spent the entire week getting after it on defense. We wanted to make a statement with our defense."

Question for Ron Hunter: *Question... What exactly did you all work on defensively during the last week?* "Nothing different, really. We spent probably about 80 percent getting ready for Arkansas State, we felt like we had a good chance of playing Arkansas State, and if we didn't we were going to have to spend a lot more time last night preparing, but we didn't because the whole week we spent preparing for them. Every set they ran, every set we saw, was for them, and usually I don't do that. I try to mix it up most of the time, but we were at about 80-20 Arkansas State, so I was pulling for them kind of. I wanted that ninth overtime, but I couldn't get that."

Question for Ron Hunter: *Question... Did you have to adjust to how Ryan Harrow was playing after the poor start?* "Right before the Southern Miss game, I told him that I don't want him to be a Burger King All-American, I want you to be that McDonald's All-American, and we got that tonight. He's really accepted that role, and when he sees that ball going in early, he's pretty good, so you don't get guys like that often."

Question for Ron Hunter: *Question... How much did you stress being a #1 seed and not coming out and playing scared?* "One of the things that we talked about is that we are 17-1; last time we played Arkansas State, we got stuck in an airport in Texas and had to bus it to Arkansas. We took a 22-hour trip to get here, so we've had a lot of adversity thrown our way, but there was nothing that was going to get in our way in this tournament. Scared is not a word I would use for what we were going to be. We deserve to be the number one seed; people talk about the double bye, and that helped us a lot. Brad Stevens (former coach of Butler) is a good friend of mine, and in the Horizon, they have the double byes as well. Every time Butler got the double bye, they made it to the national championship game. The Horizon protected its number one seeds, and so I don't know if we could win this if we had to play three games, but the double-bye really helped us, so I told our kids that we earned that. Arkansas State had a tough game last night, but that's the way the system works, the number one seed gets protected; we were fresh, and they weren't."

Question for Ron Hunter: *Question... Any challenges in getting this team ready to play again in less than 24 hours?* "Not at all. When you get an opportunity to play for the NCAA tournament; I have a whole team in there that has never been to the NCAA tournament; my job is actually going to be to get them to calm down. I thought that we were overhyped, hyped up way too early; we missed some shots early on, and that's because we were way too hyped up, and I've

got the same thing tomorrow. These guys could play this game at 11 o'clock tonight, that's not a problem."

Question for Ryan Harrow: *Question... How important was this game for you after last year's SEC tournament?* "It was really important. I actually had nightmares last night thinking about the SEC tournament, and how I was going to play in this tournament. I just wanted to come out here and do well for the team, just get the win, and that's what happened."

Question for Ryan Harrow: *Question... Did all the work on defense this week affect the offense at the start of the game?* "I think it was just playoff jitters, just coming out and worrying about defense and making sure we got stops. We saw how they played yesterday, and we wanted to just lock down on them first, because we knew that our offense would come."

Question for Manny Atkins: *Question... Given that Arkansas State played a four overtime game last night, did that make you guys want to drive up the energy and intensity early to go after their legs and try and take this one early on?* "Coming into this game, we told each other that we just need to keep the intensity on them, just try to run. We tried to come into the game today and just run the floor, keep pushing the ball, and we knew that their legs were going to die out on them after a while because of that four overtime game; we came and did what we had to do today, and we got the win."

Question for Manny Atkins: *Question... Did you every sense the fatigue of Arkansas State during the game?* "About midway into the game, a lot of shots that they normally make were falling a little short, and we were able to see that. We tried to take advantage of that and just push the ball up the court and keep them running, keep them moving. It all ended up working in our favor."

Arkansas State Quotes

Opening Statement from Head Coach John Brady: "First of all, Georgia State is a good team. They are very efficient offensively. They have four really good players that can play in a lot of places. In my experience, they are very good. Secondly, we've always thought, to beat Georgia State, you have to make a minimum of 12 threes to beat that team, and we just didn't have that, shooting the ball. I thought we got looks we needed to get. I thought Kendrick was really good around the basket. I thought we would get enough around the goal to be okay, but from the perimeter we just couldn't do it. When we played them over there, I think we made 12 threes. When they beat us in overtime at our place, we made 13 threes. To beat that team, you have to shoot from the perimeter.

"I thought the effort of our team was fine. I'm not displeased with what we tried to do. When Ed Townsel had a wonderful game last night, he's one from ten tonight, and Melvin (Johnson) was one from seven tonight. We just didn't make the shots that we normally make, for whatever reason.

"Georgia State is a good team. It would be a shame if they got upset in the championship game and not go to the NCAA tournament, because some of these teams they are talking about are not better than Georgia State. There is no question in my mind. Georgia State just doesn't have the opportunity some of these teams have to play. If you put Georgia State in the SEC, they will beat six of those teams in the SEC. No doubt in my mind. They are a deserving team. They won't get any mention, because they don't have the same sex appeal as other schools, I guess, but they should because they are very good. Southern Miss was lucky to beat them in overtime. They don't turn it over.

"I liked what our guys tried to do today. I appreciate these seniors. Kendrick Washington, I love him to death. Melville is the same way. He's been with us a year and they've helped me, and I hope they've gained something from me. Basketball is a tough draw because, unless you win a national championship, you always lose your last game. That's the only downside of this, but we won 19 games. A year ago, we won 19 games again and I don't know if Arkansas State has won 19 games back to back in a number of years. I like what these seniors did for us. The players we have sitting out, I like the players coming in, our recruiting class. I am looking forward to what lies ahead. All of these seniors that have played for us are going to get their degrees and graduate. I am proud of them in that regard. Georgia State is good. We didn't have it in terms of shooting the ball tonight. I thought the effort of our team was very good. I was pleased with what they tried to do."

Question for Head Coach: *Question... Please comment on the start of the game, given the team you were playing, and last night's game?* "We ran some things we thought were going to work, but whatever we ran early, the shots dropped. I don't believe I criticized a player the whole game for taking a bad shot, except for Rakeem Dickerson who threw one up. But, when the game went on, and it was within ten points or so, I didn't really criticize one player for taking a bad shot. That's all we can do as a team. Have the right people shooting the ball, in the right spot, on something that you think may work. Whether it goes in the goal or not, that's another issue. I don't think it's good offense or bad offense by the judge of the ball going through the hoop or not. I didn't think we were taking terrible shots or making bad offense, and I told them that during the whole game. I was never concerned about that. That team scored six points late, so the reality of it is, that team scores 66 or 68 points against us. Defensively, we were fine. I'll play Georgia State and give them 70, because they are that good offensively. We just didn't make some shots that we needed to make against them, or that we would normally make. My theory, you make 12 threes against Georgia State and you're in the game, and we had the team that was capable of doing it, we just didn't this afternoon."

Question for Head Coach: *Question... Talk about the graduating seniors?* "Those guys we have are great. Strong personalities, which will bode them well when they have to get out there and make it on their own. They are resilient and tough. They are great guys. They're all going to graduate, they are good students and I'm going to miss them. They won 19 games for us. There are three games that we left out on the table. This team is a 21/22 win team, we just left a couple out there, and sometimes that happens. It was a good year for us. I don't want people to judge a season on whether or not a team makes it to the NCAA tournament. It is more difficult to go to the NCAA tournament from the Sun Belt Conference, than it is from the South Eastern Conference. Here, you could win the regular season, and people still won't know that you won. It's difficult to play three or four games in a row, and that's why these seniors have been good for Arkansas State basketball. We've had 38 wins in the last two years. It's been a long time since they've won 38 games in two years at Arkansas State. Can we do better? Yes. Do we want to do better? Yes. Are we going to do better? No doubt. This team solidified our program. We are one of the top two or three teams in this league. We're going to be that way next year because the players we have back, and the players we have sitting out, and the recruiting class is the best I've ever had here. These seniors did a great job. I'm going to miss them. I've enjoyed them. They've been challenging, but in a good way. I appreciate all they've done and they're all going to be successful no matter what they choose to do."

Question for Head Coach: *Question... Talk about Ryan Harrow and defending his penetration?* "We guarded their plays pretty well. I think they are their most dangerous when they come off a ball screen. He's just extremely difficult to guard and he's unselfish. He's really good. He may have a little baggage, I don't know, but he has settled in at a place where he is really good. People forget how highly recruited he was coming out of high school. Now, he's in the Sun Belt and I think he's the best point guard in the league."

Question for Player Melvin Johnson III: *Question... How did you feel physically throughout the game, considering last night?* "The first five minutes were cool. We were obviously more tired than what we thought we were, but I don't want to make any excuses. I don't feel that fatigue was a reason why we didn't win this game. I feel that I didn't hit the shots that I was supposed to make. They just weren't falling tonight for some reason. Our other perimeter guys, the shots we normally hit and make, we just didn't make those shots. I feel like we guarded their best player, we had some good offensive stops, but on the offensive end, we just weren't hitting them tonight."

Kendrick Washington: "We felt good going into the game. We were trying to get over that little hump. Once they got that little lead, it was hard to get it back with them not turning it over. We tried to fight, but I guess they are just a better team. They didn't turn over the ball, they executed more plays. That's the basis of it. No excuses."

Melvin Johnson III: "It was an 8 or 9 point hump that we just couldn't get over."

Kendrick Washington: "I think foul trouble played into it too, with a couple guys getting into foul trouble, me in particular. I don't want to say I softened up, but I relaxed a little bit more because I knew I was needed more out there, than on the bench. I just wanted to stay out there and do as much as I can."

Question for Player, Melvin Johnson III: *Question... You mentioned you were tired, comment on the reality of shots that you would normally make, not going in?* "In my mind, I didn't feel that I was tired so I wasn't making shots tonight. It was one of those things where your brain wasn't linked in to your body. I'm not going to use that as an excuse though, because mentally, I'm not tired. I didn't feel physically tired. I guess, it was just one of those days."