

Eric Gaines vs Temple 3/7/2024 - Film

Gaines showcased a balanced offensive skillset displaying the ability to knock down shots beyond the arc, get past his man and finish above the rim, and create for others in the open floor and during half-court sets. He was looking to push the pace to get easy buckets for himself and his teammates, and his open court vision stood out. He made a couple of nice quarterback-like passes in the backcourt to his teammates sprinting the floor hard in transition, leading to points on the board. He is a tough cover because he has a quick first step to get past anybody on the floor and if the defense sags off, he has the ability to drain the three. One play that stood out to me was at the 7:56 mark of the first half, Gaines drove left towards the left elbow from the top of the key and did a double step back move to create space between him and his defender, then he knocked down the three. On another play a few possessions later, Gaines dropped a dime to his teammate from the opposite end of the floor, leading to a made layup.

Defensively, Gaines pressured the ball well primarily on traps, but in man coverage, he had multiple defensive breakdowns allowing his matchup to get downhill and penetrate the UAB defense. He was engaged while denying the ball and made the offense work for their catches. Naturally, he is fast-twitched and has quick feet, but that did not fully translate to success on the defensive end. For example, at the 12:31 mark of the first half, Gaines was on his heels and not ready to defend the drive, and allowed his man to get deep into the paint and finish for an easy layup. On another play, this time in the second half, he trapped the ball near the sideline but still allowed the defense to beat the double and turn the corner, which led to a defensive breakdown and another made layup.

Gaines showed the ability to distribute both in transition and in the half-court and create for himself off the bounce by getting to the rim. He struggled to keep the ball in front of him defensively though. One area of improvement for him is to press up into the defense more and play on the balls of his feet so he can be ready to defend more often.