



Coaches Quotes

Florida State 55, Virginia 59

Wednesday, February 7, 2018

Donald L. Tucker Center, Tallahassee, Fla.

Virginia Head Coach Tony Bennett

Opening Statement

“Well, it was a tale of two halves. I thought Florida State was down the floor – statistically you see how many points they get in the paint, points off turnovers, offensive rebounds. They hit some tough pull-up threes, and they were getting in and splitting our defense. I didn’t think we did a great job. A lot of that was a credit to how aggressive [they were], the movement they had offensively and they played hard defensively.

On Virginia’s second half adjustments...

“In the second half offensively, we got more aggressive off the bounce. We had to. They really overplay, so you have to use the dribble. Our bigs were clocking out, trying to open up the court. You needed to make some big shots and big plays and so we were aggressive there. We realize it’s a battle – the catches got a little easier as we moved a little harder. The pressure was really intense early – it was hard to even get catches, so we opened up the floor. And then defensively, we tried to get back even better. If we didn’t have a chance at an offensive rebound we said, ‘Let’s just make them play against a set defense, and do a better job of contesting their shots.’ They hurt us a couple times on that ball screen slip, but we felt like we needed to bounce the dribbler out just to keep him in front of us, and then try to rebound better. I thought we tightened the screws, and guys made some individual plays.”

On Florida State’s second-half, 9:01 drought from the field...

“Yeah, I didn’t know it was that long. Again, they probably missed some and I think we just realized, ‘We’re on the ropes, and we’d better get stops.’ We understand we have to be so good, and it was just one of those games where the game wasn’t out of reach, but you couldn’t exchange buckets with them. It was one of those where we needed to just get a stop. We always talk about scoring and stop, scoring and stop. Or at least quality shot, and they have to get a contested shot. I thought guys made some hustle plays, and we got some bounces. A couple big shots offensively infused us with energy and then it tightened up a little bit for them.”

On Florida State, and Virginia’s mindset during the first half and beyond...

“At home, they’re good. And even on the road, they’ve been playing good basketball. And they have the depth and athleticism, and [Coach Hamilton] does a great job with that. So, we knew we were going to have to try to get it to our game, and you hope you can outlast them and that it would lighten up. But the way it was looking in the first half, it was coming in waves. And we had some breakdowns and that cost us. Once we got established in the second half, I could tell, ‘OK, it’s getting a little easier, we’re making some more plays.’ And you know, there’s so only much energy you have. And both teams – at least I can speak for us – we were riding those guys pretty hard so we were fatigued. But it was a gut check time.’

On being 12-0 in the ACC, and the challenge that this game presented them...

“I knew they were coming after us in this one. Just because of the spot we’re in, there’s a heightened sense of focus. But how they play, how they are playing, how they play at home and even on the road – I knew we were going to have to scrap and fight. I had a feeling it would be a challenge. Coach Soderberg’s got that little plaque that says, ‘Everyone’s got a plan until someone punches you in the mouth.’ I think that’s a Mike Tyson quote, actually. But we got punched in the mouth. And for a while, we were kind of lukewarm on how we responded. And in the second

half, we responded. We got back to saying, 'OK.' And that leadership of Devon and how he played, and how guys made plays were the difference. Hard league to be successful in, and when you win on the road, that's big."