

**Never Forget Tribute Classic 2018
Saturday, December 8 2018**

Connecticut Huskies

Dan Hurley

Jalen Adams

Alterique Gilbert

Florida State - 79, Connecticut – 71

Opening Statement From Dan Hurley

“Obviously, disappointed with the loss. This is a game that we marked for the calendar, desperately wanted to win, but just loved the way our guys fought. I feel like we definitely could have played better, especially start of the second half defensively. Some of that had to do with live ball turnovers, which led to run-outs, which kind of skew your field goal percentage defense, when you turn the ball over and they go down and dunk it. So it kind of skews what you're doing with your defense in the half-court. Obviously, the turnovers. But I'll take that type of effort from a team that I coach against that caliber of opponent any day of the week, particularly these two guards here really played till exhaustion there and had some great looks at some shots where we're making that run. I thought a critical point too in the first half, just to close the first half, felt like we played well to have a one or a two-point lead, just some things went on there that I don't want to get into, that skewed that, really hurt us. When they made their run, instead of them going up six or seven, they went up 12 or 14, and that mountain becomes a little too big to climb. So end of the first half and early second half hurt us, but our guys fought like warriors today.”

What do you think of Florida State's offense? Is that a credit to the opponents or talk about how your team played?

“I think our biggest issue, I think it's shot selection less than the turnover. I think there were a couple of times, I think, where we shot some like quick bad ones, which you obviously don't want. I just think it's like turnovers really just hurt us. I didn't think -- obviously, some things around the basket were hard to finish with their length and size and strength. I mean, that's the most physically like intimidating team that we've seen different than anybody else. But I thought we had some great looks the last five, six minutes to get that to a maybe four or five-point game. Couldn't capitalize. Can't make as many mistakes as we made and beat a team like that in terms of turnovers. But they had 6 assists and 22 turnovers. So it wasn't exactly an offensive masterpiece by the No. 11 team.”

Did you want to try to turn it into that kind of game? Not the number of turnovers but the number of turnovers and turn it into a crazy game?

“Yes, we wanted to pressure them in the full court to the three-point line and really protect the paint because they're not a great a three-point shooting team. We wanted to play two different styles of defense. Ball pressure, ball pressure, get after them until they get in the scoring area, and then cushion some of their non-shooters, (Terance) Mann and (Trent) Forrest.” Again, I think some of our defensive numbers get skewed with second-chance points and 16 points off turnovers because like, when you have 16 points off turnovers, that's 8 for 8, and it hurts overall on the defensive side.

Jalen, the first half you had five shots on, was their defense kind of taking you out, denying you the ball in the early part of the game?

“I don't think it was so much their defense. I think I've just got to be more aggressive. My coaches, my teammates are on me about being aggressive. So I've just got to listen to them and just stick with it. A couple of shots, I thought I made the first ones, and then after that a couple of shots didn't fall and I kind of shied away, but I've just got to stay aggressive.”

With the turnovers, how much was it being careless?

“Some of it's being careless. Some of it's not coming to a stop and locating where our teammates are going to be, kind of just assuming they'd be in a spot they kind of shifted out of. We've just got to play off of each other a lot better.

Jalen – it seemed like you struggled to get into a rhythm tonight, and did that have to do with wanting to be more aggressive?

“I think I was -- I think not so much -- I mean, getting in a rhythm. I think kind of just other players on our team were making some plays, and they were kind of against the rim, so I was letting them do that. But I've got to assist them more by being aggressive as well.”

Alterique, you got into like a run, like how easy was it to get those baskets?

“My teammates put me in great positions just to play.”

Kemba Walker and Jeremy Lamb were here; did they talk to you guys at all before or after the game? Anything you can tell us what they had to say?

“Pretty much they like the way we compete and like the way we're playing hard, but at the end of the day, we've got to put the ball in the hoop more times, and we've got the right pieces to build something special. We've just got to lock in and have that blind trust in each other that it's all going to work out.”

I know it's a point of emphasis, but did the replays, the reviews, did it kind of kill the momentum?

“Listen, that rule, I don't understand that rule. I think it's ridiculous. I like it when we benefit from it. I didn't like it the other two -- it just -- you'd better be sure if you go to the monitor with that one. They broke up that game a couple times early when we got off to a good start. Then it seemed like they were going to the monitor, and that's all I'm going to say about what went on there with those guys.”

Coach Hurley, ow did it feel to come back home?

“The accommodations were nicer, I ate better, better locker room. No, it was cool. It was fun. To be honest with you, I thought during the anthem I'd kind of like soak it in a little bit more, but we were so locked in. We wanted to start fast, which we did. You got to appreciate the journey you're on in life, and it would have been great to come here and get a win, but tough loss now, but it was nice getting home.

Florida State's Coach Hamilton thought that you took them out of their game and forced them to do things they don't normally do, that they were able to do. Do you take, not a moral victory, but do you take something positive from that?

“I take -- obviously, nothing better than winning. This win would have been huge for us. It's also too, when you play at a level in terms of your competitiveness and how hard you play, when you garner the respect of people like Coach Hamilton, whose teams play as hard as anyone in the country, when they're impressed by your effort, like the next best thing to winning is respect and having people respect you and having the teams that are about to play you, when they turn on your film, respecting how hard you get after people. That's how we defend, and if we can learn to take care of the ball better at the offensive end, I think we have a chance to at some point be a real, really good team and obviously get some consistency from the frontcourt, just who's going to kind of show up and give us something. The guards are going to take -- you know, the guards and the coaches take the heat for the turnovers. When you're as reliant as we are on our guards to make plays at the offensive end, for us to score and when we're trying to play fast, you know, you're -- you're going to have turnover numbers. We just want them to be more like 10, 11 a game as opposed to I'm not sure where we are right now, 14, 15.

What did you think of the UConn's frontcourt? Did you get Josh out early?

“I think Josh got a little rattled, got in foul trouble. They're just athletes out there. The only real guy for him to match up with is with (Christ) Koumadje. I hope I didn't screw that up. That was matchups we could play when he was in. When they went small with Gray at the five, he had no chance of playing against him. I think a real reason why we lost, in my opinion, is you can't do -- to win a game of this caliber, I think (RaiQuan) Gray and the backup five, who I'll butcher his name, Mfiondu Kabengele, they had 26 combined at halftime. You can't let your opponent's backup four or five and score 26 points in the first half when the other guys are really struggling. We should have had a six-point lead at the half. That was just missed opportunity.”

Arizona, too, with the backups hurt you as well

"Maybe we've got to extend our scouting and focus a lot more on -- yeah, just one of those things. Those are talented players, I just think we put so much emphasis on (Terance) Mann, (PJ) Savoy and (M.J.) Walker and the guys that have carried this team, that we didn't show proper respect to some guys with talent on the bench."

Are you going to schedule any more games in New Jersey, particularly this arena?

"Yeah, absolutely. We obviously brought a good amount of fans. They were great. First half, we were balling, it was good. Second half, we're making that run, it was fun, absolutely. We're going to be recruiting in all your gyms around here trying to get the very best players, and then we want to bring the best players back here to win games like this."

Florida State is very athletic. How do you simulate the athleticism in practice?

"Well, it's hard. It's not with having me on the scout team. It's a different animal. It really is because, obviously, our scout team can't give us that same look, but we've -- you know, we played Syracuse. We played Iowa. We played Arizona. No one quite as imposing as that, and I didn't -- I think that didn't have as much to do with -- we need to just play a cleaner game, and I think we'll get better as the season goes on. It's still game nine for us. We've got so many opportunities ahead of us. We just can't get discouraged by these last two tough losses by pretty good programs."

Does taking care of the ball become a little more of a concern?

"I'd say slightly. I would say no. I'm surprised by it. I'm surprised by it. I think we definitely turned the ball over more than I envisioned with the quality that we have at that position. Again, I think it's a by-product of what we're asking these guys to do at both ends of the court too. We're asking these guys, these guards to pressure the heck out of the ball and to make all kinds of plays on offense. I just think that we're kind of just -- we're sloppy. I think that to describe us offensively with the way we handle the ball at times, I think we're just a little bit sloppy. We're not tight like a high-level team."

What you're expecting from Yakwe Kassoum? He took a couple of charges.

That was encouraging. Yakwe was good for us today. If he could give us that type of offense today, maybe a little better ball security, but when you can see what he can do athletically in terms of we don't have another frontcourt guy like him. So, yeah, we need him. We need him desperately to build on this performance because it's really just a grouping of guys that we're just kind of mixing and matching game by game right now. We get him in the mix, it helps."