



Florida State 85, Southeast Missouri 68
Monday, December 17, 2018
Donald L. Tucker Center
Tallahassee, Florida

Florida State Head Coach Leonard Hamilton

Opening Statement

“Every team has a game when they are taking great shots and the ball just isn’t going in the basket. You normally have two or three of those a year. During this week’s practice as we were going through shooting drills I was saying to myself, ‘We really, really have the potential to be a really good perimeter shooting team.’ And tonight was just one of those nights where we had great shots, and they just didn’t fall. This team (Southeast Missouri), don’t get it twisted, they are a very good shooting team. As we prepared for them, they shot the ball consistently as well as they did tonight, and have shot the ball extremely well against all the teams they have played against. They executed their offense very well and they were throwing up everything, and everything they threw up was going in, while everything we threw up was just a little off. And you have to give them credit, it was not just about what we were not doing, but it was just about how well they were shooting the ball and executing. But the unique thing about our team is that we have enough parts that we can find someone that is capable of stepping up and being productive, and I think that’s what happened tonight. We had a lot of guys step in and give us a lot of positive play, we got some valuable experience, and we had guys get stops when we needed them. We had some adjustments we had to make, with who we need to have on the floor and on the defensive side we had guys step up to the plate and do what they had to do to win. It’s one of those grinding games that is good for this team during this time of year as it helps to keep us focused and understand that we are still a work in progress and I still like this team, and we have some moving parts that are still developing.”

On the importance of the bench’s role tonight:

“In last week’s game against Connecticut in the first half we scored 39 points and our bench scored 29 of them, that is who we are as a team. I use this term ‘to win games from committee’ and that’s kind of who we are. Our starters are playing hard, yet were not quite giving us the offensive productivity we needed and some other guys stepped up. Devin Vassell, David Nichols, Mfiondu (Kabengele); guys are just playing their role, and right now we are still trying to define our roles. We still have a lot of moving parts and we have four or five guys that we are trying to develop their confidence in themselves, so we can have the confidence in them. I think you saw Polite play really, really good tonight and unfortunately his shots weren’t falling, and we have a lot of confidence in him. We started RaiQuan Gray because M.J. (Walker) had a turned ankle and I thought the pace of the game, it was better to go in another direction in the second half and we started David Nichols. We thought he was quick enough to give us some solid minutes and he made a lot of sound decision making on the floor. We went with Vassell in some critical parts of the game and I thought Chris really made a big difference in the game, as he clogged the lane up, got some rebounds, and blocked four shots. I think this will be the team you see all year with different guys stepping up and making big plays.”

On Getting Phil Cofer Back:

“We are just trying to get Phil back into the flow, which can be very challenging. He had great shots that rimmed in the basket and I thought every one of them was going in. I thought he and really good effort and we just didn’t want to push it as we want to ease him back onto the floor. We are going to need him for the long haul, I thought his energy was good, he was talking and very verbal and before too long hopefully we get him back to being the old Phil.”

On The Growth Of Devin Vassell:

"I had an assistant coach when I was at the University of Miami and we had a kid named Tim James, and I was always complaining about what he didn't know and the mistakes he was making and my coach tells me, 'This kid gets more things done by accident than most people do on a normal basis.' That is what Devin is doing and he is a player and he has great instincts and he figures it out on the floor as he is playing. And I think you are seeing a youngster growing up in front of your eyes and he's a guy that we think the world of and as he gets bigger, stronger, and gains more experience he's going to be quite special. My grandma used to have a saying 'he is cool as a cucumber' and that is the way Devin is, he is a cool customer and he doesn't get rattled. He will battle and he's very poised and he plays the game the way he thinks it should be played. He is a youngster that we are going to be able to enjoy develop into that big time player."

On Adjustments Made To Take A Commanding Lead:

"I thought we got stops and I thought we did a better job of getting a hand on the line and not letting them reverse the ball as fast as they were in the first half. They do a very good job of moving the ball, and when you have good shooters they get you off balance by reversing the ball and they do things that we try to do, but we don't do it as quick as they do. (Southeast Missouri) knows that if they get the ball over the shoulders they have a high percentage of it going in. They had seven or eight players who made a three pointer; that's absolutely unheard of. When half of your team can knock them down from beyond the arc that's a dangerous weapon. They are going to win a lot of games in their conference, and I'm going to enjoy watching them, I didn't enjoy watching them tonight. I thought our guys responded to the things that we asked them to do, we told them to do a better job contesting shots. Their system is to move so fast and quick that you draw defenders to help in the lane, but we were able to make that adjustment and our big guys were able to do their job. We then were able to get out in transition, which helped get our confidence up and we wore them out a little bit."

On the team's progress through ten games:

"I think we are growing and becoming a really good team, but we certainly are not there yet. We don't have a whole lot of time before the rubber meets the road and we are going to be playing against some of the best teams south of the NBA and the world. We have to hurry up and grow up fast."

On the impressive defensive pressure in the second half:

"I have seen that developing of late and I thought we had really good sessions this week. If you remember early on in the first half we subbed a larger group than normal, because our guys are starting to develop more confidence. We have a lot of guys that are coming along well defensively and I thought they held their own, but again this team was red-hot and we were getting good looks, yet the ball just wasn't going in. I'm hoping that we can develop another working unit, so that we can have that confidence as we continue to move into the meat of our schedule. We have shown flashes of being able to defend at a high level, but we haven't been consistent as I would like us to be, but I like what I see."