



Florida State 95, North Florida 81
Wednesday, December 19, 2018
Donald L. Tucker Center
Tallahassee, Florida

University of North Florida Head Coach Matthew Driscoll

Opening Statement

"Florida State has a chance to do something really special. After watching Florida State play because of the schedule that we have had to play, I didn't get a chance to see Florida State as much as I normally do, and I had to watch Florida State in a quick turnaround. One thing that I noticed that Florida State does, which is very impressive, is that Florida State tries to get another play a shot, or Florida State tries to get their players in a place to be successful. This means that getting MJ Walker driving downhill, Trent Forrest driving downhill, and getting Terance Mann driving downhill. Florida State does a great job at understanding their talent, who your talent is, and I told Coach (Leonard) Hamilton that the team's connectivity among yourself when talent is equal is what will separate Florida State in games and that will allow Florida State to be victorious. I have played Florida State several times and obviously from my ten years here I have watched Florida State, I have never seen Florida State this connected before, and I cannot tell you why, I am not saying the other team was bad people, I am just telling you from watching the film and seeing what Florida State has, it is amazing how well this team plays amongst each other and it shows. It is hard to come back from the number of turnovers we had in the first half, and then Florida State started the second half within the first four minutes costing us ten points off of turnovers, and we had twelve turnovers in the first half, so Florida State separated the game like that. To our guys credit we fought hard because that is what we do, our league is very difficult, and when you are playing a top ten team, or any power five team, this will be our 55th or 56th time playing a power-five opponent in ten years. Playing Florida State our guys weren't scared, our guys will never be scared because this is what we have to do, but Florida State's length and your ability to alter and change hurt us, not at the rim, and not in the half court, it hurt us between the baseline and the timeline. That is where we lost this game.

On how Florida State stacks up versus other Top-25 opponents

"I have seen many teams, I am also a voter in the top 25, as a voter I get to see a lot of different scenarios. I really think that Florida State's depth will come in hand in two-fold, number one injury and nutrition are aspects that come in to play that people forget about. As a coach I would much rather have a guy that has been in rotation and that has gone through it, then a player who says "I want to play I want to play" and then you say "you are playing" because someone else suffers an injury and then all of a sudden things don't work out a well because a player has a bad attitude. Florida State has player that have all been playing, have all been in the flow, have all been on the floor, so I think that really bodes well for Florida State. We know that lineups get shorten, we know once a team gets to league play that things tighten up a bit, and I think that from watching Florida State, the fact that this team can shoot it as well as they can and that they have the ability to rebound the ball bodes well. Mfiondu Kabengele is a beast, and he is from the old school, he is not from the new school, and praises that he is not listening to anybody or that he is getting caught up on social media, because he is an old school player. I spoke with Kabengele after the game and I told him that if he continues to play this way, he will have the opportunity to make as much as he ever wants to make, but that this will come if continues to play this way and do what he does best. Florida State is every bit as good as I have seen, there is obviously a couple elite teams, Kansas is at another level, but it will be interesting to see when Duke comes here. I also was happy for JT Escobar, the kid gets to come home, shoot six for six and play well in front of his hometown, that was very cool to watch."

On North Florida's up-tempo style of play compared to previous teams

"We weren't able to play this way when we didn't have good players. There is a ball in my office, it was from my first victory, the opposing team scored forty-six, we scored fifty-one points. A recruit that we recently signed came in and looked at it and started laughing, he said "coach we get this in a half now", the style of play is different. When you grow your talent, you get an opportunity to play differently, we want to play fast as a team, we want to shoot threes, we want to rebound better. Florida State had like four air balls tonight that ended up being scores, which is the hardest shot to rebound, because of their ability to rebound. That is just the style that we play now, our league is really good, there is a lot of teams that are really good, Lipscomb went on the road and beat TCU, Liberty has played really well, NJIT is playing at a high level, we got a chance to win the league, Jacksonville is very good as well, and Florida Gulf Coast is a team that everyone is dismissing them and they are super talented. Our league is a beast."

On North Florida as Cinderella team

"The only thing we worry about is taking care of today, because if you worry about being a Cinderella then you will never get an opportunity to put the shoe on. So, you have got to talk care of the things that you have got to take care of first, and we have got to have an opportunity to provide it for our self, so we can't live like in that mindset. I am not into moral victories, I am extremely unhappy right now, but I told our team to have Merry Christmas. The good news is that we have Auburn next, so they are only another top-10 team too, so we will come back with that one after Christmas."