

Syracuse Basketball
Syracuse 62 vs. Florida State 80
Tuesday, Feb. 5, 2019
Carrier Dome, Syracuse, N.Y.

Syracuse Head Coach Jim Boeheim

Opening Statement:

"I thought we got off to a really slow start and I'm really proud of the way we were able to press that much. We did a really good job on the press and we ran out a little bit and got it down to one, but they hit shots. They were very good. Mfiondu Kabengele is a really good player and they made 11 three's. They're just a really good team and you can't give a team a 20-point lead and expect to come back. That was probably the best effort we've had all year to get back in the game, but they played well. They're strong and physical and we had to do too much to get back in the game."

What do you tell your team in the locker room after a game like that?

"Just what I just told you. We got down 20, we battled as hard as we could battle and then we ran out of gas a little bit at the end."

What kind of challenges does Mfiondu Kabengele present?

"He's just really good. He shoots it, he gets it inside, he's a good passer and a good defensive player. You realize the guy is only playing about 18 to 19 minutes a game and still scoring 13 to 14 points per game. If he played 30 minutes a game, he'd be averaging close to 30 points per game. He's really good."

Florida State shot the ball really well. Was that just good shooting or a function of bad defense?

"They shot the ball really well. We didn't guard it as well as we needed to. They got a few transition three's but whenever you give up that many three's, your defense needs to be better."

What was the biggest issue for you guys in that early stretch?

"They made a lot of shots. I don't think we defended them really well. We lost four points on two guys falling down and they got layups twice. That's 13 to 8 instead of it being 12 to 9 our way. It's just something that is part of the game. A guy is on an open fast break, you think he will make it, but those things happen sometimes."

Tyus Battle had 23 points tonight. He had a rough game against Pitt. What helped him turn it around against a tough team tonight?

"He's not going to have too many bad games and he had one in Pittsburgh, but we were able to help him get through it. He was really good tonight, I think he, Oshae (Brissett) and Elijah (Hughes) did everything they could. Frank (Howard) was not in the game, I don't know what it was but he wasn't mentally there and Paschal (Chuwku) was struggling. When those two guys struggle, it's not good for our team – 18 minutes and 14 minutes of zeroes. They have to be considerably better than that."

Why did you struggle offensively?

"They're good defensively. We can't get penetration on them. We cannot get by them. When teams pressure you, you have to be able to get by them. Tyus (Battle) is the only one right now that can get by them. Any time you see a pressure defense – we're going to see that sometimes – you have to get by them. It's as simple as that."

What does it say about this team to even make it a game?

“The most amazing thing is they’re really good and we made an unbelievable effort to get back in it. When you press full court that long, it takes a toll on you. Nobody presses that long. We had no choice. We were down 20, we had to do what we can. We could lose by 40, (but) we have to try. The press was good. We got some turnovers. We forced them to take some shots off balance and we got it. We wanted to keep pressing. We were so tired. We pressed the first three or four possessions and they got right by us and they made open shots. It’s hard to press a team like that the whole game. It did get us in the game but I don’t think we had enough gas left to finish.”

How did Buddy Boeheim play?

“He did some good things. He’s not quite ready. I expect our veteran guys to be able to play in this game and they didn’t.”

Closing Statement

“Frank (Howard) and Paschal (Chukwu) have to help us. They have to play better for us to be successful.

"This is a tough league. College basketball is tough. You’re going to have games like these. Florida State is really good. They’ve lost but they’re really good. I think they were a Sweet 16 team last year. I think they’re much better this year. (Mfiondu) Kabengele is a pro. He’s a tremendous player. He’s as good as any player in the league. Any player. His numbers are phenomenal numbers. (Trent) Forrest, (Terance) Mann, they’re all good players. (Phil) Cofer – veteran guys, they’re big, they’re physical. They’re strong. They’re a really, really good defensive team. You have to make great efforts to get a bucket against them every play. Every play is contested. If it wasn’t for the press, we would have lost by 30, 35 points. The press helped us a little bit. It got us back in the game. They’re really good and that happens. You’re going to have those games. We just have to regroup. We have a day off tomorrow then we get a couple days. I watched Boston College before the game. They were up two at Duke (at halftime). It doesn’t matter who you play, you have to be ready. It’s going to be tough. We have to play 40 minutes. It’s not going to be easy.”