

Atlantic Coast Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Thursday March 14, 2019

Buzz Williams Ahmed Hill Nickeil Alexander- Walker Virginia Tech

Florida State - 65, Virginia Tech - 63

Q. Obviously not the result you wanted, but the effort level from your guys coming back after playing yesterday, playing against such a deep team, how would you kind of address that?

BUZZ WILLIAMS: I don't want it to come across arrogant at all, but if there was some category for effort across the country regardless of sport in college, I think we would win. I know it comes across selfish and I just said this to our guys, and I don't mean this in the wrong way either, I don't want to win so we can win. I want to win because that means we get to play again and I've never seen in my career as a coach the connectedness and the effort that these guys play with. I'm just struggling to articulate over and over to these guys the level of respect that I have for them, considering all that they have been through and how they just keep responding. So much of what goes on in the locker room and timeouts, it's them, it's what they're saying. And it's not just our players and it's not just me, it's the organization all pulling and I think you can see that, we probably get more bench warnings than anybody, and it's not for mal-intent, it's just that's kind of how we do things when it's just us. But the utmost respect for Florida State, for sure, but also for the effort and care and love that our guys play with. Thanks for asking.

Q. Guys, what, you were down for so long in this game, what enabled you to climb back in this game in the second half and second over time game with Florida State in as many weeks, what is it about this matchup or these two teams that makes for such compelling basketball?

AHMED HILL: I think they're a great team they got coaches, they're a very deep team, a very talented team. They got pretty much everything you need as a team. I just think they outplayed us and they earned it



they earned the W today, and I think that these two of the hardest fighting teams in the ACC and I think every time we play them it will be a battle.

NICKEIL ALEXANDER-WALKER: I believe it's the matchup, I think we matchup well with them they matchup well with us. When you have two teams that are tough by label it's going to be a good game and it's competition. Guys wanted to compete, everyone was going back and forth and we were aggressive, they were aggressive, it was a physical game, but again, like Med said, credit to them, they made shots down the stretch and they did what they had to do. They're a great team, which is why they earned that double bye and I just feel like it's always a great matchup because you have two high level teams going as hard as they can.

Q. For both the players, you heard your coach talking about being proud of the effort level and I know you're not satisfied with the result but what's it like to play on a team that coined of does have that extra gear and that extra effort level?

NICKEIL ALEXANDER-WALKER: I mean I love my teammates and it's like it just brings us closer. When you have someone that's giving just as much if not more effort than you are you feel like I got to give more. It's never like, well, I'm doing this for what purpose? It's always, I'm doing this for Med because I know Med's trying his hardest, so I can't hold Med down, everyone's trying to push each other up. I wouldn't say we have a leader telling us to go up the ladder, we have everyone making sure that the guy at the bottom is pushing people up, the guy at the top's pulling people up. I think it's a chain and everyone's going in one direction and everyone's flowing together.

AHMED HILL: Yeah, that was perfect what he said. I just think that it's always been like that, that's kind of the culture we have here, we never are going to do anything soft, that's our culture, so it kind of bled into us and we just want to come out here and play for each other and that's about it.

Q. Obviously you had a pretty good look there on Mann on defending him on that game winning basket how did that look from your point of view?

AHMED HILL: He made a great drive I just tried not to foul. He made a beautiful floater and it happened to go

in. And from then on it was the next play. We drew up, a good shot at the end and we just came up short.

Q. You played in the ACC and beat up on each other basically for the last three months, you move on now, do you look forward for the opportunity of playing somebody different for a change when you start the NCAA tournament?

BUZZ WILLIAMS: Your outfit is beautiful. That Gingham shirt, that velvet -- is that velvet or suede?

Q. It's velvet.

BUZZ WILLIAMS: Man, you look like a million bucks.

Q. I wish I had a million bucks.

NICKEIL ALEXANDER-WALKER: I mean, I thank God for the opportunity, it's a chance to go dancing, I mean when you think about how many NCAA teams there are and then you break it down and it's like, okay, we are one of those people that get a chance to play in an event like that, that's stories I can take on for life and when you have people in your corner that you would love to go to war with, I mean it's, we're creating life stories, it's more than just basketball at this point, it's not about who we play, I mean as long as I got this team, I don't care who we play.

AHMED HILL: I think that was a great test for what's coming up next for us. That was a great team, tremendous team, and I think that if we go out there and play like that next week, man, I for sure think we'll get a W.

Q. X's and O's question on their game trying three at the end of the game. Had they taken a little more time were you guys intending to foul before they got that shot, did they get it off too quick or did you not want to foul in that situation?

BUZZ WILLIAMS: Yeah, all that's -- we discussed all of that, we discussed, did you see how Nickeil played the ball? On the out of bounds play? We didn't want it to go to the strong side, right? That was one thing. We talked about fouling on the inbounds pass and then we talked about our colors signify some defensive things for us, we wanted to black on the weak side. Coaches call that a hammer screen that they set and we wanted to black that, which is switch it. So we prevented it from going to the strong side, it went to the weak side, but we didn't black it, we didn't switch it. In hopes that if you switch it, maybe that's denied and now the ball's got to go towards half court and now as the ball goes towards half court now we can load to the ball and maybe buy, eat up two and a half, three seconds and maybe it's more of a contested shot. Really good player, it's 24 that hit the shot, right? I think he's shooting 44 percent from three through 18 conference games. Obviously that's why they ran the hammer for

him. And similar to what Med said, on the baseline drive, very good contest, kind of a strange bounce that went in, but both of those shots, to tie it and to win it, they earned them.

Q. Curious, as you prepare over the next week for whoever's in store next, how do you evaluate Justin? I know he's talked about he would like to play. Is that a realistic and how do you evaluate is there things you want to see him do on the court before you make that call?

BUZZ WILLIAMS: Yes, sir. He's making progress. Similar to any athlete, you have to continue to make progress and that progress is based on the doctor's timeline, the trainer's time line, he has met each passing phase, we took pictures of it last Friday before we played our last home game, those pictures determined that he couldn't play. So we're going to end up being able to take pictures again on Sunday and I think that's a nine day stretch between pictures, which is the longest that we have had. Well not we, not me, the medical team will make that decision after those pictures are reviewed. But we were off on Saturday -- oh, we didn't work on Sunday, we ended up having a history lesson. 5 did his work on Sunday. Monday we had practice, Tuesday morning early we had practice, we came here, 5 was able to participate more on Monday and Tuesday than ever before. When did we practice at Queens?

NICKEIL ALEXANDER-WALKER: Tuesday.

AHMED HILL: Tuesday.

BUZZ WILLIAMS: Oh, so we came here on Monday. So on Tuesday we had practice here in Charlotte. He was able to do a little bit more than Monday. So God's the ultimate healer and we're praying that it works.

Q. For the players I think you missed your first 12 threes as a team, what about their defense kind of made that tough and how did you kind of finally work your way back into this game?

AHMED HILL: I think they had beautiful contests they knew that we as a team that we could shoot three, they kind of played it, they wanted to make us drive and go into their bigs and the bigs are so tremendous at blocking shots so we tried to get them in the air, kick out for a three, but they did such a good job of contesting it so they just made it miss.

BUZZ WILLIAMS: Perfect answer, Med.

Q. For both players, if you could just speak to what you've learned last year and Med before that in the NCAA tournament and what you think needs to happen differently to have more success.

NICKEIL ALEXANDER-WALKER: It's a moment of a lifetime and as you go farther and farther and you start, teams start shedding off and it gets realer and realer and realer and you got the best out of every conference out of that tournament. So it's like no matter who you play, 8-9, 1-16, 2-15, it's a real game, you're going to have to play all 40 minutes, it's going to be a dog fight. And I learned through even ACC, which I feel like is great preparation for the Tournament it's like you're going to have to fight all 40 minutes, sometimes 45. But it's whatever it takes to win and you got to be locked in and engaged the whole 45 to win.

AHMED HILL: I just learned to not be so uptight, I just learned just go out there and have fun. It's a game and you know you need to win but you can't stress it too much, you can't want it too bad, you just got to go out there and continue to play how you played all year.