

Coaches Quotes

Indiana 80, Florida State 64

Assembly Hall, University of Indiana

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ACC / Big Ten Challenge

Florida State University Head Coach Leonard Hamilton

Indiana Head Coach Archie Miller

"Proud of our guys. Kind of knew that Florida State coming in, and they played a heck of a gauntlet of games and schedule coming in on the road. We were going to have a great opportunity tonight with our crowd behind us to play in that environment, on that stage is, you want it see what you're made of. And I thought our guys rose to the occasion of the opponent and were ready to play. It wasn't pretty at all, but I will say this: I think if you play against Florida State and you watch them play, it's not an easy game. They overwhelm you with their consistency and how it never goes away. Like, there's no possessions off. They caught us, I thought, the first eight minutes in particular, 10 minutes of the second half, of not having our antennas up and our awareness. We looked lethargic a little bit, I thought our guards started to wear down a little bit, and you could see it on both ends of the floor, starting to get away from us."

"But made a lot of plays. Obviously, Devonte Green was special tonight. There wasn't a whole lot of coaching that went into anything he did, as usual. When he's good, he's good on his own. But I thought Armaan Franklin and Trayce Jackson-Davis, I thought Justin Smith -- I told him this after the game -- I think he played the best college game of his career regardless of any numbers that he had. I don't even know what he had, I just thought he was a real calming force for us. I thought he was a calming guy in huddles and timeouts. And he was a leader tonight out there and that was great to see as well."

"So we have a lot of guys that were in there. And, obviously, the game wasn't perfect, but this is one that we're really fortunate to get. And I can't thank our crowd enough. To be able to play on that floor as a player, to me, that, that's an amazing feeling for those guys to be able to play in front of that crowd. So we're excited about that."

Q. You didn't really have opportunities in November to have tight, tight one-possession games, but how did you feel when it got to the three-point game here where you guys responded back quickly and had a couple nice runs?

"Yeah, we were okay. I thought just talking in timeouts, just trying to stay really calm and poised, you can decipher a lot of different ways, but we had to get our defense kind of grounded there a little bit. They went small in the second half. They started the ball screen in the middle of the floor and kind of go five out off the pop action, which I think that surprised us a little bit. They were able to hit a couple threes to get going. I thought we adjusted a little bit better. And then as the last eight minutes came down, that comes down to guys making plays and getting some stops and digging some balls out, some long rebounds. And I thought our defense made enough plays there down the stretch to give us an opportunity."

"And then the back eight minutes, offensively, I thought we were able to at least find a way to function and get some shots, get the ball in the middle of the floor a little bit with them. They switched every screen in the game. It wasn't a whole lot of pretty, like, commotion. You had to literally rely on spacing and rely on your guys to make some plays. Devonte hit a couple key drives in big moments. We had some offensive rebounds again. And were able to get to the line 38 times. I think a lot of people make it out to our schedule this, our schedule that. Our team is built to do something really well and that's get fouled. That was a huge thing tonight. It was a big, big part of the game to be able to, obviously, take 38, make 23 to their shot attempts of 16. Hopefully we can continue to do a little better job at the line and keep making them. That's a big thing for this team. Finding ways to get to the foul line and put people in foul trouble. And I think our physicality was good. Trayce continues to be a monster on the boards. And that's, to me, how we're going to win. We're going to win with trying to take care of the ball a little bit better. We're going to win by, obviously, getting to the foul line. And we got to rebound like crazy. And that

happened tonight in a couple areas and we were able to pull it out. Obviously, the home court helped.”

Q. To go back to that idea of poise. Devonte talked about it as well. I know you had more turnovers in the second half than you would like. But were you surprised at all with just how calm guys looked, the way guys moved on from mistakes, the way they didn't seem bothered by the way the game got tight in the second half?

“No. And I think that, in general, like I said, I'll give Justin, you have Al out there a little bit, and I think those guys were very calm in the timeouts. There wasn't a whole lot of get flustered, oh boy. I mean, you know, we have been through a lot. Some of these guys have been through a lot of games now and all of our newcomers, to me, have confidence. They're not afraid. But we were able to respond. And in most cases when you respond somebody on your team rises to the occasion. That was Devonte tonight. He rose to the level that a senior guard in that game you hope that is able to do. Not get 30, but just make the plays to alleviate some of the pressure. And he made almost every single one of them for us.”

Q. When you look at defensively for your guys tonight, where did the corrections come from that allowed you guys to stifle Florida State and hold them scoreless for such long stretch, especially in the first half?

“Well, we knew it was going to come down to, in reality it's a one-on-one game. When it comes down to those guys, they have physical driving guards, physical wing players that they try to, for lack of a better term, they really try to get their shoulder down and get by you. And they did quite a bit. I thought we made some good 50/50 plays, maybe some blocked shots. We challenged some things.”

“But for the most part in particular a good stretch of the first half we kept the ball in front of us. We were able to rebound it. They did a better job in the second half of using the high ball screen to get down on us a few times, which was too easy, and we got to do better at guarding the ball. And I think Phinisee would help a lot in that area guarding the high ball screen. That's where he normally is. But we're getting more experience. Clearly, adrenaline plays a little bit of a role here. But after, I told those guys, first eight minutes you're going to feel different. And the first four minutes it felt different. You couldn't make a pass, you can't do this. And you have to be able to just say, okay, keep going, play through it, find a way. And I thought our guys did a really good job after those first four minutes of not, all right, we got the first one out of the way, now we can go back out here and keep going. Then from that point forward I thought we competed pretty well.”

Q. I asked Devonte about two of the shots he hit. There was one, I think, he kind of spun at the top of the key and managed to somehow hit one. And then there was the other three that he tried to really sell the foul, didn't get it and somehow hit it anyway. He said that, basically, he practices those shots. So I guess my question is, does he really? And when he does, does he actually make them?

“He practices them if he said he practices them. He doesn't practice them with me. And there isn't any drill that you're going to do to do that. But that's the gift of the game, you know what I mean? Sometimes it's not about -- it's about guys going out there and playing. He made some plays tonight that I was just like, wow, obviously, you get taken a back by it. But there were also some plays that he made that you would like to have back. He's got to be able to secure that ball for us in that type of game a little bit better where it's just can't turn it over a few times. But that's the type of kind of guy he is. To be honest with you, those are the games he relishes, are those things when he can have the ball in his hands and make those kind of shots.”

“Now, you'll go to Wisconsin and it will be a completely different feeling in Wisconsin and, you know, he's got to be able to adjust to the next game. But he's playing well. He's a little bit hobbled right now, to be honest with you. But he stepped up tonight and he played as well as he's played all year long. And this is the kind of thing that we talked about in the off-season with him. He's got to be a playmaker for us. You're going to have to live with some of the stuff that he does because he is gifted and he is talented and he can make shots and you're going to need that kind of guy to do some of these things. And you have seen it a lot over college basketball the last few years, guys emerge, they're even seniors, they have great years. And so we talked about that with him. He's got an opportunity right now on a good team, in my opinion. He's got a team that can get better, too, but he's got a team that's a good team. And we can be, we can be a team that can play with a lot of heart this year. We have a lot of different guys, I think, they can do things. But he's sort of the head of the snake when the pressures on. And he's

going to have to be able to make some of those plays, and he knows that. We talked a lot about that in the off-season.”

Q. To follow up on that: When Devonte's answering the bell, like you talked about pressure moments, and he's getting more points than minutes played, in your eyes, what's really going well over the course of the whole game for him?

“I think the ball's going in. Just in general, Devonte's always been a guy, I think, that's wired to score. He values it. It's been something that we have struggled with him at times, that early in games he doesn't make a few shots or things go bad, don't get down on himself. He knows this year he doesn't really, he doesn't have a fear of things going bad because he's got to be out there. He's got to play. He knows that some of the stuff we'll live with, some of the stuff we're trying to get him better at, at times. I think Rob can, obviously, take the load off of him and Al's back here a little bit where they can get off the ball a little bit. But to me, Devonte's at his best, obviously, I think when he's scoring. I think when he scores then he starts to play the game a lot better. And he started breaking their press in the first half, he starts to get the bigs involved behind the basket, he makes a couple drive-to-kick plays for other guys. He was good tonight, man, I mean he really was.”

Q. Same topic, but let's get more precise about this one. In the second half he had a stretch there where he was the best player on both teams, actually. What was that like? You want to leave him in, but he's killing you, but he's also killing them.

“It's a good question. He was the best player on the floor tonight without question. He dominated the game in a lot of different ways. But there are just those times when he's got to let go of the ball. It's just the first open pass at times, especially against the pressure teams. When you start over-dribbling then it gets crazy, and he had a couple there in the second half. A post feed to Trayce was one. He's got to be able to trust that he can get rid of it and get it back at times. But sometimes, I think, the staff, you'll be like, you know, it's feast or famine type of thing. But to me, he's got to feast. He's got to be out there. He really does in the big games. And you're going to live with some mistakes, like I said, especially some of the ones that are out of aggression. But there's some things in situational basketball, time and score, slow down the game a little bit, things are getting crazy, those are the ones you wish you could take one or two of them back for him, think the game just a little bit more for him.”

“But we're not going to worry about that. We need his confidence, and at the end of the day he's a character. He really is.”

Q. You touched on this in different places but with so many newcomers and people in larger roles on this team compared to last season, what did you guys prove about yourself in your first big game with so much opponents not of Florida State's caliber beforehand?

“I think that's the thing. This wasn't the first big game. For a lot of these guys the first game was the big game. Every game that we played to this date has been a big game. I think they're all learning, they're all trying to do well. And there's a lot different guys searching for their niche on the team. And I think this was the opportunity to put all the individual stuff -- we haven't had much of it -- out the window because this is the one you want to win. This is, like, all eyes are on you and you want to show that you belong. And I thought our team showed that they belonged tonight. There was a lot of guys that went in there and made mistakes, but there was a lot of guys that went in there and did some good things that probably didn't show on the stat sheet. And have you Armaan and Trayce as true freshman. Joey's playing his first year here. That's not easy. And then you have Jerome, who is basically a true freshman running around out. Race was hurt. Didn't play all year last year basically. He's in there playing. Damezi is in there as a sophomore playing. De'Ron couldn't get on track tonight but eventually he's going to get back. And I think that's the quest for this team is to have the strength in numbers and the development of winning means more than anything that's going on. And I think if you want to be a part of something like this tonight, stay with it, because I think that's the group that we have right now. That's been the group that we have talked about very early before we started this season how we had to play, how we're going to have to do it. And at the end of the day, there can't be any compromise on that. And I think they know that and that's not going to change.”

Q. It was 11-4 early, Florida State seemed like they had all the momentum and then Armaan hit a big three. What did you think of his play today?

“Yeah, I think it was talked about earlier, he grew up tonight. He played on a big-time stage and a big environment and made big plays. He made some things happen that weren't probably visible to the spectator as much as they were to our staff. He hit a huge couple huge drive to passes in the game. When you play against an unbelievable shot blocking team and a team that's that talented, if you go to the basket and you get your shot blocked off the back board it's like a run out. Part of it is when you drive, man, you got to bring them all in and then you got to be able to deliver. And he delivered a couple great passes. He stuck a big shot that rimmed in in the first half, that was obviously a big one, and I think at the end of the day he was able to handle the ball against a lot of pressure tonight, which was good to see. He needed a shot of confidence too because, like all young guys, man, you worry about like getting off to a good start and you want to make a shot and at the end of the day coach is on me every second of the day to do this and that and next thing you know you lose a little juice. I thought tonight he played sturdy, he showed some calmness to him he competed and this should be something that he looks at all the way down the line that says to myself, I can, I belong out there, I got to keep working and getting better, but I belong out there. And I would add Trayce the same way as a freshman. He's a young dude out there playing against a big front line and to me he was out there competing. And that's the fun thing is to see these guys so early in their careers having an impact.”

Q. Saw Phinisee pregame in a boot. Is that a new injury or something that he's been kind of dealing with?

“Rob was back at practice yesterday and looked great. He did. He looked great. And then he turned his ankle in a one-on-one drill, which inevitably is a little bit of bad luck for him. Probably maybe could have got in there tonight, definitely would have probably been ready to move in to maybe this weekend or next week. This ankle is going to slow him down just a little bit. But good spirits otherwise and he's looked good so hopefully now he's just got to get through this ankle and get him back and whenever it is we get him back, obviously we become a little bit better in my opinion.”

Q. Another guy that felt like maybe got a little bit of a confidence boost, Damezi had some moments where it felt like defensively things were really kind of clicking into place for him.

“He was ready to play. I knew he was ready to play on Sunday. I knew he was ready to play on Sunday. He worked out on Sunday for a good 30, 40 minutes and I mean no one was more excited for him to be in the gym at 4 o'clock on a Sunday afternoon and he was ready to play. He was excited and he brought the physicality that we needed. In this type of game that type of size on the perimeter, you're not going to be able to get away with three small people out there and for him to be able to do his 20 minutes -- and he guarded, to me, he guarded a lot of good players and he hung in there, used his sturdy frame, he was able to really hang in there for us, which is what he's been doing, he's getting more comfortable and Jerome's the same way, Jerome just is basically brand new as well and he's trying to find his way as well, once he gets in there and gets a little more experience, I could see where we can play small and do some things with those guys out there. But Damezi can shoot and he's a good shooter and he's really shooting the ball well for us every day in practice it was good for him to stick that last one, to be able to knock that last one down, that was a big shot for our team in general because he can shoot the ball for us. So he's another added guy out there that I think helps stretch the floor a little bit.”

Indiana Players – Trayce Jackson-Davis, Devonte Green, and Justin Smith

Q. Devonte, give us your overall view of how things were flowing tonight for you?

DEVONTE GREEN: “I think every player feels a hot hand – it's just something you feel. I can't explain it, it's just a feel thing. Shots were dropping tonight so I guess I just had the hot hand.”

Q. With the offense more broadly, Devonte, I'm sure their length caused you guys more problems than you would like with the turnovers but in terms of points per possession, the efficiency, the way you got to the free-throw line, what was working across the court for you guys in both halves offensively?

DEVONTE GREEN: “I think, we just we found open teammates, we drove to kick a lot and the pressure was tough. But we stayed as poised as possible.”

Q. Talk about staying poised. It didn't seem like mistakes bothered you guys too much tonight. Do you think that's fair?

DEVONTE GREEN: "We knew this team would cause turnovers, we knew turnovers were going to happen in this game, and we knew we just had to move on to the next play."

Q. For any of you guys: Just the crowd that you had out there, any thoughts on just how they were able to feed you?

JUSTIN SMITH: "They brought a lot of energy. They really helped us when we were going on a couple runs. And when they started coming back, they really gave us energy. And I mean, this is the best place to play basketball in college basketball. So they helped us a lot tonight and we were able to get the win."

Q. This is for Tayven Jackson's older brother. This is the first time you played against somebody, you played size, but you haven't played that many athletic, big, NBA-type bodies. How did you feel out there?

TRAYCE JACKSON-DAVIS: "I thought I felt good. Really big compliments to my teammates for putting me in open positions to score. I got to the line well tonight. Didn't drop as many as I should have but just got to keep working at it. But credit to Florida State because they're a great team and they wreaked havoc and we handled that pretty well."

Q. This is for Justin and Devonte: Can you guys both discuss what you learned through the course of last season's ups and downs to get to the point where you are now to be playing both as well as you are now?

JUSTIN SMITH: "I would say that you can't dwell on the mistakes. You can't worry about what people are saying about you. You can't, you just got to have a next-play mentality. And when your head is clear then things start going your way. And we put a lot of work in in the off-season and it's paying off right now."

DEVONTE GREEN: "Just to add on to that, I think it's just maturity, having experience under our belt. And like he said, we put a lot of work in. So just trusting in the work that we put in that it's going to pay off."

Q. Devonte, Florida State came out swinging early. They were swinging throughout the second half. When you're checking back into the game for the second half, what's going through your mind?

DEVONTE GREEN: "Let's win this game."

Q. Devonte, I want to ask you about two individual shots, like, late in the second half. Basically, there was the, I don't know if it was a pull-up, but kind of that spinning jumper right on top of the foul line. And then the one where you were kind of trying to sell the foul on the three-point shot and managed to put it together. Take me through each of those. How did you manage to pull that off?

DEVONTE GREEN: "I practice those shots. So, and also they hack, we hack a lot in practice, so I'm used to getting fouled. So I thought it was a foul, but if not, it's all right. It went in anyway."

Q. Justin and Trayce: I just want to get your guys' thoughts. When Devonte gets going like that, kind of, is it, I mean, have you guys seen this a lot in practice? I know, he's had a really good games, but when he gets going like that, what do you think?

JUSTIN SMITH: "I tell him to keep shooting, but I tell him to take good shots."

DEVONTE GREEN: "Every shot is a good shot. (Laughing)."

JUSTIN SMITH: "All right. But, I mean, when he's hot, he doesn't miss. In practice, in games, he's a microwave, so just got to let him keep playing."

Q. When you see him get going like that, you think what?

TRAYCE JACKSON-DAVIS: "Green light. That's what I think. Every time."

Q. Devonte, what is it like on the flip side? On the one end, you're scoring and doing all this stuff, but when you're not scoring you had some turnovers there in the second half. You were, what are you thinking, is it, you're either, it's a home run or a strike out for you for about 15 minutes there. What's that like?

"Like I said, they are a good defensive team. They bring a lot of pressure and they cause a lot of turnovers. I just, like I said also earlier, I just got to stay poised and move on to the next play because I know turnovers are going to happen and especially against the way they play defense. So I mean, I just say move on to the next play and adjust to my mistake."

Q. Justin, what would you say as far as your team's defensive intensity today? It seemed like you guys were pretty locked in on that end of the floor.

"Yeah, I mean, we have taken big, big strides in the last couple games defensively. This was our first time playing where we had the atmosphere we had a bigger team that we were playing against, a lot of different players who do a lot of different things. So, and especially in the first half, we really rose to the challenge. And in the second half we kind of got away from it at the beginning, but we were able to really buckle down and get defensive stops when it really mattered the most."

Q. Trayce, you've kind of been asked a similar question to this, but were you itching to face competition like this? You came to Indiana to play teams like this?

"Really, we're just focused on each game one at a time. Just have that mindset of just whatever team's in front of us we're going to play as hard as we can and then we're going to move on to the next one and then to the next one and then to the next one and that's our mentality. We're not going to take and overlook any team. And there's just another team on our schedule and we just have to bring our all every game."

Q. For Justin or Trayce: 35-25 rebounding margin. Coach said this was a game that was going to come down to the boards. What kind of physical mindset did both you guys take inside there?

"Box out. They bring four or five to the glass. So we really had to focus on boxing our man out, especially the bigger guys. And then going after the balls, not just letting them bounce. Bringing them in with two hands and being aggressive on the glass."

Q. To follow-up on that more broadly, I think Ken Pomeroy had these guys No. 1 in the country in average height. A lot was talked about their length around the rim. You guys have talked about how versatile you feel like you can be when you go big. Was there a bit of, I guess, a prove it mentality tonight, whether it be in rebounding, you outscored them in the paint as well, I think you had a couple big blocks in the second half, just a feeling of we're not going to, nobody's going to be able to match our height, I guess.

"I mean a lot of people have been saying, like, we have been facing littler teams. How are they going to do against the big dogs? Well, you witnessed it, so I would just say that we just got to play hard and just do our thing."

Q. For anyone one of the three of you guys: In three key stretches, 12-0 run, 9-0 run, then they close with a kick. You guys really made them play in the half court. How much of an emphasis was that in this game?

"I think it was a big emphasis. We knew they were a transition team. They scored off of forcing turnovers and also off crashing the offensive glass and we knew if we could just get them to play in the half court it would be to our advantage."