



COACHES QUOTES

FLORIDA STATE 54, VIRGINIA 50

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 15, 2020

DONALD L. TUCKER CENTER, TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA

FLORIDA STATE HEAD COACH LEONARD HAMILTON

OPENING STATEMENT:

“Obviously this was a tremendously challenging game for us -- playing against the team that has consistently been number one field goal percentage defensive team in the country. They showed us why they lead the nation in field goal percentage defense. They stripped the ball from us, they bottled us up, they made it very difficult for us to get high percentage shots -- but that’s what they do. They are a very good team, we tried several different schemes and they were very well prepared for just about everything we did. We were very fortunate that we had some guys knock down some shots from the perimeter. On the offensive end, it’s very seldom done in the last number of years that we have won a game when the opposing team outscores us 30-14 in the paint. We’re a different team than what we’ve been in the past, that’s why we’re proud of our guys. We kept utilizing small lineups, big lineups, and our guys maintained their composure and came through then toward the end. This will be a tremendous learning experience for us because there are not very many times you play against a team that was that locked in. I told our guys before the game that we were playing the University of Virginia at a time when I felt would be one of the most focused times of their year in the fact that they had lost two games in a row and the legacy that they’ve created. The consistency with their success is well-documented. We knew that we would get their very best performance tonight and I was not disappointed in that analogy. That is why I feel so fortunate and pleased that we were able to come away with the victory. Some people will say this was not a very pretty game but it was beautiful to me. There are times when you can have your typical ACC blowout, that’s about four points- I keep reminding you guys that 70 percent of our ACC games are decided by four points or less- and this was a typical, knockdown drag-out game. We’ll see them again in a couple of weeks and hopefully we’ll make some adjustments, because I know they will. We can enjoy this victory for about a few hours here but then we have to start preparing for the next ACC contest.”

On Anthony Polite in the first half and the courage it took to take the corner three-pointer to tie the game:

“Anthony exudes confidence. A lot of the mindset, I looked in his eyes as a freshman, and it seems to be leaving him rapidly. He’s comfortable. He’s a Seminole through and through. He’s unselfish, he plays hard every possession, he spends a lot of time in the gym getting shots up, and when he shoots the ball I think everyone who sees him looks at him and sees that he shoots the ball with a lot of confidence. The good thing about his teammates is that they all have a lot of confidence in him. We went to an all guard lineup there basically toward the end of the game because we felt that they were bottling us up so much inside that we needed to have our best shooters on the floor. He came through for us.”

On the team’s defensive performance in big moments:

“Believe me, I have no intentions of saving the defense for those types of moments. I think that Virginia did a very good job of executing their game plan and it was very challenging for us from a defensive standpoint. I thought we stuck with it. We got some deflections, got some steals, created some indecision on their part, and were able to turn the ball away 18 times. That’s the way you have to play against certain people. If I felt the game was in doubt there for a majority of the game, the game could’ve gone either way. We just got some stops- a big block by Pat there in transition. A lot of guys seem to be growing up and learning. I’ll remind you that in some ways Virginia and Florida State are similar in the fact that we lost six players and they lost three or four guys to the professional ranks, so we

both are growing, and learning, and developing and I'm just glad that we were able to win while we are working on growing and trying to improve."

On how Virginia guarded Trent Forrest and the plays he made down the stretch defensively:

"We all have each other's films, we all have statistical analysis and we all have tendencies on each other. They wanted to force Trent to go left because they just didn't want him to go right so their scheme was to make him play on the left side of the floor. Trent had plenty of opportunities in their but they did a very good job of what we call 'stripping' on the drive. Not many schools are efficient in those areas, and they were able to do it without fouling. Trent got in there, in the lane, but because of their defensive schemes and how they are trained, they created some problems for him. He had shots right at the basket but their defensive schemes are created to challenge us and sometimes you just have to give people credit for what they're doing. This team does not lead the nation in field goal percentage defense consistently year in and year out without being a challenge for teams like us who are still learning, growing, and trying to develop some consistency with each other. That's why I feel very fortunate that we were able to come away with this victory, and we got the film to go back and evaluate and see what kind of adjustments we can make and hopefully we can be better prepared for them. I thought that their effort was excellent, I thought they played with a sense of urgency, and there were periods in the game where I thought we matched that. We had several possessions where I thought that we were able to force turnovers and get some easy baskets in transition as a result of getting some deflections or steals and I thought that made the difference in the game. In the half court we were struggling a bit until right there at the end when we were able to make some plays again."

On whether the players react differently due to the awareness of the rivalry and the status of Virginia as defending National Champions:

"That's one thing that's good about our team, we are in a good place mentally, we aren't getting caught up with the hype. We still have an empty feeling in our stomach, the feeling of coming up short last year. The fact that Phil (Cofer) and David (Nichols) did not have an opportunity to participate in the NCAA tournament unfortunately after what happened to Phil and we feel like last year probably could've been our year. So we understand that this is fragile that every game is important and we can't get caught up with where we are ranked and the fact that now people are coming to see us play and we have to respect them and be honored but the reality is that we have keep chopping wood, have keep stacking victories on top of victories, in order for our season to be meaningful and to enjoy the fruits of our labor we need to continue keep winning. How many games have we won in the league? (Five) Nobody is going to the NCAA tournament with five ACC victories, that doesn't sit well with the committee so we have to enjoy this for a moment then understand reality is what it is, we have to continue to keep winning and then hopefully win at the end of the season then we can answer that."

On the home atmosphere and the different it makes in the result of a close game like tonight's:

"That's no doubt that it has an effect on the game. The atmosphere, the experience of the game I think people leave feeling like they were part of a victory and that's what we've been trying to build, a team that is that worthy of attention and support, but we want to keep it that way to be consistent night in and night out we just want to continue to keep winning. Over the last three to four years I don't know what our record is but we haven't lost that man games at home. I think that the fans help us, we are doing something that they want to see."

On Trent's big block and how he impacts the game:

"He's a stat stuffer. That sounds pretty good stat stuffer, is that word? Is it in the dictionary? Check Webster out, but that's Trent's MO, since he was a freshman, he is such an unselfish guy, he never loses his poise, he's confident, he's scored over 3000 points (in high school) but he makes winning plays, winning stops, the comments that he makes, the communication with his teammates, and the trust that he has earned as a result of his character on and off the court, and his consistent communication with the guys, there is nothing that he does that surprises me so we go how he goes."