



Coaches Quotes

Florida State 85, Notre Dame 84

Saturday, January 25, 2020

Donald L. Tucker Center, Tallahassee, Florida

Florida State Head Coach Leonard Hamilton

Opening Statement:

"I thought we had moments in the game where we played very good basketball and I thought we had moments in the game where our inexperience showed and I thought it almost cost us. We had a moments in the beginning of the game, I thought we started off kind of slow. It was more our defense than it was anything else. I don't think we played with the kind of energy that we normally have been accustomed to. You have to give Notre Dame credit. I thought they were very sharp in the beginning of the game. They moved the ball faster. Their offense was moving faster than our defense. But I thought we made some adjustments, mentally and emotionally more than we did physically. I thought we got some fresher guys in there and played very good basketball for probably the rest of the half. At the end of the game, if you would have told me we had an 11-point lead and then we get five point-blank layups, I'd take that. But we missed those layups and then all of a sudden now you're questioning what you're doing and what's going on. That's the nature of the challenges and the competitiveness of the teams in the ACC. You have to finish those plays and we didn't and what should've been some working margin becomes a very, very close game. Obviously the turnover at the beginning of the game was a mistake. That play was made but I am very proud of the team because even though we are a team that is still growing and maturing, we are finding ways to win games. Sooner or later we are going to reach out potential and right now we are a little ways away from that. I thought Notre Dame demonstrated to us why they are one of the best three-point shooting teams in the country. They started off, about the first ten minutes they were shooting 63% from the floor. We were very fortunate that in the first half they were shooting 37% from the floor. Wyatt Wilkes came in the absence of Patrick Williams, gave us tremendous lift. I told our guys a couple of weeks ago that before he leaves here, he'll go down as one of the all-time best shooters in the history of our program, but he is showing his potential. I thought we had a lot of guys step up and make contributions. I was glad to see Balsa back. I thought he gave a full account of his set. RaiQuan (Gray) came out the second half and gave us a tremendous lift that we really needed, with exception of those point-blank layups that he missed down the stretch along with one or two that Trent missed. That's the nature of the ACC. I feel very, very fortunate to come with a victory is a lot better to make your adjustments and be critical of the progress you are making when you win as opposed to trying to correct yourself after a loss."

On what it will take to go far in the NCAA Tournament:

"We can't worry about the NCAA tournament in the middle of January. What we can worry about is our preparation for each game. The adjustment we have to make to understand when you get that type of recognition, you are going to increase the intensity of focus and you are going to get everyone's best shot. That's an adjustment we are going to have to make. Now what you see sometimes on film and then when you get to the game, guys are going to turn it up a notch and that's the greatest thing about the ACC. Every night out, if you are not at your very best for 40 minutes, you can come away with a loss. We just keep trying to find ways and we keep making enough plays for us to win while we are learning. I am very proud

of our guys.”

On accomplishments of the team:

“I think we have an outstanding level of chemistry. I think we share the ball, share playing time, the guys cheer for one another, no one really cares who gets the credit and that is a tribute to them, their character and how strong of a Seminole these guys are. They represent what the unconquered spirit is supposed to be. I am very proud of these guys, but we still have a lot of short comings. We still are improving. We have one senior. We have a transfer that’s a senior and then the rest of our guys are either Sophomores or First-year players. That’s why I feel like we’ve got a tremendous opportunity here, available for us. We just continue to keep growing and not allow ourselves to be affected by anything, like maybe not finishing the game very strong. We’ve got to enjoy this victory for maybe 30 minutes. Now we have to go in and prepare ourselves against, what I know is a very, very tough game in Charlottesville on Tuesday.”

On Anthony Polite’s abilities as a defender:

“He’s a legacy youngster. The Seminole spirit is in his heart. He’s a great representative of what a student athlete is supposed to be about. But more than anything else, he has a tremendous amount of pride in representing the garnet and gold. He’s a warrior. He’s always positive. He does all of the dirty work, he does everything you ask him to do. He’s a good student athlete. He conducts himself well, on and off the court and I just think that he’s the kind of guy that you have to be proud of because he comes to work and gives tremendous effort night-in and night-out. Now he plays with a lot of confidence. He realizes that he is an integral part of my team and he’s really going to get better and better as we move through his career.”

On stopping Notre Dame’s John Moody:

“That was a tremendous emphasis, no doubt about that. We have a tremendous amount of respect for him. When you watch films of him, when you watch how he has tremendous instincts with long arms. We double-team rebounded him when we blocked him out. I thought Balsa (Koprivica), Malik (Osborne) and Dominik (Olejniczak) did a really good job, but we switch one through five. A lot of times we would have a point guard or a perimeter guy were on him and I thought they did a very good job of blocking him out. He’s a tremendous athlete. He has tremendous instincts. It is almost like he knows where the ball is going to go when it leaves someone’s hands. You have to give the guy a lot of credit, who has that type of basketball skill.”

On Wyatt Wilkes developing confidence:

“Wyatt is probably one of the more knowledgeable players on our team. Not only does he know what he is supposed to do but he has a basketball IQ, where he helps all of his teammates on a consistent basis, doing what they are supposed to do. He’s always down, he’s always positive. Our guys have been spending an awful lot of time in the gym getting shots up and we realize that the nature of the games that we have been playing, you’ve got to lock down those perfect shots. All of the teams that we play against are all doing a pack-line type defensive scheme against us, where they pack the lane and we realize we have to shoot the ball a little bit better from the perimeter. I thought that made a big difference tonight.”

On Wyatt Wilkes’s performance:

“I was just so happy for him because he has put the time in. But there’s no doubt that his teammates, they all have a tremendous amount of confidence in him. I think that you’ve just seen the tip of the iceberg. We’ve just got to keep staying focused, keep staying focused on the moment. Understand that we are seven and one and we’ve got to be realistic. In order for us to have some opportunities at the end of the year, we have to keep stacking on. When you look at our schedule, look back at the season, we’ve won a lot of close games. That means we are fundamentally sound, we spend a lot of time working on situations, we’ve been finding ways to create those little extra moments where you are able to make a play or two to win games. Trent has too. His free throws gave us a little bit, gave us a little working margin. This team is finding ways to win and we still have not come close to reaching our potential.”

On Florida State's Maturity

"Well that's part of the journey. We lost six players last year, we got six new guys we are trying to work in. But this team believes in themselves, they believe in the system, they believe in each other. Now is not the time to start taking any bows fellas. We have got 12 more games to play. Unfortunately, in the ACC, 70% of the games are decided by four points or less and we are right in the middle of it. We've just got to keep trying to find ways to win and hopefully while we continue to improve and maybe we will have some opportunities to be proud of at the end of the season."

On Balsa Koprivica's first game back:

"We really didn't know that we were going to have the availability of his service until probably middle of the week. He's pain-free. He has an unusual type of energy. When the doctors came in in the middle of the week and said "show me the X-Rays", I'm not trying to play doctor, its just sometimes I am a little more cautious than what I should be because I want to make sure that we had him for the remainder of the season. But he felt good and we felt good about his ability to contribute. He was a little rusty tonight, no doubt about that. But that's part of the process. He's young, he's still growing and maturing. I feel very confident that he's going to be an excellent player before he leaves Florida State."

On atmosphere in the final seconds:

"I think we needed every yell that was coming from the folks in the stands. We needed all the energy we could muster. That ball was bouncing around, and I was on the sideline praying. So prayers were answered tonight."

On being undefeated at home:

"I think that's one thing that our guys take a lot of pride in, the fact that we've lost three games since the end of the 2015-2016 season. That's a tremendous accomplishment. But a lot of credit has to go to the fans and the support we've gotten from the athletic department, administration and the support we got from our fans. It makes a huge difference when the games on the line, when the energy that you receive from the fans is, you know, a part of the game. I'm so happy that we've given people a little dose of the same medicine that we get when we go on the road. I said it's just what the doctor ordered."

On goals during practice:

"Obviously, we want to defend, we want to play hard, we want to play unselfish. Those are the three things that we built our program on. Our guys are responding to that A lot of media types are asking me how we keep guys happy with all in certain minutes. Well that's kind of who we are and that's how we built our program. We recruit guys who want to be a part of making a difference. Each one of the guys on our team, including the guys who are walk-ons make a difference in who we are. I see things growing and maturing and our practices are spirited. Our guys cheer for one another. We are in a good place; we just have to make sure we keep winning. There are a lot of teams that were in the top five in the beginning of the season that are no longer there. We've got to keep it real. Every game is important. We've got to enjoy this moment. Tomorrow we will come in and debrief this game. Then we meet and start preparing for Virginia, we won't physically do a whole lot but we will do a lot of film work, do a lot of walk-throughs because road games during this time of the year are very, very important. Every time you get a road victory, that is an added plus. We know we are going to get their best shot; we just have to bring our A game to Charlottesville."

On the team's full potential:

"Let's just wait and see. I don't have a crystal ball but I think that we have shown that we have potential. I just want to stay focused, keep doing the things that have gotten us to this point. I don't want to be emotional one way or the other, we still have a long ways to go."