

Coaches Quotes

Florida State 56, Virginia 61

Tuesday, January 28, 2020

John Paul Jones Arena

Virginia Head Coach Tony Bennett

On finishing a close ACC game:

"I think we've been in a lot [of close ACC games]. You get to those stretches in the game, and if you've played, you understand it or if you've watched the game, it comes down to making plays. You have to make your free throws. You have to make a play – Kihei made some wonderful plays. Offensively, you have to bang a shot. You have to make a block. You have to do some things. Offense matters to an extent, but it comes down to making plays. Tonight, we did that. We did it with a couple of big stops, free throws, and I thought Kihei was terrific. It's a lot of pressure going against [Florida State], of course we were a little sloppy with some of the turnovers, but it felt good because it was a hard-fought game and those young men battled. They've been battling, and they've been close in a lot of [games]. This is a heck of a team and I liked what I saw, so we'll take that and move on."

On overcoming the pressure of the moment:

"We've had two really good games against [FSU] We've been in all the games we've lost. We've been right there... We didn't flinch. We weren't perfect, but enough big plays were made. You've got to do that down the stretch. You can't win those games unless you take the moment and make a tough play."

On Kihei Clark's play:

"[Florida State] forces you to make plays. When you play against teams that switch one through five on ball screens, one through five on off-ball screens, they take away the passes, you have to make the plays. We worked really hard on getting in there and trying to play off two feet... At times we did that well and at times we didn't, and that's when we turned it over. You have to have a go at it. If you're not going to attack, you're going to stand out there. Kihei took a couple of those threes that were tough, a couple were ok, but he had to and you just have to figure it out. Obviously, with his size, that makes it challenging, but I thought he was excellent today. He did the same stuff at Florida State, but he learned from some of his errors and even some of his errors early on in the game, and he kept getting better and better."

Virginia Sophomore Guard Kihei Clark

On being able to finish at the rim:

"When the big switched on to me, I thought we did a good job of spacing. At times I tried a jump stop but they just stuck with the shooters and weren't really helping. There were a couple times when I drove that Braxton was able to get back doors which allowed us to get some easy buckets, and then late, I had the up and under and I knew that 10 [Malik Osborne] wasn't going to jump and I was able to finish it."

On having confidence to keep driving to the hoop:

"I put in the work. I know that I can finish layups, so I just keep shooting them and don't get discouraged and play with confidence."

On how experiencing tight games throughout the season has prepared them for a night like tonight:

"It always helps because we've been in that situation a few times. We just try to execute down the stretch and this just goes to show that you can pull out any game if you stick together."

Virginia Senior Guard Braxton Key

On confidence in the game plan:

"I just thought after we lost to them, we knew we could've come out with a win in that game. We've dropped a lot of late games, and today we knew we were going to turn the ball over against a team like that, so we were just trying

to limit the turnovers to as minimal as possible. I think 17 (turnovers) was the number tonight with 11 assists, and against a team like that, that's a win. Still, we could be a little more sound, but we were forcing a lot of guys to make tougher shots. Last game, Polite, he killed us. He was 4-for-4 from three. Today, I don't think he made one three, so we were just trying to contain some of the guys that played big last time."

On out-rebounding Florida State by 13:

"It's huge. Every game that's something we pride ourselves on, with Mamadi, Jay, Papi (Caffaro), myself and Kihei sometimes... we take a lot of pride in getting rebounds. We just know that if we get a rebound that stops the team from scoring and we can get it to our offense, and if we get offensive rebounds, we get second chance points at the rim or kick-out threes. It was big to be able to beat them by 13, that's huge."

Virginia Redshirt Senior Forward Mamadi Diakite

On Tony Bennett's energy on the sideline:

"He knows he has to take every little play, defensively and offensively. When the refs don't call what they're supposed to call, it kind of hurt us a little bit. As leaders we didn't care. I was telling him not to worry about it and that we were going to get them defensively."

On his confidence level during his late game free throws:

"Elite Eight last year, Final Four, we've been there and that's the reason that we were all clutch today."

On his three-point shooting:

"I keep telling the young guys, the old guys know it already, to shoot the ball whenever they get it. I remember at practice, Kihei [Clark] telling me that I am like a conscious to the guys. I was trying to get to my sweet spot which is posting up down low on the block, but they were doubling me. So I was just going to take what the defense was giving me. That is what Kihei did. That's what Braxton [Key] did."