



#### **Coaches Quotes**

**Florida State 80, Syracuse 77**  
**Saturday, February 15, 2020**  
**Donald L. Tucker Center**  
**Tallahassee, Florida**

#### **Florida State Head Coach Leonard Hamilton**

"I've known coach (Jim) Boeheim for a very long time, and he has developed a defensive system that is very challenging for almost everyone who goes against it. Being in the big east with them for 10 years, going against them today was very challenging for us because each time we made adjustments in our offensive system, they made adjustments in their defensive system. We were kind of keeping each other off balance. Fortunately, in the second half we were able to get a little separation and it gave us a chance to win the game. I can't say enough about M.J. (Walker), to get a cut like he got and 12 stitches which is an awful lot of stitches to have to recover from. When you have to get all those shots, for him to come back out and represent his team in that fashion with no fear, a lot of confidence and aggressiveness says a lot about his will, his desire, his toughness. But more than anything else the culture that we have been able to develop; that he wanted to get back in there and help his team. The game was kind of in doubt and he put us on his shoulders and made the good plays down the stretch; that says an awful lot about him. The quality of the depth of our team obviously, raised its head today, everybody who came in gave us some contribution. I thought the quality of our depth really, really stood out. The thing I like about this team is that we still aren't hitting on all cylinders. We have asked this team to elevate their game, their focus, whatever sacrifice they have to make, so we can get closer to reaching our potential. The first half, I thought our inexperience showed with some of our first-year guys, we were not quite executing as well. But then in the end of the first half, we forced two turnovers, got a couple easy baskets from our defense, hit a couple threes, and were able to grow some separation, but I want you guys to understand the ACC is in as competitive of a year that I've ever seen. It doesn't matter if the school is ranked, if you play them at home or on the road; an ACC blowout is a four-point victory and I think we got a 3-point victory today and you have take it with a smile and move on to the next game. We have Pittsburgh coming in here on Tuesday, and they taught us a really good lesson early in the season."

#### **Was Devin Vassell an injury situation and do you expect him to be back on Tuesday night?**

"I think you guys have been around me long enough to know that I don't talk about injuries if a kid doesn't play, I don't want to acknowledge it one way or another and that's it."

#### **How does your offensive action have to change when you have a long stretch of time with players like M.J. Walker and Devin Vassell not being able to be on the court?**

"Sometimes we have a short corner attack, sometimes we have a middle of the lane attack, and sometimes we have a free throw line attack, and there are sometimes where we try to get all of it working together, where we can penetrate and create, and we aren't quite there yet to be very honest with you. Our system, when it's on point, you can look for all of those things at the same time and we aren't quite there yet. Right now, this is probably the first or maybe the second time we have played against zone we weren't quite as sharp as I would've liked us to have been. They've (Syracuse) have got one of the best defensive systems in the country. That's why I feel we were making progress, because I thought our guys adjusted and followed our lead and we got some baskets in real quick time. For instance, we put Dominik (Olejniczak) in the game and his job was to keep the five occupied and we got some baseline shots and penetration. Earlier in the game we had Trent (Forrest) at the free throw line, his job was to create for other people, and he made a couple. But they kept adjusting and we had to keep adjusting."

**It seems like Patrick Williams has been able to kind of start to move into that short corner shot in the second half has that been something you're focusing on**

"Patrick is a superior athlete. He kind of plays in a space sometimes that is difficult for other people to play in, and he got some rebounds, some power in his legs and he created a lot of havoc. For him to get 17 points, in a closely contested game it says a lot about his progress. He is growing up in front of our eyes and I think the best is yet to come, I think he has only scratched the surface of his potential."

**You alluded to your team having depth on the bench as well, and you had three players score in double digits with Trent Forrest, M.J. Walker, and Patrick Williams. Can you describe how each one was able to impact the game individually?**

"I think everyone stepped up and gave us something. RaiQuan Gray was 0-8 (shooting) but he gave us 10 rebounds, he wasn't having a good offensive night. I thought that Malik (Osborne) came in and gave us a lot of energy, he got a couple big rebounds. Dominik (Olejniczak) came in, caught a lob or two, and him being able to be big and strong and physical inside and give us that energy, I thought made a big difference as well. I thought that this was a team victory today, and hopefully we can grow from this."

**At halftime did you know that M.J. Walker would be able to come back, what were you told at halftime?**

"We were told that he would be able to come back but when you're sewing someone up with 12 stitches, you have to be real careful that you do it correctly. At first they told us it was four stitches and I wanted to know what was taking so long. That's that coach talk. However, when I realized it was 12 stitches, I had a game where I had nine and I know what it's like and it's not easy to come back in there and be clear, that is one of the reasons I was a little reluctant to put him back in this early. I wanted him to sit there a little bit and hope that the shots wear off. And he came up big, 5-9 from 3 in a critical game like this was, it says a lot about him you know, he might be the toughest guy in the gym today, besides from his coach."

**M.J. Walker has had a lot of moments this year where he has been hobbled -- an ankle here, a knee there, and now a lip, but he keeps coming back, what does that say about him**

"It says a lot about his character, his will and desire for his team to win. But more than anything else it says a lot about the culture that we have, he wanted to support his team. That's growing right in front of our eyes as well. The culture, the togetherness, the unity, the unselfish spirit that we are playing with, and to see this many guys come off the bench. When you see 32, 16, 14, 12 minutes, contributions from the bench, it made a big difference in the game. And hopefully, sometimes we will all be playing well at the same time, I'm looking forward to that."

**Today's home win marked the 20<sup>th</sup> consecutive home win for the Seminoles. How would you describe the atmosphere of the civic center week in and week out?**

"There is no doubt that the atmosphere makes a huge difference in how our guys are performing. It gives them (Florida State's players) a boost of energy, with the energy in the building. I am so appreciative of the support that we are getting from the fans, it makes a huge difference, I said last week, now we are giving people a little dose of the medicine that we get when we go on the road, and my joke is that's what the doctor ordered."

**What were you able to do so well against Buddy Boeheim, he didn't score tonight, and he is usually more effective than that?**

"The respect we have for what he is capable of doing is the only reason why we gave him a tremendous amount of attention. When you see a guy, who is capable of getting 18 straight points in a ACC game -- I mean that gets your attention. So, we gave him a tremendous amount of attention and the fact that we were able to win by three, another typical ACC blowout, and the top player didn't score as well as he's normally capable of scoring says an awful lot about how important that the defensive job that we did on him was, because had we not gave that level of respect the game could've been different."

**Without giving away secrets, on that last inbound play is that the first option, the homerun pass to Trent Forrest, because it looked like a really good pass?**

“When we have an inbounds play like that we have four options and you tell your guys that whenever it gets so flat on the baseline and they are overplaying you, you’ve got to spin out and go for the homerun. We have homerun play and we have other plays. They (our players) did a very good job.”

**Did the wild ending in Chapel Hill last week cause you to think twice about fouling there?**

“There was no doubt, we intended to foul him before he shot. But that’s part of the game of basketball. Sometimes you can’t always do what you intend to do. Thank goodness he didn’t throw a hail Mary shot up there. We wanted to foul him with under five seconds on the shot clock, but he got away from us and we were not able to. So now we were in the position where you don’t want to try and foul him and he throws up a three pointer, so I thought the kid made a wise decision, he moved the ball we couldn’t get too him. The clock was getting down, so we didn’t foul him on the 3-point arc so he couldn’t get to the line. I thought we made good decisions there down the stretch.”