

Florida State at Louisville
January 18, 2021 | KFC Yum! Center
Postgame Quotes
Florida State Head Coach Leonard Hamilton

(Opening Statement)

"I thought our guys were extremely focused at the beginning of the game. We got out of the box early. Defensively, I thought we had the stops and got a lot of deflections. We were on-point with our execution. We made a lot of shots. That just shows that we are kind of growing up. Obviously, we stubbed our toe the last time we were on the road in the ACC. That was a bad taste, and I was glad to get that taste out of our mouth. Just going on the road and being able to adjust mentally and emotionally. This team has potential, but we are still growing and we are still coming together. We had the lead, and they cut back in, but what I'm most impressed with is two things. We maintained our composure. We didn't lose our poise. We regrouped and came back in and made effective plays. The second thing I was impressed with was the fact that M.J. Walker was not having a great night offensively, but he had 10 assists and two blocks. He gave us great leadership on the floor. That's the leadership we like to see from your senior."

(You said after Saturday's game that Anthony [Polite] was dealing with an illness. Was this related to that? Was this something else? What can you speak to how he stepped up in his absence?)

"It looked like [Anthony Polite] kind of had a shoulder injury or a bruised shoulder, and it was still sore. This time of year, I just want him to be 100 percent. Hopefully we can have him back for Saturday's game."

(Talk about Wyatt [Wilkes] obviously being in the starting lineup tonight.)

"Wyatt is probably one of the most knowledgeable players on our team. He has a very high basketball IQ. He understands everything that we're doing. We weren't hesitant at all to move him into that position. He makes great decisions with the ball, and he's shooting the ball very well right now. He stepped in and gave us great floor balance. I thought that he gave us a couple of baskets there early that fill in for Anthony. Anthony's shooting over 50 percent from three, so I thought that with Wyatt coming in we didn't miss very much, and that was very good."

(Can you talk about Raiquan Gray and the game that he had, and also the improvements he has made in his game this year?)

"He is becoming more comfortable with his role. Obviously early on, that's a big adjustment from being a player that's playing on a team and in a different role with Patrick [Williams] and Trent [Forrest] and Devin [Vassell] over the last couple of years. Now he's in more of a leadership role. He's experienced. Whether we are successful or not has a lot to do with how well he plays. I think he's maturing into that and understanding his strengths and his weaknesses. He's going to the basket more. He's being patient with his shot selection. He gives leadership on the floor. He gives us a unique ball-handling and decision-making for his size, which is challenging. We want him to drive the ball to the basket. He's a really good jump shooter, but he's not shooting the ball as well from the perimeter right now, but I think you will see as he grows with confidence, you will see him become more and more consistent throughout his offensive game. And he's playing very good defense."

(How much better has Malik Osborne been in these last two games? Is he finding his role a little bit?)

"Well, to be honest with you, we're still trying to define our roles within our rotation and who fits in what. For instance, tonight we wanted to be as big as possible if we could contain the dribble. We weren't very effective with it. And so we went with a small lineup and I thought that's when we, in the second half that's when we were able to extend the lead. And so we're kind of still defining our strengths and our

weaknesses in relation to the personality of this team. Tonight was not a very good night for Tanor (Ngom). I thought Balsa (Koprivica) was a little sluggish early, he came in and gave us a big lift in the second half – for a sophomore you like to see that. I hope you guys understand we’re still just growing and developing. If this team continues to keep growing, by February we could be a pretty good basketball team.

(Do you feel like in the first half, in the first 10 or 15 minutes of the first half, that's what you want to look like on defense, in terms of deflections and blocks?)

"Yes, and we pushed the ball down after we got those deflections and blocks and steals. We've been solid on the offensive end as well, so you like to see that with a team that really has as many moving parts as we have."

(Against UNC you guys didn't have Scottie (Barnes), but it looked like Rayquan Evans really took a step forward. With Scottie back, tonight you used them at times together. Does that allow Scottie to kind of be more effective at different spots on the floor?)

"Well, Scottie's been playing on the ball an awful lot so some of the things, he's not really familiar with. But that's kind of who we are. He hasn't been around enough to learn everything. So tonight, we kind of felt that, because we didn't have Anthony Polite, a great decision-maker, great free throw shooter, well, we think he's a great free throw shooter. Obviously the guy who's probably our best on the ball defender, we kind of just had to improvise tonight by playing both of them together."

(How would you assess your defense at this point in the season?)

"We had some good moments tonight, but we still had trouble containing the dribble. I thought that there were times when they just, at will just drove right by us and laid the ball up at the rim and that's unacceptable, but you've got to give them credit, that's the strength of their team, they have those skills. We don't like to get beat on the first step, but that's the strength of their team and I thought that they did a very good job and challenged us and maybe they took advantage of our weakness. They forced us... we like to switch 1 through 5, but it didn't seem to matter if they were trying to drive off of our center or our perimeter players, and we had a hard time keeping them from getting to the rim."

(Playing on one day's rest, and three games in six days is tough – what did you learn about your team in these first games back after the layoff?)

"I'm learning that we have some strengths. We're shooting the ball well from the perimeter. We're not moving the ball and executing in the half court nearly as well as I think we should. I think that we're not really taking advantage of maybe some of our strengths. But that's kind of who we are, we're still kind of growing. Some areas we're experienced, some areas we're not. We're just still trying to put it together, still got some growing to do."

(What do you say to yourself when your 7-1 center gets that steal 70 feet from the basket and goes coast-to-coast and has a follow dunk – is that in his arsenal?)

"Well, that just shows that he's growing and maturing. That was a very big play during that part of the game. He got the steal, had the confidence to take it to the basket and the focus to go back up on the missed shot, so I was very pleased with that."

Louisville is a good basketball team and I thought our guys did a very good job on the road against a very good basketball team. You've got to give them a lot of credit. They're well-coached, they play hard. They never backed up, they never gave up. And they kept coming back at us every time we extended the lead. That shows that they're a very good team and very well-coached."