

Postgame Quotes

Florida State 58, Michigan 76

March 28, 2021

NCAA Tournament Sweet 16

Bankers Life Fieldhouse, Indianapolis, Ind.

Florida State Head Coach Leonard Hamilton

LEONARD HAMILTON: congratulations to the University of Michigan and Coach Juwan Howard. I thought they did an excellent job in their preparation and their execution. Many times, when you watch teams on film, you feel like you have a pretty good idea of their strengths and their weaknesses. Many times this year, people have looked at us in a similar fashion. Once they got on the court, our system sometimes is not quite what people think it is, and this is the case here. This team executed so well. Their spacing was unbelievable. They were extremely patient. We had a hard time turning them over. They really, really played off of their big guy. We spent so much time trying to defend Hunter, and they get to their perimeter shooters, when the clock would run down to with about ten seconds left on the shot clock, they continue to keep staying in their system, and they executed and made plays right toward the end. That's what a good team will do. There's no doubt that this team, from an execution standpoint, from a decision-making standpoint, they are playing to who they are. I said prior to the game that the team who would win this game would be the team who was the best version of who they were, and I think they were the best version of Michigan tonight. Even though I thought we could have played a little better, I'm not real sure that Michigan didn't have a lot to do with our inability to play as well as we have played sometime during the course of the year. Hat's off to (Mike) Smith. He's hard to rattle. I thought that the two things we thought would be the biggest challenge for us would be to -- because we switched one through five, is to keep the ball away from Hunter, and we worked our (indiscernible) off, but we never really seemed to -- we worked so hard in trying to defend him and Smith, I thought it opened up opportunities for other guys to get the (indiscernible) cuts. Hat's off to this excellent team. If they play the way they played tonight, they're going to be hard to beat.

Q. Coach, it seemed like you defended at least well enough to give you a chance in the second half, and they seemed unstoppable in the first half. In the second half, they were pretty unstoppable. Was that an adjustment they made? Was that a lack of execution from the defense?

LEONARD HAMILTON: First half, we both shot -- we were 11 for 13 -- 33 from the floor, and they were 10 for -- both shot 33.3 percent from the floor. I think our Achilles was that we were 0 for 7 from the three, which is what had a couple games where we have shot the ball poorly, and we turned the ball over, I think, ten times in the first half. They scored the 16 points off our turnovers. So I thought that they defended us and we defended them. We couldn't get to the free-throw line, and they got to the free-throw line because we were overly aggressive. The second half, I thought that they did a much better job executing and got some high percentage shots, and I thought that the second half, we didn't get -- we shot 46 percent the second half, which was not horrible, but obviously their execution gave them a lot higher percentage shots than we did, plus we shot -- for the game, I think we shot six free throws, and they shot 23. They were much more aggressive in terms of executing, getting the offensive rebounds and the put-backs and driving to the basket and spacing the floor. I thought we followed them a little too much, and we didn't get the same type of aggressiveness on our offensive end. And there lies the loss to a very good basketball team.

Q. Obviously, you made the run to the Sweet 16. What did you say to your team afterwards about finishing this very trying season and really a trying two-year stretch when you look at what happened at the end of last year and now this season with all the COVID?

LEONARD HAMILTON: I told them that I knew how bad they felt after going out and losing to a very good team that played as well as Michigan did, but they can't let that one game define their season. We're one game short from winning the regular season. We're one game short from winning the conference tournament. And we came up short, and we made it through the Sweet 16, and we got beat by a team that played better than us. In reality, we have -- you feel bad now because you didn't perform well enough against a real good basketball team, but we have a lot to be proud of. We've made tremendous progress with our program, and what we have to do is evaluate where we

are, evaluate our shortcomings, and let's go back now as a group, and let's improve on these -- on our shortcomings. Say, can we come back and be a little bit better than the Sweet 16 next year.

Q. RaiQuan Gray picked up the two early fouls in that game in the first half. Was there any thoughts of putting him in, even for just a couple minutes, towards the end of the first half? Because the offense seemed pretty much out of sorts without him.

LEONARD HAMILTON: Well, we normally have been okay. We were down, what, 10, 11 at halftime. That wasn't something that we were really -- we've come back from being down like that, but putting him back in for two minutes to get a third foul, I'm not really sure that would have been the wise thing in relation to this particular team. There are certain guys that we need on the floor and certain guys that really make the difference in how well we play. RaiQuan has developed to be one of those guys that seem to settle us down when we need it. He's a very integral part of who we are, but I'm not real sure him not playing a couple minutes more in the first half would have made the difference in the game.

Q. You talked about maybe your aggressiveness versus theirs. It did seem like M.J. attacked the rim quite a bit. It wasn't like you were settling for jump shots. I guess, not to get you in trouble commenting on the officiating, but what did they do offensively to not get called for fouls that you guys did get called for fouls?

LEONARD HAMILTON: Well, it's very unusual that a game of this magnitude and both teams being as aggressive as they were, but sometimes that's just the way the cookie crumbles. We went to the foul line six times, and you've got to give them credit, though, I thought their execution was really, really good. If I did underestimate one thing, they were really big, strong, wide-body guys who really did a very good job of playing to themselves and within themselves, and they executed a lot better than we did, and they put themselves in positions where they could get fouled. Obviously, I'm concerned about it, but not to the point where it's anything other than sometimes that's just the way the game goes. I thought they were aggressive, and I thought we were too. In the first half, the thing that I was most concerned about, I think we had about five point-blank layups that we just didn't finish. We got the shots that we wanted, but we just didn't -- even on the three-point shots we got in the first half, I thought they were pretty good shots. It's one of those nights where we just couldn't seem to finish our attempts at the basket, but you've got to give them credit for being big and strong and contesting shots in there. I don't want to take away from their defensive schemes that I thought caused us a little indecision and to be somewhat apprehensive and somewhat tentative when we went to the basket. You guys that have seen us play all year, normally we finish pretty well around the basket. We've been one of the better field goal shooting teams in our league and around the country.

Q. I know you said that you've told the players not to let this one game define your season. I'm curious how you will look back on this season. Did this team get everything that it should out of its talents?

LEONARD HAMILTON: Sometimes I thought we might have overachieved at times. We have some strengths, and we have some weaknesses. I've been very proud of this team that they've hung together, and they've played within themselves. Every team goes through periods where they have issues. We have -- I'm proud of these guys to go through the entire season without having anyone have a COVID issue. And even though we had two long pauses, to be able to bounce back without a whole lot of practices and be able to come back and be somewhat efficient, most teams always have a few of those nagging injuries. It seemed like they all came in bunches where we had maybe a two-, three-week period, where guys only played in games and didn't really practice. So I look back at this season, I think that team has a lot to be proud of. We'll take this, and we'll move forward. I think that we still got a lot more errors where we can improve in, and hopefully you'll see that as we continue to move the program forward.

Q. The ACC is now out of the tournament. It's the first time in a while there's been no ACC teams in the final eight. I'm just wondering, from their perspective, what do you think was the difference in the conference this year that maybe it wasn't -- if you didn't think it was quite as strong as in years past?

LEONARD HAMILTON: I think every conference goes through the period where you can't stay on top forever. Our team is one of the most successful and rich traditioned conferences in the history of college basketball. We made it to the Sweet 16, and we have some other teams emerging that I think that, because of the rich tradition of some of our outstanding teams, they're kind of pulling some of us up and kind of help accelerating our progress a little bit. So I think what you're going to see is more teams end up being at the highest level because of the success of the rich tradition of the programs that have been the marquee teams for our conference over a number of years. It works

that way. It comes in rotations. I feel like maybe we had a year where this year maybe we're not having someone in the Elite Eight, but I think most people, most rational, reasonable thinking people, they know this is not going to be the issue moving forward.

Q. There's kind of been this narrative in the sport that it's going to be a Gonzaga-Baylor National Championship Game. Can Michigan beat those teams, what you saw today?

LEONARD HAMILTON: I will say this. If Michigan plays as well as they played today in terms of their focus and their execution and their spacing and the way they were connected today, I mean, they were almost flawless in their execution. I mean, I was extremely impressed with how ready they were to play. They maintained their composure. From start to finish, they never deviated. They had that stretch there where I think we might have cut it to four or five there in the second half, but they continued to keep executing. There were about three or four possessions there where I thought we defended them by as well as they can be defended, and I thought we were having a good possession, and then they would have a guy -- one of our players would turn their head, and they would make a dive cut and finish a basket there after we have spent a lot of energy defending them for part of the shot clock. So that's a team that really, really knows who they are. They know how to play to each other, and it wouldn't surprise me at all for them to be standing there on Monday night with their finger up saying they're number 1.