

Coaches' Quotes

Florida State 65, Miami 64

Tuesday, January 11, 2022

Donald L. Tucker Center

Tallahassee, Fla.

Florida State Head Coach Leonard Hamilton

"Miami has a really good basketball team. They have, in my opinion, the ability to get to the final four. They are so difficult. Every time you make a mistake, they make you pay. They execute very well, they seem to be in sync with each other, creating for each other. Defensively, they were stripping the ball from us, and making it hard for us to run anything. We feel very fortunate to win this game. The (Miami) coaches have done a great job with that team; they are going to be a tough opponent for anyone who plays them. My hat goes off to them, it took all we had. I looked up once in the second half at who they had on the floor. They had some six-year veterans and I had three freshmen on the floor. I was proud of those guys, I thought they communicated well. They didn't show any lack of confidence in what we were trying to do. I was very proud of our guys tonight because that was an important victory for us against an outstanding basketball team."

How pleased were you with how aggressive your guys were until the last second of the game?

"They (Miami) were doing a tremendous job defending us and we wanted to be as aggressive as possible. We were able to get into the lane and draw some fouls and make some plays. When I mentally look back at the game, I thought everyone made winning plays. I look at the stats and I think everyone contributed in some way during the course of this game. I always say that our system is built around winning games by committing and I thought that was very obvious tonight."

What's to say about your veterans and how they performed tonight?

"The respect we have for Miami elevated our focus. Our veterans have been to the wars before and I thought they gave great leadership verbally in the huddles and on the court. The younger guys were attentive and paying attention, that just shows we care and adjust as a team. Hopefully we can continue to keep growing and dig ourselves out of this little ditch we have put ourselves in."

How special was it for RayQuan Evans to step up and hit those free throws?

"No doubt about it, that was huge. He stepped right up with poise and extreme amount of confidence. I was very pleased with his body language. He just said 'I'm glad I'm on this line, I'm going to win this game for my brothers.' Those were his free throws. Malik's (Osborne) big three, obviously, that was a huge shot. He has not been 100 percent; he turned his ankle at the end of the first half and we had to regroup. He still has been limited with practicing, hopefully having a day off tomorrow will give him some time to get some treatment and hopefully he'll be feeling a little bit better come Saturday."

What do you think Malik Osborne playing injured does for the other players?

“There’s no doubt that they’re going to gain a lot of respect for him because they know that he’s been playing limited and with limited reps in practice. He stepped up, that’s what leaders do. He’s a Seminole and he’s been leading by example.”

How important is the rivalry between Miami and Florida State?

“There’s no doubt that the rivalry goes back years and years. Unfortunately, from a basketball coaching standpoint you do not have the luxury of having one game more important than another, especially in the ACC. That’s what happens when you’re with a young team, trying to grow. You can’t get too high and you can’t get too low. You can’t get too excited when you have a little success, and you can’t get down when things aren’t going your way. There’s no doubt that our fans, our student body, and overheads that have been here, it means an awful lot to them. Unfortunately for us, the coaches and players, we can only enjoy this for a few hours and then we have to go up to Syracuse where there won’t be any beaches or anyone walking around in bathing suits because it’s a little chilly up there. We have to go up there and adjust to that environment and I’m sure it’s going to be hot in that gym.”

Can you talk about how you took advantage on the rebounding game and capitalizing offensive rebounds?

“Let’s just say this, we had (a) 14-6 (advantage), but we lost two when the game was on the line that we didn’t come away with and we probably shouldn’t have had to worry about that three-pointer that the young man hit. But, I thought our guys battled very well. They knew that offensive rebounds and rebounds would be important. All those little things add up to an ACC blowout by one point.”

If Matthew Cleveland can find any kind of consistency with 3-point shots, what can that do for his game?

“Let me just say this – his defense, his rebounding, his tenacity is probably the biggest part of his ability to contribute. He’s been working really hard, he had an uncontested three when the game was on the line and he knocked it down. That just shows the confidence from the mental standpoint and emotional standpoint than anything else. He’s confident, he’s been working out, he knows that he’s improving in that area. But he’s not wasting his time shooting those threes, he’s doing whatever the defense gives him. That shows that he’s maturing and he’s doing the little things it takes to help us win.”

What can this win do to validate the work that the guys have been putting in?

“It’s a process of learning. Physically, we’ve been doing a good job in the weight room and with conditioning. Also, we had a little bad period where we couldn’t practice because of COVID. The biggest progress I see us making is mentally and emotionally. Being able to handle the highs and the lows, the things that are not going well. There is a lot of teaching going on in our system and with seven new guys. They have to know ‘Do I have my right foot up in this position?’ ‘Do I have my left foot up in this position?’ ‘Do I close out with my both of my hands?’ They have to learn all these new defensive and offensive schemes. It’s very challenging for them to be comfortable and relaxed while they’re still learning. Basketball is a sport of reaction, the reactions need to be

instinct, but you can't be instinctive if you're still learning exactly what to do. So, I have seen progress in those areas. I see Jalen being less hesitant, in early games he would walk the ball down the court and now he's pushing it down the court. I see Naheem (McLeod) coming in, sprinting out, setting a screen quickly and then stiff rolling to the basket more consistently. Defensively, tonight we need him rotating over to the lane and he's on the other side of the basket. When we point that out in film, he'll be better next time we practice. It's still a growing process, like I said earlier, I hope we can win our share of the games while were still learning and growing and hopefully by February we can be a tough outfit for somebody."