

Coaches Quotes

Florida State vs. Troy

Monday, November 14, 2022

Donald L. Tucker Center

Tallahassee, Florida

Florida State Head Coach Leonard Hamilton

Opening Statement

"It's been a long time since I've had to try to explain the lack of things that we're going through with this team. Obviously, there were some positive things that went on, but when the game was on the line I thought we made some really bad turnovers. From the beginning of the game we allowed them to breathe life. And a team as hungry, as well coached, and determined, like they are, and Coach Cross does a tremendous job, he has a great system, and I thought that we just didn't respond, during that period where the game was somewhat in doubt. Some of that's inexperience, some of us we have to make better decisions on the ball, when the game's on the line. Turn the ball over 19 times, they turn it over 10, you give them definitely more possessions. A team that's now playing confident; they hit two threes in the first half and the clock running down and then they bank one in, that's what happens when you have a good team come in who's hungry for a victory. You end up being on the losing end. I think we can correct the turnovers. I thought we'd be one of the best free throw shooting teams that we've had; I'm a little disappointed in that area. I'm glad to see us be aggressive and get to the foul line. We've got a lot of room for improvement, but thank goodness I think our attitude was good, I think we still believe in ourselves and believe in the system. Hopefully we'll get some relief here before too long where we cannot end up playing guys 35 minutes without very much rest. I said last week, we try to keep our guys fresh in relation to how we want to play, obviously it's much more challenging when you practice a certain way, and then once you get into the season you have to extend the minutes of guys who are still trying to gain experience. Glad to see Darin (Green) get his confidence back and shoot the ball the way we know he's capable of. Matthew Cleveland, we have to find a way as a team to execute better to give him the type of opportunities that give him the chance to be his best self. I think sometimes the ball will stick a little bit without moving enough, and people will key in on him. He's improved his perimeter shooting tremendously. As a team, we have to execute better to create easier opportunities for each player."

Does the team currently have an on-court leader?

"When you look back at how we develop our program we've always had juniors and seniors - we have none. We don't have any guys who have been in our program for three years other than some of our walk-ons. You can't complain about it, you can't use that as an excuse, that's who we are. And most teams who are successful, they have veteran leadership. Our veterans are here for their second year. We might be expecting a little too much out of them to be where normally experienced juniors and seniors are. We have to have leadership within the team. Everyone has to hold each other accountable. Have to call each other out when someone's making a mistake, we have to communicate that in our group huddles and in our timeouts. And that's part of growing and learning. For me to expect second year players that aren't juniors and seniors might not be very fair of me. We have to do it as a team and not put that burden on one or two players."

You talk about the ball sticking on offense, is that just guys not understanding where they need to go, is that confidence?

"The little things that make your offense go. Moving the ball, someone has to be coming off the baseline to make themselves a receiver. Sometimes we move the ball and we're stuck there because somebody's slow, not valuing how fast you have to get high so you can execute the offense that we have. It's a little different when you've got guys who are still trying to learn the system. We like to have guys set the screens a little quicker. In the past, we always had big guys that set screens and roll to the front of the rim that create problems in interior defense, we don't have that available. When we roll big guys to the rim for lobs, for slots and seals, which puts pressure on the defense. They don't have the luxury out in those passing lanes and on the line because they have to rotate and take care of guys at the rim. We have to find a way to win, with who we are, the talent that we have available. Sometimes that's a little challenging for guys who are first and second year players."

You mentioned free throws, that in practice you guys shoot free throws well, what's happening on the court you think that they're struggling with?

"There's a mental aspect to the game as well as the physical aspect. As you get older, more mature, and you go through successes and failures, you handle it a little better. Right now, we got guys who shoot well in practice. Even as young as we were in the beginning of the season, then you go on and have the guys who really can help you overcome things. That's part of who we are and what we are. We've been here before and we just have to find a way to not have a pity party, not point fingers, not play the blame game, and say how can I get the most out of who we are in this edition of our team, regardless of who we have available? Someone has to step up. I thought we showed signs of it, but not enough."

With being short-handed and guys playing so many minutes do find somebody that you consider doing zone?

Hamilton:

"You know we're not very good at zones, we haven't spent that much time on zone (defense). We've been here 20 years and probably played 20 possessions on zone (defense) and we've been fairly successful. But with this team and being short-handed we have been working on zone. But tonight we didn't feel very comfortable because they were shooting on us a lot."

You talked about holding guys back and the possibility of anybody returning for the Florida game

"We will have to wait and see. I was talking to the doctors as I was coming over here to the press conference and I don't have any information to give you. We'll see soon. We don't need to rush our kids back from injuries. We need to allow the medical staff to make those decisions. It's a long season and what we don't need to do is rush some guy back who is not physically ready because it ends up making matters worse. We'll go along with whatever information we get from the doctors and we'll get to it; we don't want to do anything to jeopardize our kids."

You mentioned you wanted to get some of the kids going and you know what do you think about the game with Florida; do you think that could be something that could spark the team?

"You're asking me to look into my crystal ball, look into the future. I think anytime you ever have a competitive rivalry like the Florida/Florida State series you can expect them to give their best effort and you have to expect us to do the same. And that's what makes the series as exciting as it is. But also, you know there's a lot of pride at the University of Florida and we have a lot of pride at Florida State. So I think you need to respect both teams if they're giving their best effort."

How do you kind of characterize practice right now? You haven't had Jaylan (Gainey). Naheem's (McLeod) hurt, Cam'Ron (Fletcher) is a guy who you said you're not really been letting him practice, is it not where you want it to be in terms of bodies and availability?

"You just want the best. You know I mean we're young, we played with basically six players tonight, I think (Tom) House played four minutes. But that's who we are. I wish I could tell you something different. We just got to find a way to win with the guys we have available and we have to overcome fatigue. We talk about leadership. We all need to be leaders, coaches and the players. Normally we have a system - three or four systems we use to rotate in and out of that. But that's not who we are now. We have to simplify things a little bit more. We have to expect them to give that same level of energy to the defensive end that we've been accustomed to giving for four and a half minutes. There are even seven or eight minutes without any rest but you still have to play with that same level of intensity and execution on the defensive end and on the offensive end. I'm not really sure I really want to get into getting to walk the ball down the court playing pack-line defense, and playing zone defense like has been suggested. I'm not sure that that is quite that easy. But all of a sudden now we have been basically playing man to man defense for 20 years and all of a sudden you want to magically become a real good zoning defense. It doesn't quite work like that. You know, zone defenses require a lot of work, a lot of drilling, and a lot of execution. We have spent some time on zone thinking that maybe we could have the luxury of using it as a team, but it looks like we might need them more now to just slow the pace of the game down and maybe buy a couple of minutes of rest here and there. So it's a great suggestion, it's easy to suggest. It's a lot more challenging to go and get it done."

Is this the toughest coaching job you have ever had in terms of dealing with injuries and the like?

"I've been coaching 50 years, so I've had some challenges. When I was assisting at the University of Kentucky we had some challenges. When I was at the University of Miami, I had three All-Americans injured all at the same time. It was challenging to bounce back from that. But we did. Going through last year was probably the biggest challenge that I've ever witnessed with the part of not really knowing who you're going to have available from day to day. It's just one of those things that you look back and you don't wish it on anybody. It's very unusual for you to have it back to back. There were years that I felt so good that we were not having the same issues with injuries that some of the other teams in the ACC were having. Now we're having that same period now and that's the way it rotates through every team in America. We're going through it, at a time when we can least have those injuries. But you have to work through it, you have to be positive, you have to be encouraging, try to look at the bright side. Hold your kids accountable, not try to overdo it. You guys probably don't remember but a guy name Stewart Inman, I think he was the general manager for the Portland Trail Blazers many, many years ago, and I had him for a session down at the University of Miami. He said to me "When you're losing, the worst thing you can do is start trying things. You need to stick with who you are, what you do, and work it out. When you start improvising, making all types of changes in your system, then all of a sudden now you are learning new things that really don't necessarily help your cause. Stay focused, keep being as compartmentally sound, keep doing that things that you know you want from the past, and it all works itself out." I just wish that we could wave our hand and everybody be healthy."

What are some positives that you did see that you can build upon for the Florida game upcoming?

"I don't think that we have a problem with effort. I thought our guys gave a good effort."