

Coaches Quotes

Florida State 81, Boston University 80

Donald L. Tucker Center, Tallahassee, Florida

Wednesday, November 24, 2021

Florida State Head Coach Leonard Hamilton

Opening Statement

"Obviously, we had some interesting turn of events tonight. I'm very pleased to come away from this game with a victory. Obviously, Ray (RayQuan Evans) has a heavy heart now and we didn't have his available services. Naheem (McLeod) turned his ankle in warmups and Tanor (Ngom) strained a muscle. Our guys had to regroup. We had to change our game plan on the fly. We played against an experienced team that executed very well. Maybe we might have been a little flat after playing in Jacksonville. But, under those circumstances, I was very pleased that we were able to come away with a victory. It was obvious that we're still struggling with our offensive execution. We're very good when we get deflections and steals and get out in transition. Our offensive execution ... I guess a team playing a pack line type of system challenges us an awful lot when we don't have an established low post offensive game at present. We made a different type of adjustment tonight and we were able to end up having an eight-point lead with not very much time on the clock and that's when we lost the discipline. We gave up a few back doors and there's no doubt that we should have fouled the guy with a 3-point lead and five seconds on the clock as he came across half court. That's probably one of those coaching errors that we didn't emphasize enough to our players and that's kind of on us. But overall, to be able to come out with a victory, to have some guys step up - Matthew Cleveland, Caleb Mills -- guys who did not play major minutes like that. Even Malik (Osborne), Anthony Polite, going to the point guard for extended periods of time. You like to see guys just make those adjustments and you come with a victory against the team that really had a great game plan and executed their system flawlessly. We knew they would shoot a lot of threes - they're a very good three-point shooting team. What we didn't expect though, is to give up those backdoors during a critical portion of the game. That's hopefully a learning experience. We'll be a better team moving forward, (after) playing against a team that really did a great job executing tonight."

Can you just talk a bit about Matthew, just what he did overall this evening? And obviously coming up huge on Caleb Mills and then also still on the inbound pass?

"There's no doubt that Matthew represents the kind of freshmen we've been bringing in. Seeing them come into a system, fit who we are, able to absorb the things we're doing and be able to go out ... I didn't see any indecision on his part. He was an extremely confident youngster with a high motor. He did every little thing that we knew he was capable of doing all to give ourselves a victory. Getting the big rebounds and hitting a couple tough shots. His defense is really growing and getting better. I think that he's just starting to gain the confidence that we know is going to give him an opportunity to have a very, very successful season."

Steals, blocks, turnovers and hustle plays and just grinding it out. Can you just talk about getting that victory? And again, guys, they did what they had to do to help win.

"No doubt about that. This was a grind. These are the types of games you learn from. I'm sure we were favored in the game...but I think what happens sometimes, people don't know very much about your opponents. If you go back and look at how well Coach (Joe) Jones has done with Boston University, and look at the experience they returned on that team, you knew we were going to get their best shot. They executed their game plan very well. I was very impressed with them. It became a grind. What I liked about our players - I didn't see any panic when the game was on the line ... I thought that it wasn't as much about what we were not doing. I thought they did an excellent job. We gave them a good look in the critical parts of the game. They knocked down threes. They were very strong going to the free throw line. They did an unbelievable job of knocking down their free throws; they only missed three for the entire night. But, that's what good, solid, mature, experienced teams will do, that will coach. I'm just glad we're able to pull the victory out. Hopefully we'll learn from this while we are growing."

You talked about the end of game or end of regulations scenario where you probably should have fouled up three. Is that something you would normally communicate with players like at the previous timeout?

"We did not do a very good job of communicating that with the players. In practice, we always try to, in those situations, as he approaches half court, you want to put him on the line and not give a good 3-point shooting team an opportunity to get a good look at the basket. That could have been a devastating error. We were fortunate enough to be able to overcome it. There's no question that in our philosophy, we would prefer, in those situations, especially when you play against a great three-point shooting team like Boston U. As he comes across half court you don't want to foul him while he's shooting it, but you want to make sure you're giving him a nice bump and put him on the foul line and live with that opposed to giving them a good look when they have as many good 3-point shooters as they have on the team."

Great overtime win for your program. I mean, what was it just saying about resiliency to be able to finish off teams?

"I think that you got to give our staff a lot of credit with preparations and practice that gives your kids confidence that they can have enough in our system to win close games. Rhythm has made a difference. That's given us the opportunity to set the national record. Our staff does a great job in preparing kids for these types of moments. I've got to give those guys a lot of credit. Sometimes the head coach gets all the credit but there's no doubt ... Stan's (Jones) been doing this almost 26 years. CY (Charlton Young), I recruited out of high school. And Steve (Smith) is one of the sharpest young assistants around. I'm just blessed to have guys who are great teachers, great communicators with our players and it doesn't necessarily happen during the game. It happens in the film room. It happens in the skull sessions. It happens in the meetings. That gives us the confidence to go out and be successful in tight games like this."

Looking back now, and I'm sure film will help more, evaluate the defensive performance tonight? Obviously, that's going to staple the seeds in the field. The steals and the turnovers were there again, maybe too many easy baskets?

"Well, the back doors, I'm not really sure you can call those easy baskets. They were baskets that were executed. We were playing hard pressure on the wings, and they caught us sleeping. Normally we don't let the ball even come to the elbow. That's us learning, developing techniques to keep the ball out the elbow. There's no doubt about that. That's what's happening. That's what happened. And they watched us - they knew we were unbelievably aggressive. We've got to become a team that's a little more conscious, that doesn't consistently give players that many drives to their strong hands. That's a little bit technique wise, that's a negative from a technique standpoint on our part. You've got to give them credit for having the presence of mind, to be patient with the ball, to take advantage of some of our weaknesses, which they did a great job of. And they were so confident in their three-point shooting that they made some shots that I can't lean less on my guys would even take. They were so far out, but that's what their strengths are. They played to their strengths, took advantage of our weaknesses. At the end of the day, I'm really pleased with Caleb (Mills) making big plays. Matthew (Cleveland) coming through, Cam (Fletcher) with some big plays in the first half. Even when I look at John Butler, I thought he had several good plays there for us. Our young guys are really, really doing a good job for us. Malik Osborne gave us another good, solid performance. We are still a team that's growing and developing. Sounds like a cliché, I'm just hoping that we continue to keep winning our fair share of the game while we're growing and developing. I think we'll be a pretty good team toward the end of the year that we can continue to keep winning and have some postseason opportunities. I think we're going to be a pretty tough out for anybody."

This time of year is the holidays, its college basketball can you just share a little something on thanksgiving and people being safe and sound and really enjoying their families?

"There's no doubt that this time of year, as we all pause and give thanks for all of our wonderful blessings that we have enjoyed, especially our basketball team who you know you get a chance to grow up wanting to be in a situation that our kids are in, getting the education. They are with their extended family of their basketball team, it means an awful lot. We try to encourage them, them being away from their family to call them and thank them for all of the wonderful blessing they have endured. Our hearts are very heavy with the tragedy that RayQuan Evans is experiencing, and our heart goes out to him and his family. He lost his brother at 27 years old that was extremely healthy, had a rare disease that really affected him and caused him to lose his life. So, our heart goes out to RayQuan

for him to lose his brother and then want to play with his team and support his brother says an awful lot about the kind of Seminole he is. The night was just overwhelming to him, and we wanted to play and I am glad we won the game for him. Our heart goes out to him, it just shows how precious life is and we should all be thankful, you know for the blessings of good health and family and friends. I hope you guys can pause for a little bit and enjoy your family and your friends but also do not forget to be thankful for the wonderful blessings that we all enjoy. Working in basketball, writing in basketball, coaching in basketball, playing, and the fans for having the opportunity to enjoy it. We've got so much to be thankful for, I hope you guys enjoy your thanksgiving."

Calbe Mills

That was kind of a grind out, grit and determination game, overtime victory. Just talk a little bit about it and from your perspective what you saw out there?

"Not having Ray (RayQuan Evans) hurt us tonight, but some of the younger guys that did get in, they contributed and all though they made a few mistakes whatever they did on the court led us to getting the win and I am proud of them. This is not the last time we are going to have pressure situations so we didn't fold which is definitely what you want. This is a tough-minded team that is not going to quit and those are the essentials to a championship team."

What can you say about Matthew Cleveland, a true freshman coming in, I think he scored eight points in the second half and then six of the 10 in overtime and just taking over in the big moment like he did?

"This is a winner man. In practice he leads as much as he can being a freshman. Says what he knows, and you know he is just a special man, a special man. Works hard you know, tough minded, just what he did tonight does not surprise me, I expect that out of not just him but everybody on the team."

This was this first overtime win you have been around for but it is actually FSU's 12th in a row which I think is a NCAA record. In your time around the program, what do you think it is about this team that they seem to just handle those high-pressure moments so well?

"Just the fact that we want to win for each other. This is a real close group of guys who care so much about basketball. It is so important to us. And Coach Ham and Coach Jones, they prepare us as best they can and they do a great job. As well as Coach CY and Coach Smith, the whole staff, so props out to them and thank Mat for tonight's game winner, I was happy I'm sure y'all seen that when I was hugging him for like a minute."

Can you talk to us a little bit about your transfer process and why you felt like Florida State was the right choice for you?

"The same reason I keep bringing up, just the brotherhood type bond. I knew Coach Ham was a great coach who could develop me in all aspects of the game. It just has definitely felt like the right choice since I have gotten down here."