

Coaches Quotes

Florida State 65, South Carolina 66

No Room For Racism Classic

Rock Hill Sports and Event Center

Rock Hill, S.C.

Florida State Head Coach Leonard Hamilton

Opening Statement

"South Carolina did a real good job in making that comeback. In the four games we've lost, it's kind of similar. We've been ahead at halftime of three of the four games that we've lost, which shows that we're doing some things right. But because we kind of faded in four of the games that we've lost, it means that we have a lot of work to do. Frank (Martin) - I thought his team did a very good job of mixing their defenses up and I thought they kind of got us out of rhythm a little bit there with about six minutes to go in the first half, which was a smart move on his part. We don't have really one or two zone offense that we use, but for whatever reason, we've had a difficult time executing during that period. I think that's what happens when you get as many new guys that we're trying to blend in with our system. We have not had this much inexperience all at one time. I like this team and I think that we've shown signs that we must be capable. We just have to start turning some of these close losses into victories so that we can have some, hopefully some, opportunities at the end of the season. I thought Frank did a very good job of just mixing his defense. I thought that his guys made some big plays and when the games on the line, made some big baskets and they deserved the victory today."

South Carolina hadn't played much zone coming out of the game. How prepared were you for it and how do you think they reacted?

"We've been working on zone offense since spring, and into the summer and into the fall. It's easy, sometimes as coaches, to implement your system. But it's another thing for your newcomers to adjust what they've been accustomed to all their lives and how they can adjust into a new system. That's been our biggest challenge, execution against in these situations. I'm just hoping that we can continue to keep learning and don't allow ourselves to get caught up in a cycle. It's very unusual to be ahead three games and fall in the second half like we have. But that just shows we got a lot of growing pains that we got to go through."

On The No Room For Racism Classic

"I would like to say this; I want to congratulate the city of Rock Hill for the emphasis that they placed on the theme of this game. In the climate that we exist in now, it's not always easy to make statements. You have to be careful that you, sometimes you, please some people and insult other people when you're dealing with a sensitive issue. The theme of the classic was no place for racism. I'm from Gastonia and the fact that I just found out about the Friendship 9 as I was coming into this tournament speaks for itself. That was a significant part of our history, a significant moment in time. When you think about how the city and the community of Rock Hill have established it as something that they are proud of and how it was handled is significant. Those who worked hard to put that museum together as well as initiating this tournament with that theme. I try to be real careful because I'm extremely sensitive to this theme and these issues that we have in America. I'm always encouraging dialogue. I'm always encouraging people. Let's have a conversation. Let's not jump to conclusions. We all have opinions. We all are who we are as a result of what we've been exposed to. But it concerns me that the racism issue has kind of been treated like so many of the other things in our society that we should be giving attention. I mean, so it's not like it's treated any differently than we do about all the diet related illnesses. We lead the nation...we lead the world in diet related illnesses. I mean most of the cancer, the diabetes, the high blood pressure, that stuff is self-inflicted. But we don't have enough education, enough communication, enough dialogue about those issues. Domestic violence, drug overdose, teen violence, 50% of all marriages end in divorce. That's just one of the most important institutions that we have in our society. So the racism issues get clumped in with all those other things that are important that we don't have discussions about. You know, we get overly sensitive, and I don't ever want to offend anybody. I mean, I don't want to offend anybody because I realize that we're in challenging times. But for the people of Rock Hill to stand up and say, let's have a conversation. Let's highlight this as part of something. We need to learn how to deal with its significance, and they are to be congratulated for having that courage in this day and time, to encourage

dialogue and conversation. I believe...if we put somebody on the moon, we better figure out how to get along. I mean, America is one of the greatest places in the world. Where is *the* greatest place in the world? But somehow never...we just got to think, we got to do better and not try to blame people, not trying to fault people. Let's have a conversation and see well now that we can figure out how to work these things out. When you look around the world and you see the other nations have conflicts and then when you look at the end results...this is not very pretty for anybody. I mean, you look at all the conflicts we have. I won't go through all of them. But it's unnecessary, and I still have faith because we make so much progress in our society and how we deal with issues. I just feel that, sooner or later, if we just have conversation in a respectful way and respect people's opinions, and let's see, can we work this out? So, I just can't leave here without acknowledging the fact that there's something special about the feeling that I got from being here – being at the ceremony yesterday and the ribbon cutting. That was an emotional moment for me because I grew up during those times right up in Gastonia, where I used the color bathrooms, I used the color water fountains, I sat on the balconies the movies, I couldn't eat at certain restaurants. I had to sit in the back of the bus when we go to the bus. I lived that, and so that was a very emotional moment for me. But I must say I had a very good feeling about the atmosphere and the hard work that people in Rock Hill and the community just to make a statement that we want to be part of the solution. I hope that you guys, as journalists, will do your part in recognizing, not necessarily picking a side of what's right or what's was wrong, to try to tell someone what they should or should not do, and how they should feel. But I think it's fair to say that it's significant for us to have conversation and see can we make this world a better place for everybody who is here? We've always had to figure out how we will get along. It's amazing to me why I should dislike you if I don't know you. [Because of me that] For me what's also interesting is why you should dislike me when you don't really get to know me. I think we're better than that. And I think that you guys, as with the pen and the pencil, that people read and this doesn't lose the significance of this classic and also the significance of the people in the community. Here, 50 years ago, something significant happened in this community. And now they're trying to move forward and putting the emphasis on they're proud of the fact that these young men had the initiative. And I'll close with this. You know, it's significant that they had the courage to go sit at the counter. But when you think about the reason why they went and sat at those counters, when you think about the indignity that they endured by feeling less than, confused as to why at 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 years old when you're put in that situation...how confused they were as to why am I not good enough to use this bathroom or eat at this restaurant. What was building up in there and to the point where they became frustrated to the point where they say listen, we can't take it. And it's significant in I believe they started out with other people, but they only ended up with nine because that's human nature. That was a hard thing to do. Because those days when you got arrested you didn't know what was going to happen to you. For them as teenagers to have that courage to step up and put their life on the line for something bigger than themselves is extremely significant. We talked about the act of sitting at the counter. But the reason why they said what they had to go through that motivated them to the point where they say listen, I don't care what happens to me, I got to make a statement, is significant. So when I saw those guys yesterday there it was, it was very emotional for me because I lived it. I walked it. And the good thing is that I just felt something significant and positive in the atmosphere. And then I'm hoping that you guys can help them build on and not just let it be "that was the name of the theme of the classic" because you guys play a significant role in making people aware. I'm not asking you to [come up with] pick a side on these issues one way or another. But I think it's fair to actually encourage the conversation, the dialogue, just to see, you know, how we can move forward with the courage that those nine young teenagers did back in 1961."

John Butler has been put into the starting lineup for the last couple of games. What type of growth have you seen from him? And what type of player can he be?

"You have no idea how challenging it is for a seven-one guy to go from what he's been doing in high school to now being put in a situation where he actually is switching one through five, he's guarding a 250-pound guy in the post. He's gotten quick, fast. Perimeter guard on perimeter. He's learning different systems. He's from a defensive standpoint, those are challenging things for a guy to learn and adjust to. Now, you know, he has to bring the ball down the floor, he has to make decisions in a plethora of things. I mean, you know, now we go from man-to-man offense to zone offense to out of bounds plays, press offense, press defense. That's not easy. He's made significant progress. I feel that the future is extremely bright for him. His skills are at a level that I think is...his attitudes good, he's got a high IQ. He's still adjusting. He's still learning. He's still growing in the game of basketball at this level. His

best basketball is ahead of him. He moved into the line-up just because I have confidence that what you're seeing now is just the beginning of something that I think will end up being special"

Can you describe the last two plays...the block by Keyshawn Bryant and the last block it seemed like you got what you wanted that last play offensively. Is that what y'all kind of drew up?

"We have a number of situation things we work on a regular basis. We just felt whether we had man or zone, we craft those up and we executed very well. And if he couldn't, for several seconds on the clock, if he couldn't get in the lane and draw a foul or get a good look ... we had three spots for him to look to on both sides and behind. But he had a good look and it's unfortunate it just didn't go in. You've got to give Frank credit. I thought they had played well. Taking advantage of our youthful inexperience. They had made some adjustments that caused us to pause a little bit and not executing them as well as if you watched us play, we've been pretty good at doing things over the years. But that's where we are now. This was a good game for us to learn from, evaluate, and move forward, because I wish we would have won the game, but Frank earned it, deserved it. We got a good look. Sometimes they fall and sometimes they don't."

Frank Martin has talked a lot about how influential you were on him early in his career and sitting in your office when he was in his 20s as a young coach and in Florida and just curious, I mean, how has your relationship with him sort of developed over the years and what does it mean to be able to participate against him at an event, in a platform like this?

"One of the reasons why I always try to give back ... I try to utilize the opportunities and experiences that I've endured in my life to end the challenges that help young people not have to go through some of the challenges they have, but also to give them an idea of how to avoid some mistakes that I've experienced and I've seen other people go through. A lot of that goes back to the unforeseen challenges I had to deal with during segregation. Some people became bitter, discouraged, and angry. My father never taught me that. The indignities of being made feel less than, knowing why other people felt they were better than, I used it as a motivator to not ever want to have to ensure that. I want to be better than that. I didn't want to have to make any excuses. I didn't want to blame anybody. I wanted to be ... I wanted to try to work myself through every challenge and obstacle that was before me regardless of what it was or who did it. When Frank was 22/23 years old, he was assistant coach at Miami High School and at the time, not very many of those players, but to even consider the University of Miami. However, we did get one of their players who was player of the year in the state, Steve Evans that was Doug Evans brother, who's on (South Carolina's) staff and a friend, made a big difference in our program. So whenever Frank would come around, I would try to take as much time as I could, because I saw we had potential. He was very good at what he does, what he was doing at the time. I wanted to share everything I could with him because I've had people take me under their wings and share things with me. I'm so proud of where he is and what he's done and the kind of man that he is. He was exposed to some of the challenges coming from his family coming over from Cuba like I was exposed to different sets of circumstances. I try to explain to these guys, in order to get to a place where you have never been, you got to do something that you've never done. You have to not make excuses because it's easy to get ... my motivation came because I just did not want to ever have to go back and live the way that I had to live and I didn't want my brothers and my sisters to have to do this. So I adopted my brother Willy, Barry, and my sister Pam when I graduated from college, being the first person in my family to go to college. I'm wanting to set the example for them. You know, my sister Pam, I adopted all three of my brothers. John I didn't adopt because he grew out of the age where he could be adopted. They lived with me. I tried to change the culture of my family. I'm always mindful that when I sit down and talk with young people, I take time. Frank was one of those guys and listen, he's always hanging around, coming around and asking questions. And my entire life, I've always tried to learn from people who I thought had the wisdom. In life, you know, you gain wisdom a couple of ways. Sometimes you're wise because it's a gift from God. And then sometimes you gain wisdom because of the experiences that you have to endure. And the third way, you listen to someone who has gained wisdom, who may be a little wiser. And that was sure...So I try not to shortchange youngsters, and Frank was one of them and I'm glad to see him where he is. I'm so proud of him. He's done a great job. I'm so disappointed I didn't get a chance to speak to his lovely wife."