

Coaches Quotes
Florida State 79, Duke 78 (OT)
Tuesday, January 18, 2022
Donald L. Tucker Center
Tallahassee, Fla.

Florida State Head Coach Leonard Hamilton

Opening Statement

"In our preparation for Duke, I thought that this edition of the Duke team was the most impressive, one of the most impressive ones that I've seen only because they seem to execute so well on the offensive end. Their spacing is such and they normally score bunches in the paint. I don't know what we did tonight inside, but they normally just overwhelm you with offensive put backs. What we didn't know, and the most challenging thing to prepare for as I look back at the game, is that I thought they did a tremendous job defensively. We never could get any type of offensive rhythm. The things that we have been working on all year long they seemed to have made us stagnant. They overplayed, they took a lot of things away from us so we had to improvise. Guys had to play a little bit out of offense. I thought that our effort was very good, we were extremely aggressive. They went to the zone defense there in the second half, because they very seldom ever use the zone, that surprised us a little bit. But you would think though because we just played a game against a two-three zone in Syracuse and spent all week that we would have been a little bit more mentally prepared. I thought was a very strong move on their part because we didn't really expect them to play zone. But as fate would have it I thought our guys made the right plays, hit the right free-throws, we hit some threes, Caleb kind of gave us some offensive productivity, we got a big block there at the end."

You challenged your freshman, your first year players, tied going against that front court, I guess what can you say about John, Naheem McLeod, how they rose to that challenge?

"There is no doubt that John Butler is just growing up in front of our eyes. There's not another seven foot one in the country that's been asked to do what we are asking him to do. He has a tremendous amount of adjustment he has to make in terms of guarding the ball full court, moving the ball down court in transition, switching on all five positions, we are really really tempted to do that same things that guards do. He's rising to the occasion and tonight he took a step a little further. He shot the ball well from the perimeter, just did a great job containing the dribble, and with his length and his size and wingspan I thought made a big difference in them not making some of the plays that they normally make."

RayQuan Evans had another huge clutch moment for you again; I guess talk about the last possession of regulation, the kind of runner he made and then knocking down those free throws in overtime?

"He is very mature and he has a tremendous amount of character and he has given us tremendous leadership. Whenever the game is on the line he seems to always make the right decision. We feel safe when he is going to the line and honestly those plays, those runners, he's been doing that ever since he's been here that's a unique skill that he has to finish plays high off the backboard, to avoid getting his shot blocked. He's given us more leadership, you saw him in the huddles, he's taken the young guys under his wing, he's really, really given us some really solid point guard play and he's the difference as we move to the second half of our season."

How proud of you were of the freshman – Jalen Warley, Matthew Cleveland, obviously John Butler -- they all had big moments for you in a game they really needed, against a really good team?

"I did look up out there one time and I had all five first year guys out there at one time, and I thought that was a little interesting, but they were playing well they were giving is good execution, I was very proud of them. But I thought our effort was at a level five tonight, offensively and defensively, we didn't always execute as well as I would have liked but I thought that our effort was good throughout the game, I still got a tremendous amount of respect for Duke and how well they connected their art together. It took a tremendous effort on our kids part and I think one of the reasons why they played so well tonight is because of the respect we have for their program."

I wanted to ask, obviously Paolo Banchero, got 20 on the evening, but you guys really made him work for every bucket he got. How impressed were you by how the team played him?

"There is no doubt that he is the number one player in college basketball right now. There is no doubt about that, he does a tremendous job, he makes great decisions, he's very mature, he very seldom ever gets roused, he shoots from range, he can rebound, I mean he is as advertised. And there is no doubt that he probably deserves all of the recognition that he is getting and that's why our guys gave him a lot of attention, out of the respect that we have for him."

I think that's four times out of the last five games your team have had ten or fewer turnovers.

"There is no doubt that we were focused on that a lot. It's interesting the fact that they overplayed their pressure so very much. They are a great half court defensive team and we had a hard time executing out of the half court. And it's amazing that we only had five turnovers with the pressure that they were putting on us. They overplayed, they really got after us very good, and to not only turn the ball over five times points out the fact that our guys were really focused on meeting the passes and taking care of the ball."

Another signature victory this is one that fans and Seminole nation will remember can you just talk a little bit about what this can do as far as moving you guys forward, and you guys are getting better every game

"What we have to do is stay focused on that which we can control. We know we need to not get distracted by the success; you can't get too high when things are going well and you can't get too low when things are not going well. You know we've got four games in eight days we have to manage our energy we have to come back tomorrow and give a lot of attention to North Florida and then we leave to go down to Miami. I don't know if you guys know that tonight but Miami probably shocked the world with a 25 point victory against North Carolina. So you know that we got our work cut out for us the next several days, we just got to stay focused."

You'll be tipping off against North Florida in 36 hours. How does that quick turn around effect things for y'all?

"We just have to manage it. This is what we are up against. We need to get our rest, eat properly. Tomorrow we won't be doing anything physical. We will be in the cold tubs and getting treatment. We got to see how Malik (Osborne) feels after playing extending minutes when he did not even know if he was going to play. Tanor (Ngom) got into the game a little bit tonight. It looks like he will be able to come back. I'm hoping that allows us to be better. Now is not a good time to be tinkering with your rotation but that is the hand we were dealt."

Can you describe where the team is in terms of confidence?

"That's part of where we are. We are trying to learn a system, trying to learn how to take advantage of the strengths of your teammates, adjusting minutes, sharing the ball... When you have seven first year guys, they all come from places where they have been the man. Now we are asking them to be one of the men. Sometimes that is an adjustment as well. This team has high character. We play with an unselfish spirit. We are in a good place right now and growing in confidence."