

Coaches Quotes

Florida State 64, Virginia 63

Saturday, February 26, 2022

John Paul Jones Arena

Charlottesville, Va.

Florida State Head Coach Leonard Hamilton

Opening Statement:

"Tony [Bennett] does such a good job with their defensive schemes, and his pack line defensive philosophy is so difficult for us to find good shots, especially in the first half. They were crowding the lane and it made it very difficult, all the things we worked on, and it seemed as though we couldn't find any cracks anywhere because they do such a great job. Our inexperience showed, I thought especially in the first half. I feel very fortunate that we were at least in contact going into the end of the first half. In the second half, I thought they extended the lead, and even though we had a lot of inexperience, I thought our communication got better. We got some stops, we were live on the backboard, got some deflections and steals; We were able to generate some enthusiasm and got some deflections and got some easy baskets, and made a couple free throws. Virginia is always a challenging team for us because they do such a great job executing the defense. And then, they also challenge your defensive principles because their spacing is so good, their ball reversing is so good, and they always seem to have someone available to knock down shots. But, in the last two or three minutes of the game, I thought that we got some deflections and steals, and were able to at least tie the game up. Obviously, that was an exceptional shot that Matt [Cleveland] made at the end. Now I know you guys may find this interesting, but we work on that every day. We'll warm up and shoot free throws, then we go into our shooting drills, and every day at the end, we make half-court shots. And that was just one of those fortunate shots for us that went in. I told Matt [Cleveland] in the locker room [after the game] that we're going to run that play for him about three times a half. I hope he's able to make it more than once in a while. It was a great game, I'm especially proud of our guys. We've had ups and downs, and to deal with all the adversity that we've had to deal with this year and for them to come into a team as well coached and talented as this team, I feel very fortunate to come away with a victory."

On Matthew Cleveland's effectiveness tonight:

"Matt is one of the highest IQ basketball freshmen that we've had. He understands the game as well as any youngster that I have been around, offensively and defensively. Sometimes when you are talking with inexperienced players, they hear the words, but the picture that comes to their mind is not always what you intend for it to be, but he's always on point. He doesn't get rattled, he has a tremendous amount of energy, and he realized we needed somebody to step up and give us a little bit extra "Umph" today and he rose to the occasion. He is a high IQ guy, has a tremendous motor, is a very courageous youngster, and I think the future is very bright for him."

On Kihei Clark:

"I thought [Kihei] Clark controlled the game. I mean, he was just in total control of the game. He found people, he created shots for teammates, he made some easy passes and gave them some easier shots. Even when we were playing our best defense, he broke us down. He never lost his composure. He hit that big three in the first half, in the corner with a seven-two guy guarding him. He just seems to make all the right decisions. I can't say enough about the respect I have for him. He was a freshman on the championship team, correct? Yeah. And you're going to miss him. He's a coach on the floor. I've talked to people who watched him play in high school, and everybody thought he was a cerebral guy that makes great decisions, and so that was a tremendous evaluation on Tony's staff to go out in California and find a little guy like that has meant so much to the program. I can't say enough about the respect I have for him, and I'm not going to say that I'm disappointed to see him go."