

Coaches Quotes
Florida State 89, NC State 76
March 5, 2022
Donald L. Tucker Center
Tallahassee, Florida

Florida State Head Coach Leonard Hamilton

Opening Statement

"I'm real proud of our team for maintaining their focus through all of the challenges we've had to overcome this year. We've had some ups, we've had some downs, our emotions as we dealt with what seemed like one injury after another, after another. The thing that has been challenging for these guys, as close as they are, the culture that we gave them and developed, you get disappointed when you know who one of your teammates who loves to play is not as certain of when he's going to play and if he's going to play. We have three guys now who have season ending injuries and you feel for them, and your responsibility changes; more minutes are required and the stress of picking up the slack for guys who aren't available has changed almost every week. But the guys have grown closer together, they have developed more of a bond, and it seemed as though they have come to a point where they feel like we can win regardless of who we have available, next man up mentality, has been taken up by my team. The fan support this year, the students have been exceptional, every game, regardless of if we won or lost, the community we have had close to near sellouts, just about every game. That says a lot about the support we have gotten, but it means an awful lot to our players that during those moments, when things are not going well for us, we always felt that love and energy from our crowd. In this particular game, (RayQuan) Evans I think he had 10 assists, (Anthony) Polite had a double-double, 14 points with 10 rebounds, we were able to get (Caleb) Mills back, I'm hoping that his injury isn't proving to be anything serious. He's given us 19 points after we lost Cam Fletcher for the remainder of the season. This team has just seemed to find a way to rejuvenate itself under all circumstances."

Coach when did you think Caleb would be able to go and what did he give as far as a lift? He didn't miss a shot till late in the game.

"Cam has a mentality about him, that confidence, that's important to our team. He's experienced, we have some guys who, they are not as quite confident in where they are, in terms of development, and him to come off of injury and play number of games, and give us 19 points in 18 minutes, as efficient as he was it was good to have him back on the floor, gave us that little "umph" everybody says, that we needed to help us over that hump when the game got a little close, he was able to give us some offense and productivity. This confidence, he believes in the set up and our players believe in him, so that is especially coming off of Cam Fletcher's operation yesterday, he was a walking sight, but hopefully he will be prepared to help us once we get in the ACC tournament."

Leonard, was Caleb's' injury late in the game, was that a re-aggravation of his previous injury?

"I have not really gotten the full (report). And when they say that it wasn't anything serious, I didn't ask any details. I'm sure he probably came down wrong and aggravated the old injury, I'm assuming."

Leonard, to finish the regular season, and I know it's been a crazy year, but to finish the regular season with 2 straight wins going into the conference tournament, you've been preaching for a while that anything could happen in the conference tournament, and I think these last few games kind of reassured those guys that that's the case.

"There is no doubt that, in reality you look around and the way the ACC has gone in the regular season, that you've had guys, anybody is capable of winning on any given night. Once you get to the ACC tournament, it's a team that is playing the best on that particular night and hopefully we will put ourselves in that position."

Thank you guys for your coverage all year. It has been an interesting year. You have been a witness to something that has never happened in college basketball. Talking with the TV announcers, we beat the number one team in our league. And now the players that started that game are dressed. These guys will remember this year for the rest of their lives. They'll have some fond memories of how they persevered, how they handled adversity, how they make the best out of a negative situation. I can't say enough about how proud I am of these guys and the way they've stuck together. Our society will mirror their relationships, communication, and respect that our basketball teams

have for each other. On our team, we have guys from all over the country and different parts of the world, black kids, white kids, all religions, and we have guys who found a way to respect one another and get along with one another. They ended up being brothers. We always give our players the opportunity to talk about their journey, even in scouting meetings. For these guys to share their heart, brings everybody to tears and positive emotional situations of they feel about their journey, about each other, the relationships they've established with their coaches. If our society could mirror that, we would have a much better place to live and be able to get along. Our guys have been able to create a culture that I am proud of. Hopefully we can enjoy this moment and we can get back to the drawing board for the ACC tournament, and do something different than anyone else has ever done. Thank you all for the coverage"

Senior Guard Anthony Polite

Your first double-double of the season...how important was it to you to finish off the season with a big game like this?

"It was huge; I've been wanting to get a double-double. All the guys celebrating us today was exciting, and we played extremely hard for our seniors. I am appreciative of the team that we have and for Coach Ham for putting it all together."

What was it like emotionally after the Senior Ceremony to settle in and get ready for the game?

"I was able to dial in pretty quick. It was definitely emotional. But as soon as the jump ball went up, I was locked in."

About his journey and improving during his time at Florida State...

"All of the coaches do a great job telling me what to work on during the summer and giving me confidence and pushing me to the next level. I listen to them and put my trust in them."

On Caleb Mill's performance...

"Caleb is a bucket getter. He is able to put the ball in the bucket extremely easily. We expect him to do that. We were happy to have him back and finish this season off strong."