

Maui Jim Maui Invitational

Monday, November 23, 2015

Kevin Stallings

Vanderbilt Commodores



Vanderbilt 92 St. John's 55

THE MODERATOR: Coach Stallings, an opening statement?

COACH STALLINGS: I thought our guys came out with a lot of intensity and purpose at the beginning of the game. The way we played the first, probably, 10 or 12 minutes of the game, I think, set the tone.

We were a little disappointed in our play last time out on Thursday night, and I think our guys wanted to atone for that.

We also recognized that we caught St. John's in a short-handed situation. They were without a couple of guys that are usually available to them, and we certainly acknowledge that. But I thought our guys played very, very well, and I was pleased with our play on both ends.

Q. Luke, you had seven rebounds again today what's been the difference for you this year as far as rebounding the basketball a bit more?

LUKE KORNET: I think a lot of it was just the mentality. Just every single day trying to be bit of a more physical presence around the goal, and definitely it helps when I had the whole off-season to improve my body and stuff like that. I think most of it though is really trying to be a presence with blocking shots and rebounding. It's all kind of the same thing and all about my mental approach for the game.

Q. Nolan, what was different for you today?

NOLAN CRESSLER: I think my approach was better. Yesterday I got a couple extra shots after practice and what not. Got with Coach Richardson, one of our assistants, and I just think my preparation was better, and when my name was called, I stepped in and made a couple.

Q. You guys shot almost 53% from three. What do you think it was today?

NOLAN CRESSLER: Some days they go in a lot more. We've got a team full of great shooters. I think we just executed and we were excited to play. I think our preparation was great. We've been working hard all week, and I think if we do that, the ball just goes in.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Coach Stallings.

Q. Did you guys imagine you would win by this much? Just the margin of the victory?

COACH STALLINGS: I don't think you ever anticipate winning. I told Chris, and I meant this, their team has really, really, really improved, and I know that that may sound a little weird, but from where they were after their first exhibition game to where they were after their last game where they beat Rutgers, their team has shown a tremendous amount of improvement.

So, no, I did not anticipate that the final margin would be the way it was. I was just pleased with the way that we approached the game and the way we played. We're always pretty good about sharing the ball. You asked about us shooting 53% from three, and honestly we're not a 53% three-point shooting team. But there are lots of days we shoot over 50% if you count practice. Our team can make them on most days. Some days you don't, but a lot of days we do. So that's not a surprise to us, because we do have a team, as Nolan said, full of guys that can make them.

Q. Coach, no player with more than 25 minutes. How big was it the first game of the back-to-back-to-back to be able to limit minutes?

COACH STALLINGS: When we got the lead, certainly that was something that was in the back of my mind. Damian only played five minutes in the first half. I wanted to give him time in the second half. He picked up a couple more fouls, and I took him out. I didn't have to, but I took him out. But we wanted to limit minutes.

Luke had 17 in the first half. I think Riley had 15 or 17, and I wanted to shorten those up guys up in the second half given the lead that we had. Because, again, three games in three days is a challenge, especially against this quality of competition.

Q. Just wanted to get your thoughts on Damian Jones. He's playing well for you guys. He's mentioned as somebody who clearly has a pro potential, sooner rather than later, most likely. What makes him so good? What's gotten him from where he was when you got him to where he is now?

COACH STALLINGS: I think a couple things. First of all, Damian certainly did not have a Damian-like day,

which probably makes this even better for us that he didn't play anything close to what he normally gives us. Again, he only played five minutes in the first half. You can't produce if you're not on the court.

But to answer your question, he's every bit of 6'11". If he's not the fastest guy on our team, he's the second fastest guy on our team. He can run and jump and change directions with the grace and the skill of a 6'2" really athletic guard. Because of his own work and how hard he's worked since we've gotten him, and hopefully some of it has to do with the way we develop guys, but you saw that left-handed jump hook. That's pretty impressive. You saw the right-handed jump hook, and it wouldn't surprise me at all for him to jump up and take and make a three-point shot.

So he's just really worked hard on his skill level, and there are times when more of it shows up than others. Like today was a little bit less than other times. But Damian is a great kid. Probably too nice sometimes, and he's playing with a little more fire this year which has really been good for us, and a little more intensity and tenacity.

We won't do in this tournament what we were hoping to do if he doesn't step up and kind of become the lead player in the band, because he's our guy. Our guys know it, and he knows it. But he did what he had to do today. He didn't have to do as much.

But I would, again, long answer to a short question, his work ethic has been the biggest thing, but he's been blessed with a great body, and a great amount of athleticism.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you for your time, coach.