

March 20, 2014



Florida – 67
Albany – 55

An interview with:



WILL BROWN: I'm very proud of my team. This is our third game in six days against arguably the best team in the country, a tremendous effort. This has turned into a very, very tough, tough team, and I'm proud of them. This was a tremendous opportunity for our University, for our program, for our athletic department, and you know, we're very excited to represent the city of Albany in the America East Conference. Congratulations to Florida and Coach Donovan. They have a legitimate chance to win the national title, and I thought we really challenged them tonight. It was a great effort overall by our team.

Q. Can you talk about the fact that going into the game you weren't going to be intimidated against arguably a bigger, more talented opponent?

DJ EVANS: Yeah, we just had the mentality that it doesn't matter what it is on the front of the jersey. The name doesn't mean anything. You just have to go out there, just play the game, and that's what we did.

GARY JOHNSON: We just wanted to come out and play as hard as we could and try to take it one media at a time and try to win each segment. We came up close but came up short.

JOHN PUK: Yeah, this team has faced a lot of adversity before, and we've experienced

many situations. I'm just proud of the way my guys came out and played. Once the ball was thrown up we were just going to play basketball.

Q. DJ, did you guys feel like you had to play a perfect game to win today?

DJ EVANS: I wouldn't say we felt like we had to play a perfect game, but I just felt like we had to play really well for 40 minutes. I don't think any team plays perfect for 40 minutes because every shot is not going to go in. But you just have to play every -- just have to play hard.

Q. DJ, it looked like you took a foot to the head and now you have ice on your elbow. Can you describe what happened and how are you feeling?

DJ EVANS: I had a lot of bumps and bruises, but if I would have never got back up and went back in the game, I feel like I would just let my team down, so I just felt like they needed me at the time. But I'm okay. I was able to get back in. But it was just a dog fight. I just didn't want to let my teammates down.

Q. DJ, 14 minutes left, basically tie game, you're with them the whole way. Do you allow yourself at any point to think we might do this?

DJ EVANS: Of course. In the beginning of the game I felt like we could do it, but yeah, that was a good feeling to see that me and my team was competing the way we were. We just felt like we wanted to shock the world, and I'm proud of these guys, and I would not trade them for anybody.

Q. DJ, can you just describe how, I guess, the process of you getting to this point, how you started playing ball and what it meant to get this far and get so close to beating a No. 1?

DJ EVANS: It was a long process. We went, like Puk said, we've been through a lot of



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adversity this year, but we just stayed together as a team and as a family. These guys are just like my brothers. We just have to be there for each other, and that's what we did today.

Q. Will, could you talk a little bit more about how your team, how proud you are of your team after staying with a team that a lot of people didn't think they'd stay with at all?

WILL BROWN: Well, you know, obviously I'm a proud coach right now, and I think everybody affiliated with our university is proud of the young men in our program right now. Like you said, very few people gave us a chance tonight. I had an alum email me an article from a newspaper that says Gators open with laughter. I think our guys take stuff like that personally.

We came here to win. People think that's coach-talk. We spent a lot of time coming up with a game plan. This was our third game in six days. You know, we did a lot of mental preparation the past 36 hours because I had to keep our guys fresh. You know, if we didn't come here to win, we should have got on that plane in Dayton and went right back to Albany. A 16 is going to beat a 1 at some point, and we wanted to be that team. We've been in this situation before. In '06 we were tied with UConn with five-and-a-half or six minutes to go. I think we ran out of gas, and the best team in the country probably had something to do with it, as well. I'm as proud as any coach in the country right now because this was resilient group that developed tremendous toughness the last month of the season and really came together as a group. I could sit here and talk to you about them all night, but like I said, I'm happy for them.

Q. A couple questions: First, the three games in such a short span and then the travel, the overnight, do you feel in general that that's fair for a team? And second of all, I've heard that you helped design the uniforms and I wanted to ask you that, what went into that?

WILL BROWN: Well, in regard to the uniforms, with me they're going to use that phrase they use a lot in college and the NBA, one-and-done, so I don't think I'll be designing any more uniforms. We did get a lot of attention for the uniforms. I don't know if that's good or bad.

But the other question was, I'm sorry?

Q. The turnaround?

WILL BROWN: See how the uniforms distract me?

But the quick turnaround is tough, but we're not going to sit here and complain. We're representing a great league, the America East Conference, and we're playing in the NCAA Tournament. It's a wonderful opportunity for our university, the exposure that we've gotten the past few days, and if they made us play every day, we'd play every day and we would represent our city and our university to the best of our ability. No complaints here from Coach Brown.

Q. Can you talk about Florida a little bit? Did you guys maybe expose some things that they're lacking? Do you really think they can compete for a national title?

WILL BROWN: Well, they're the No. 1 overall seed. They're arguably the best team in the country. They've got a Hall of Fame coach, tremendous length, athleticism, McDonald's All-Americans coming off the bench. If there is a better team in the country, let me know. When a team runs through the SEC, whether people think it's up, down or just okay, when you go undefeated in the SEC, that's impressive. I'm not sure they've lost a game this year when they've had their full line-up in place, so I'm not sure how you can question them. My job as well as my staff, my staff does a great job breaking down film. I'm very fortunate in that regard.

They put the film in front of me, and I've got to come up with a game plan. There's certain things that I noticed watching them that I thought we could do maybe to expose them. I'm not sure the bigger programs at the BCS level are willing to roll the dice like I was willing to roll, and we were going to play certain guys a certain way. We were going to make certain guys beat us. We were going to mix up our defense. We mixed them up so much that we confused our guys at times. But I thought we kept them off balance.

I think the biggest difference is I think we ran out of gas, and also, again, we're playing the No. 1 team in the country, and all that length, physicality and athleticism is another reason why we wore down besides the three games in six days. We were going with basically what I call our iron seven these last couple of games.

You know, our guys deserve all the credit for embracing the game plan. It's one thing for a coach to put together a game plan; it's another thing for a group of young men to go out and execute the game plan, and then I'm asking them

to execute it against the No. 1 overall seed in the NCAA Tournament, so I think our guys deserve an awful lot of credit.

Q. Is part of that game plan having the mentality from the get-go to be the hunter and not the hunted?

WILL BROWN: Well, let's face it; we had nothing to lose. Our program has been in these situations. I mentioned '06 against UConn. Last year in my opinion in the first round, we played Duke. I thought with a healthy Ryan Kelly they were the No. 1 team in the country. I have five guys that played in that game last year that are experienced, and I thought we could rely on that experience, even though Duke last year and Florida this year, a little bit different. Not only did we have three games in six days, two of the teams we played pressed for 40 minutes. So that's tough to deal with, as well.

You know, like I said, I just think that our guys executed that game plan as well as we could have asked, and we didn't have any time on a court, either. I did not bring my guys to a court since we beat Mount St. Mary's on Tuesday. Wednesday was all mental preparation. Today we didn't even do a shoot-around. We didn't go to the gym. We went into the ballroom at the hotel and taped a court down, and we did stuff in there. I had to keep these guys fresh, not only physically but mentally, as well, because I had to have them believing that we can win this game.

We came here to win. I know a lot of people smile about that and think this coach is crazy, these kids are crazy. We came here to win. We believed we could win. We wanted to be the first 16 to beat a 1. That was our mentality.

Q. Was trying to stop them low because of their size and athleticism which you referred to, was that going to be a problem no matter how much you could game plan?

WILL BROWN: Yeah. You see the size of Patric Young? If he couldn't make it in the NBA he's going to have a shot in the NFL. If he doesn't go to the NFL, he'll be in the WWE, if he doesn't go to the WWE maybe UFC, I mean, that guy is enormous. DJ comes up to his kneecap. He's huge, and that's the tough part. I'm asking my bigs to really battle and grind, and John Puk said, Coach, can't move him. I'm like, well, try. I mean, they wear you down, the length, the athleticism. They're quicker, bigger, more athletic at every position than us. That's why we have to play so

well and so sharp if we were going to win that game.

Q. Since you got to play them both could you give us a little preview of Florida against Pitt?

WILL BROWN: Jamie Dixon is a good friend of mine, and I'll tell you, I think that game, if Pitt handles Florida's pressure and it becomes a half-court game, that could be one of the -- that could be the most physical game you'll see in the NCAA Tournament this year. I think whoever can score the ball easiest in that game is going to win, and I think Florida's pressure allows them to get some cheap turnovers which will translate into some easy baskets.

I think Pitt is really good. I think Jaime is one of the best coaches in the country. I think Florida is playing the best in the country right now, and you're talking about a 1, and Pitt is a 9 -- a 1-9 game? This NCAA Tournament, now that we're out, hopefully I'll get a chance to watch some games in between recruiting, but this is going to be a great game, I think, a lot closer than many people think.

Q. Michael Frazier only had one three today. What was your game plan for him?

WILL BROWN: Well, we had all sorts of names for him: Ray Allen, Jesus Shuttlesworth. He has the smoothest stroke since Ray Allen. We were determined not to let him get a free look. Unbelievable shooter, arguably as good of a shooter as you'll find in college basketball. We wanted to force them to beat us with twos. We didn't want to give them as many dunks as we did, but we had to give up something. We were not going to let Frazier beat us. We stayed home on him, we didn't help off him. Obviously we played a lot of junk defense, triangle-and-two, diamond-and-one, played some match-up zone, but we always wanted to know where he was at all times, and then the other guy we were really concerned about was Wilbekin. We were going to let the other guys shoot -- not let them shoot, but our game plan was not to let those two guys beat us, and our guys I thought did a pretty good job. But Frazier, he might be the best shooter in all of college basketball.

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