

NO. 1 VIRGINIA 64, NO. 9 FLORIDA STATE 51

Virginia Coach Tony Bennett Joe Harris Anthony Gill

COACH BENNETT: Okay. Well, first of all, I think hard fought game. I knew it was going to be physical. I thought Joe Harris really kept us going and Anthony Gill in the first half, and I think one of the strengths in our team this year has been depth. So when a guy like Malcolm to have an uncharacteristic game for him, to see those guys step up, and just getting the contributions from the masses, that was important. And I think that was a key in the game.

They turned us over early. We looked shaky. They did a good job. They got on the offensive glass early. When we shored those things up and had a level of patience, I thought we became a better team and knowing obviously of their talent.

Q. I know you said you expected Joe to elevate his play here on the stage, but when a few of those shots go down early, how much better do you feel knowing, okay, it's happening?

COACH BENNETT: No. He certainly did a good job. Joe has one of his strengths is he knows when to step up. We talked about this yesterday, actually Joe and I did. He knows when to let it come. I thought he really did a great job early when we needed some things, showed a variety of things he can do, which I thought was very good and I thought he was locked in defensively as well.

Q. Early on in the game Florida State had a huge advantage rebounding. Did you get an opportunity to address that with the players or did they just kind of solve that themselves?

COACH BENNETT: Of course we talked about it during the timeouts. At halftime that was our thing. I thought we were even better at the end of the first half. I thought we were keeping them off of the glass. But our careless turnovers or turnovers that led to opportunities for them and then their offensive rebounding were the two areas that we had to get under control if we were going to be successful.

Q. A lot of us thought that you seemed more animated than usual on the sidelines. Can you talk about your thoughts going in to the game?

COACH BENNETT: Well, I mean, it was a physical game. You got to be ready. We haven't played for a while. I think just it's this is not that it's okay to not be that way during the regular season. But this is a great opportunity for us. I thought our guys were ready. We wanted to set the tone. I was just trying to encourage and be engaged and be passionate.

That's what we talked about to our guys. Be passionate. Play with passion wisdom, passion and compassion. Those were the three things we talked about today in playing that way.

- Q. Tony, the 26 bench points tonight, Akil and Darion, could you maybe just talk how big that was for COACH BENNETT: You mean Anthony.
 - Q. Sorry. Anthony and Darion.

COACH BENNETT: I can't believe he's disrespecting you like that.

Darion, as I said, gave us a big lift. We've seen Anthony do that. We needed that. I thought Anthony was all over the offensive glass. They got such shot blockers when we got into the paint and a shot went up. Anthony has good timing and a good nose for that. Just looking at him, he had four offense rebounds. Only one defensive rebound.

But really that was important for us. I think as I said in the opening statement, when Malcolm was a little off, the other guys stepped up and that was certainly key.

Q. Joe, Coach had said during the week he anticipated you elevating your play here. Did you come in with a



NO. 1 VIRGINIA 64, NO. 9 FLORIDA STATE 51

more aggressive mindset? I know you talked about that a bunch.

JOE HARRIS: I would just say you take it with the feel of the game. You kind of have a sense of when you need to be aggressive and when not to be aggressive.

I thought I was getting my guys lost a little bit being able to move without the ball. Guys like AG, Akil, DA, they're all setting very good screens and allowed me to get some looks and I was able to constantly keep my guys in movement which allowed me to get some open shots.

Q. Anthony, talk about the motivation today. Were you aware of Virginia's recent lack of success in this tournament?

ANTHONY GILL: Yeah, I was here to watch the loss last year to NC State. I feel like today we just really wanted to go out there and prove to everybody that we deserved to be here. We deserved to be the number one seed. We went out there and executed.

Q. Anthony, to have this kind of game so close to your home town of High Point, does that make it more special?

ANTHONY GILL: Yeah. You know, I joke with you all of the time saying High Point is the greatest city in the world, and I believe it. It was good to have the fans out there for me and everything. So it was good.

Q. Anthony, growing up in North Carolina, did you attend a lot of ACC tournaments and what were some of your memories that you recall of big games here?

ANTHONY GILL: I really did not attend too many ACC tournament games. I really didn't get focused or start focusing on basketball until probably my sophomore year of high school.

Q. For Joe, how often have you heard the name Ralph Sampson? How often has that history been sort of thrown in the face of teams over the years to try and match what was done so long ago?

JOE HARRIS: I would say that we've been fortunate to have Ralph we've met him a couple of times. He came and spoke to us I think my first year when we played at Minnesota. His son happened to play here. He came to Charlottesville my second year. We saw him after the Georgia Tech game this year in Atlanta.

Other than most of the media I guess talking about the run that we made this season and drawing comparisons, you kind of maybe hear about him a little bit here and there. Obviously he was an unbelievable college player, but the comparisons and all of that didn't happen at all until this season when we started winning games.

Q. Tony, Joe said he kind of went with the feel of the game. But could you tell early he was feeling it and did you change any of your play calls to take advantage of that at all?

COACH BENNETT: No. As I said, I think one of Joe's strengths, when my father and I were talking about him, he has a good feel when to let it come and when to be assertive. He senses. He doesn't get it right all of the time. He senses when something is required of him.

I thought he had a good beat. Again, he said it. He was moving. I thought we were a little stagnant early. He was moving very hard without the ball. He was breaking the vision of some of the Florida State defenders and the guys were setting good screens. You could see him get in that space where he could catch it and either make the play, whether it's a shot, mid range game, I think he showed a lot of things. I want him to be assertive and aggressive with soundness, and I thought he had the right balance mark.

Q. Joe and Anthony, obviously Okaro White came out and said some things, kind of questioned the toughness of the team yesterday. How much did that motivate you guys coming in to this game?

ANTHONY GILL: You know, we heard about all of that stuff. And we were on our way here when we saw it. But Coach Bennett, he kind of like reeled us back in whenever anybody was kind of getting a little bit hyped. He told us it's not about that. It's all about us. To stay poised throughout the whole game and don't lose your mind out there.



NO. 1 VIRGINIA 64, NO. 9 FLORIDA STATE 51

That's what we tried do throughout the game.

- Q. Anthony, second half, how did the defense interior change especially regarding Okaro White? ANTHONY GILL: They were getting a lot of offensive rebounds and Coach Bennett really challenged us at halftime to stop them from doing that. We did our best, the X outs and everything like that on the ball screens, we tried to focus in on that so he didn't get that 15 foot jump shot.
 - Q. Tony, can you talk about Akil on Okaro White in the second half?

COACH BENNETT: Yeah, that was an important match up. One of Akil's strengths, and I think Anthony has really improved in that, specifically Akil, his mobility defensively, whether it's to guard a five, a mobile four, sometimes even a three. And white can really he's not shooting as many threes late in the year, but he can stretch it with his long ball. And then he's quick off the bounce.

So you got to have a guy who individually can at least contain him a little bit until our help was in position. I thought Akil's mobility and defensive prowess showed and it was an important match up for us. That's why we stayed out of foul trouble with them.

Darion did a good job. I don't think Anthony you didn't match up on him too much. Those two guys, their quick ness and Anthony's mobility certainly are important because he can get it going.

Q. Coach, if you could just talk about first time since '95 that the Cavaliers will be playing on Saturday and either Pitt or North Carolina obviously the opponent coming up.

COACH BENNETT: Yeah, two good teams. Great opportunity. Post season is a special time. To be able to come out after not playing our best against Maryland, not poor but not our best, to come out and play a little more indicative of how we want to play was important for us and then a chance to advance. Knowing that this is a special tournament and for these guys to take that next step is exciting and we'll play good teams. We'll be ready to go tomorrow.

Q. Tony, there have been a couple of reports that have come out that the ACC tournament is close to finalizing a deal with the Barclays Center starting in 2017. What would you think of that move?

COACH BENNETT: First of all, I would be the last to know if that was valid or not. This is wonderful here. We'll show up and play anywhere, though. I'll tell you that much. This is a special place.

I went to the ACC tournament in 1995, when I was playing with the Hornets. Mike Gminski was my teammate and JR Reid and I heard those guys talking about it. I remember I went in '95 with my fiancee at the time back then. It was unbelievable. I remember sitting up there and I got my first taste of how special the tournament is here.

But post season play is special. And obviously whatever the ACC decides to do, we'll show up and we'll be excited to play anywhere. It's going to be in D.C., isn't it, first in a couple of years? So I'll just focus on Greensboro and D.C. for now. I got to slow down a little bit.

Q. Joe, after the last two games, prior to the tournament you seemed to struggle with your shooting stroke. A lot of balls were in and out it seemed like. Today almost from the get go, you seemed determined to lead the team on offense. Talk about the mindset between that last game at Maryland and today.

JOE HARRIS: I would just say as a shooter, our coaches are always stressing to have short term memory. You can't worry about however many shots you might have missed in the past. Shoot the ball with the same amount of confidence no matter if you missed eight in a row or hit eight in a row. I don't worry too much about missing shots. I just try to go out there and I'm going to let it go and whatever is best for our team in that situation.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports



NO. 1 VIRGINIA 64, NO. 9 FLORIDA STATE 51

Florida State Coach Leonard Hamilton Aaron Thomas Okaro White

COACH HAMILTON: It was obvious to us that the energy to defend them because they're extremely patient in how they execute their offense. And they had five guys on the floor that are all capable of hurting you, four guys that shoot close to 40 percent from three and a couple of very athletic post guys that were very capable of scoring.

I was pleased with the first 15 or so minutes of the game. I thought we defended them very well. And we kept pace offensively.

The second half, it was obvious that the quality of their depth took its toll on us. We didn't quite have nearly the energy to fight those screens for the long periods of time. And I thought that really made the difference. We didn't have the the four offensive rebounds we gave up the first half, I think three of them they scored on. They did a very good job attacking the basket.

We rotated over our guards, very concerned about their three point shooters. We were kind of in an indecisive mindset, do I rotate, find somebody inside the blockout, do I our game plan was not to give up very many threes and I thought our guys were so indecisive when we thought for a second and they crashed the boards and got those easy baskets in the first half. It kind of gave them that breathing room.

Down the stretch we ran out of gas. They kept executing and executing. That's why I think they're probably one of the top teams that I've seen in a long, long time. Playing within themselves, playing to their strengths, staying away from their weaknesses, making you pay every time you make a defensive mistake. That's to their credit. They're an outstanding basketball team.

Q. Okaro, how critical was that the first three or four minutes of the seconds half, you guys were only down five but it seemed like you couldn't get stops to get yourself back in the game?

OKARO WHITE: That was very critical. That's when they went on their run. They kept it to a nine, ten, 11 point game during that time. It's very hard to come back on a team like Virginia when they're coming down and using 30 seconds of a shot clock. You can't get down on them. That's where they went on that run. So that was a very critical part of the game.

Q. Coach, you guys have struggled with turnovers a little bit. What was Virginia's defense doing that kind of let you guys did it force you guys into them or did you guys kind of do that as their defense setback?

COACH HAMILTON: If you remember correctly, we must have had at least 12 to 15 point blank shots at the rim. I mean, we got great looks. We didn't finish some of the opportunities we had available. So I'm not I can't fault execution. I just think that we didn't have the legs to finish those plays inside.

This is one of the first times in a long time that we haven't had enough depth to keep the rotation where we can keep our energy up. It's been a challenge for us all year long. They're playing nine guys and we're playing four perimeter guys and one rotation there. And it was a little bit more of a challenge.

I thought in order to guard this type of system, you have to you can't take any possessions off defensively. I thought there were too many times as the game went on they started getting separation on their cuts and, like I said earlier, I just think that we look for some spots to catch a breather. And each time we did that, I thought that it cost us.

Q. Okaro, what defensively was Virginia doing the second half that seemed to make it harder for you to get open looks there?

OKARO WHITE: I just thought they played tighter in the second half, when I tried to drive the ball to help them a lot quicker. That's pretty much it.

Q. Leonard, a couple of reports have come out that the ACC tournament is close to finalizing a move to the



NO. 1 VIRGINIA 64, NO. 9 FLORIDA STATE 51

Barclays Center in 2017. As a guy who grew up in North Carolina but also spent a lot of time coaching in the Big East, what do you think of that move and what would it mean for the conference?

COACH HAMILTON: First you have to understand that the reputation of the ACC has been built because of the outstanding ACC tournament for many, many years. And it's been—I think it set the standard by which all other conference tournaments have been judged throughout the years, the pageantry, the interest, the support. And it's been honed right here in Greensboro.

I'm not real sure you can ever replace the culture that has been built for so many years as a result of the tournament being held here in Greensboro. But over the years, it's obvious that the footprint of the league has changed and I think if that's I don't really want to comment on rumors. Because I don't I like to talk about facts. But the tournament has moved around. It's been in Tampa. It's been in Washington, D.C., it's been in Atlanta.

So if it moves somewhere else, I think it would just be part of the plan of the ACC to expand their territory, which is not anything different than what we've been doing all along. If that's the case, then that would be I mean, I can understand that being under consideration. But until it becomes a reality and something that's absolute, I'm not real sure it makes any sense for me to be speculating on it.

Q. Leonard, you're one of those, quote, bubble teams. I know you're not on the committee. Do you think your team deserves to get in? Will you be watching on Sunday, hoping they get in?

COACH HAMILTON: Well, obviously. I think anybody that starts this season off in October and November practicing, there's not a team in America who does not have a plan of wanting to win a national title. Every kid grows up wanting to have an opportunity to participate for a national title. And I think our team and our players and our staff and our school and administration, we all feel the same way.

But the reality is we really don't have a vote. And what we have to do is wait and see what happens. I do believe that we're more than capable of doing well in the NCAA Tournament. But at this particular point, it doesn't do you any good to play the what if game. Because there's a lot of criteria that the committee will use as they try to make their decision.

We hope that we have fulfilled most of them. A win today probably would have helped us a lot better than a loss. So at this particular point there's not anything else we can do other than go back and try to regroup from this game and learn from it and move on and try to get a little rest, prepare ourselves for whatever tournament we are going to play in.

Q. Okaro and Aaron, same question to you guys, do you guys think you've done enough? Do you think you deserve to get in?

AARON THOMAS: Let's see. You know, I think we did. I think we got a couple of good quality wins. Like Coach said, I think today would have helped us a lot. And Syracuse would have helped us a lot. Like Coach said, let's see what happens.

OKARO WHITE: You know, as far as our record, our record speaks for us to be on a bubble. But I mean, I think we're a great team. I think we've showed in the beginning of the season and had a tough time throughout the course of the season, but I think we showed everybody that we're a team that should be out there. I think we're a team that is up to the level of a lot of the teams that's going to be in the NCAA Tournament.

But it's all up to voting and I know there's a lot of different categories they go by. So whatever they choose, we'll go off of.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports