

QUOTES | GAME #4



NO. 5 SYRACUSE 63, NO. 13 CLEMSON 53

SYRACUSE ORANGE

COACH QUENTIN HILLSMAN BRITTNEY SYKES

COACH QUENTIN HILLSMAN: I think this game just came down to just playing hard. It's funny, because when you go into this game and I look back at the tape we played Clemson the first time, they just do a lot of good things in the zone. They spread us out. They put themselves in a situation where most teams you just settle. But when you look at their roster and the players that should be taking 3s, take them, players that shouldn't, drive. We need to concentrate on their personnel and knew who was in our area and who was in front of us.

I give them a lot of credit. Audra is doing an awesome job. She's getting them to play hard and play the right way against our zone.

As far as our team, it was about waking up this morning and trying. I didn't care how we got it, I just wanted to get it. And I thought going into this game, we thought about balance. I thought we had a ton of balance. When you look down our stat lines, everyone played and everyone contributed to this win. So I'm very happy about the win.

I thought that late second half we just got isolated and got some good looks at the basket. Everybody helped us win the basket game.

Q. Quentin, what did you tell Brittney and Brianna at halftime? They were combined 0 for 6, they had no points. I know you had to be concerned about that.

COACH QUENTIN HILLSMAN: Yeah, I was concerned. I told them they were awful. I told them they were awful. I really did. I said if our two best players play awful we're going to lose the basketball game. That's what I told them. You've got to pick it up, we depend on you, and you guys have to play better.

Q. Brittney, was it a matter of working through things when the shots weren't falling and just hanging in there?

BRITTNEY SYKES: In the first half, me and Brianna were 0 for 6, but for me, it was just a matter of just staying confident and knowing that the shots that I usually make were rimming out, and I know I could make those shots. It was keeping confidence and staying out of my own head.

Q. Were you able to wear them down a little bit? You just kind of kept after them?

COACH QUENTIN HILLSMAN: That was important for us to push tempo and to keep pressuring. They did a really good job of spreading you out. And once they get you spread out they attack you really well on the backside of your press. But we thought if we could continue and press them and get a few traps and steals, that they would have to get out of that and get into something different. I thought everybody helped us, yes.

Q. La'Shay Taft really kept you in the game in the first half. Could you talk about her playing, everybody focuses on Butler and Sykes so much, but you really had another player step up and start nailing some threes. And I thought that was a big key, the reason you led in the first half.

COACH QUENTIN HILLSMAN: Yeah, definitely. When you look back at the games that we won, that we consider big games, and the games that are résumé builders, La'Shay Taft played well at the Paradise Jam. She's a very explosive scorer. And she's the one one of the kids that has a neon light. If you want to shoot it, shoot it, we'll figure it out on the back end. She's going to just shoot it, so just let her go.

Q. This is for both of you, is your depth something that can maybe help you through the next you get to play multiple games on multiple days, is that something that can come through for you?

COACH QUENTIN HILLSMAN: Yes, for sure. We talk about getting four players in double figures. We talk

QUOTES | GAME #4



NO. 5 SYRACUSE 63, NO. 13 CLEMSON 53

about getting ten players double figure minutes every night. And we can continue to keep fresh bodies in the game and we can continue to have ten players give us production in our positions, it will be huge.

I think in the post, it really hurt us a lot driving in the middle of our zone, so we used all three of our centers, I thought Briana Day came in, she only played three minutes, but she did an awesome job of getting some stops, getting some rebounds. She got loose balls. She played with energy. I thought tonight it was her.

Q. Brittney, would you care to elaborate on tomorrow's opponent a little bit and your thoughts about playing them again?

BRITTNEY SYKES: Well, I know now that the regular season is over and we're in ACC tournament we kind of figured out and put the teams in the place they would be, and now that we see we're playing them, I think the whole team and the coaching staff we're all excited and we're ready to play them again, because we lost a tough one at NC State, and we really wanted to face them again, because we know we can win them. We're playing them tomorrow, same time, same area, we're going to go out and do game prep and be ready to play against them.

Q. This was your first ACC tournament, were you surprised at an atmosphere for an 11 o'clock game in the morning? What were your thoughts on that? It sounded pretty loud in there.

COACH QUENTIN HILLSMAN: No, I wasn't surprised because they've been warning me, if anybody has that high school game you're not going to be able to hear yourself think. And I wanted to say, you guys be quiet, because I can't I really can't hear, and they can't hear me. It was an awesome atmosphere.

You get to a venue like this, and you have young kids that are coming to the game, probably one of the most unbiased crowds that I've faced. They cheer for everybody. It's funny, they cheered for us one possession, are you with us? We've got to give them credit for their enthusiasm throughout the game. It was a great atmosphere, great venue, same thing tomorrow, hopefully it will be great, same thing.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports.

QUOTES | GAME #4



NO. 5 SYRACUSE 63, NO. 13 CLEMSON 53

CLEMSON TIGERS

COACH AUDRA SMITH

NIKKI DIXON

NYILAH JAMISON MYERS

COACH AUDRA SMITH: First off, I want to commend Syracuse on playing a decent basketball game. They really had a lot of kids step up. They shared the wealth tonight and had a balanced attack in terms of their scoring.

For us, I was proud of the way our players played, the way they fought, especially the majority of the kids having to play a ton of minutes last night. That was a very emotional and physically exhausting game for them. But I'm really proud of the way they fought. I really felt like Syracuse had to battle to win this game. And they turned it on in this late second half and went on a run and we couldn't recover from that run.

Unfortunately we gave up quite a few offensive rebounds there, and that completely exhausts you on defense, when you have to continue to play defense over and over again. But I can't begin to tell this group, these two young ladies here and the rest of the group how very proud I am for them for getting to this point and battle a team like Syracuse like they did today.

Q. Coach, what's the challenge of defending a team that just keeps bombing away from three point range like that?

COACH AUDRA SMITH: Taft, the kid didn't even play against us the first game. But that's the thing with 3 point shooters, she has a very quick release. And a couple of times we thought she was coming off the ball screens and we were getting ready to defend her utilizing the ball screen and she just shot it. We lost her a couple of times. That presented a great challenge for us in the first half.

Also the offense, they were running the first half, they were lining up shooters on the right and left side, setting the ball up top, and Leary was diving to the paint and we couldn't defend her. We couldn't trap her like we normally trap in the post. She was in the middle of the lane. And we couldn't bring anybody from either side because of the shooters. That presented a huge challenge for us in terms of locating the shooters and making sure that we got in their face. Of course, you know, Coffey knocked down two. Taft, she was the X factor in the game tonight. She was the X factor, she kept them in the game and kept them going the first half when Sykes went out.

Q. Nikki, you guys were playing with basically six players there at the end of the game after Quinyotta fouled out and they were running with 11 most of the night. Did you feel like you wore down the second half?

NIKKI DIXON: Definitely, I felt like we were limited on numbers. But we've been limited on numbers all season, because it's not an excuse, we have been playing with 6 or 7 or 8 strong, regardless of what it is. I felt like we kind of ran out of gas.

Q. You played two of your best games of the season in the tournament. What do you think is the key to sort of finishing strong like that?

NYILAH JAMISON MYERS: I feel like like I said yesterday, I'm just working on consistency. I'm just trying to make it to where I can bring it like this every night for next season and seasons afterwards.

Q. If you could, the two players, you know, you're obviously disappointed, but it seems like you were playing your best ball right here at the end of the season. How do you feel about the progress you made and the program made this season?

NIKKI DIXON: I feel like it's like, I don't know, it's like tournament time is the time to just everything you possibly have been through this season, you play so many games that when you get to the tournament time you have to have like a second brain, like a second physical body and mental brain. A new player, fresh out of the summer.

QUOTES | GAME #4



NO. 5 SYRACUSE 63, NO. 13 CLEMSON 53

You have to get to that point when you come to the tournament, teams are ready to win. And there's also teams that sleep. And there are also teams that come in that are the underdogs and sneak up and win against very good teams. I felt like the progress we've made did you say individually as well as

Q. Wherever you think you made progress.

NIKKI DIXON: It doesn't matter. As a team, we really are changing, and that's the biggest thing, we had a really good foundation for this program. And we're ready to take off.

Q. Coach Smith, same for you, obviously you just finished your first season here. What are your thoughts on it right now?

COACH AUDRA SMITH: A lot of positives going into my wheels are already turning about postseason workouts and into the summer and next fall, because you know before we know it the season is back around again.

I have to admit, they won't admit it in public, but for these young ladies, this has been a tremendous adjustment for them. Literally, I think I said to someone the other day, it's like I picked them up and dropped them off in Japan, and they're like, Oh, my God, I don't know the language, how do I get around, how do I navigate this thing? I completely changed everything that they've been used to. So I made them very uncomfortable, which is part of the process in terms of growing.

We have a lot of talent returning, we have quite a bit of talent coming in. And I'm hoping that these young ladies have learned from not only when I started, but what the staff has started in terms of everything that we do, from practice, from the way we dress, from the way we speak, from the way we conduct ourselves, from the way we take pride in being in class on time, from the way we take pride in everything, in who we are, that that will help us move forward.

Because Clemson is a very special place. This program at one point was at the top of the ACC. And my focus and my goal is to get us back there. And I'm really proud of the way they came into this tournament. No one expected us to beat Virginia Tech yesterday. But especially the way we played them at their place. And they dug deep and they won, and in the way they battled tonight. There were numerous times they could have folded and Syracuse could have beat us by 20. But they continued to stay in the fight.

So that shows huge progress and that we're getting there. And I know it's going to continue to take more time. But the future for us is very, very bright. As long as they continue to learn to understand me, which sometimes can be quite difficult. I guess I'm a strong disciplinarian is a nice way to put it. But we have to have it. We have to do it.

And this is a tremendous league. I'm so excited to be back in this league, but already I'm ready to get started working so we can be ready to get back here yesterday and our stay here next year will be longer than it was this year. FastScripts by ASAP Sports.