Atlantic Coast Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Tuesday, March 10, 2026

Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

Spectrum Center

Virginia Tech Hokies

Coach Mike Young

Ben Hammond

Postgame Press Conference

Wake Forest 95, Virginia Tech 89 (OT)

MIKE YOUNG: Not the outcome we were looking for or expected. Held out hope that we could get Amani well. He was feeling a lot better yesterday. When we got to Charlotte, we didn't do a lot with him in practice. Was encouraged, felt -- I was encouraged today. But once we got over here and tried to rev him up at the hotel on our way over, it was apparent that he wasn't going to be able to do it. So we had to sit him.

That's a tremendous loss, needless to say. Not the story of the game. The story of the game is Wake Forest played a little bit better than we did. Disappointing, but I thought they did some good things. A little bit better than the Hokies, unfortunately.

Q. Ben, you went 6 for 7 from the free-throw line today. What do you feel was working for you in terms of getting fouls?

BEN HAMMOND: I feel like I was just attacking the rim, getting past their defenders and getting to the line. Yeah, that's what helped with it, yeah.

Q. Ben, I know you wanted to make a play in the NCAAs this year. Do you look at it just like too many injuries you had to deal with this year as a team or too many close losses you had or both?

BEN HAMMOND: Yeah, I would say both. We of course want to have our full team when playing. That definitely affected us, especially a key player like Amani Hansberry. That did affect some of the losses for sure.

Q. What were they doing in overtime that made it so difficult to come away with some of those crucial stops?

BEN HAMMOND: I would say just they were hitting shots; some people that don't usually hit shots. I felt like their point guard had the game of his life today. I give him credit for showing out when it mattered. But yeah, I would just say they hit more shots than us, and we couldn't hit those rebounds. So that's what happened.

Q. Ben, you guys had a time-out with 17 seconds left in regulation. What were you looking for at the end of regulation and do you feel like you got a decent look?

BEN HAMMOND: Yeah, for sure I got a decent look, a shot that I work on all the time. And then J.B. with the put-back, it just didn't -- it wasn't able to fall down.

Q. Ben, your team held Juke Harris to 3 for 18 from the field. What did you like about your team's defense of Juke?

BEN HAMMOND: Give credit to Jailen Bedford, Jaden Schutt, and Tyler Johnson. They did a great job on him all three games for sure. They work on it, the scout, in practice. They were ready for him. So give credit to those guys. I didn't really guard him, so...

Q. Obviously I know you wanted to coach these guys in the NCAA Tournament. Will you look back and just say too many injuries or too many close losses or both?

MIKE YOUNG: Doing it a long time. 24 years as a head coach, you have never heard me make an excuse. Was it hurtful? Yeah. But tonight, down Amani, and you've got to find a way to continue to win, and we didn't do enough of that.

We didn't do enough of that.

Not quite good enough.

Q. Mike, the Ben Hammond look, the Bedford tip, was

that kind of what you drew up there at the end?

MIKE YOUNG: We want the last shot and they had stoned a couple of things that we typically go to there with how they were maneuvering or how they were guarding us. We thought we could get post players, Spillers or Biliew, on to Ben. We had had a lot of success getting him off that.

Jailen makes a heck of a play at it, and just doesn't get it down. You get two shots on the rim in that situation, sign me up. And without Hansberry, that allows us to do some other things. And that was -- I've had a lot like him. He's the best receiver we've got. He's the best front court passer we've got. He connects us offensively, and that made it hard.

But again, I don't discount Wake Forest's play. I hope I answered your question.

Q. Only five turnovers against Wake in the last meeting last month. What made their defense force more turnovers tonight?

MIKE YOUNG: Well, it was closely resembled what we saw in Winston-Salem. Very aggressive off our ball screen, ball handling, and we had some terrible, terrible turnovers, 10 the first half, as you mentioned; only three in the second half. But you out-rebound somebody 45 to 26 or whatever that is, I can't see it. Supposed to win that game. Unfortunately, we did not.

Q. What did you like about what you saw from Tobi Lawal today?

MIKE YOUNG: Well, what I've seen so many times. He's a really good player. Made a couple of mistakes down the stretch. His basketball IQ has come leaps and bounds in his time with us. But still some things that need to be covered up, and he should be able to cover it up. Not quite where we need him to be.

But take nothing away from Tobi. You know exactly what you're going to get. Going to play really, really hard. He's about all the right things, and I'm awfully proud of him.

Q. Neo didn't play the majority of the second half and overtime. Was it something physical --

MIKE YOUNG: Nope, nope. I just thought -- Schutt played a good ballgame. I thought Bedford -- I was going to go with those -- and Neo got a huge three down in front of our bench in the second half. I just thought those kids were playing better than Neo, and that's how I went.

Q. Despite the loss coming tonight, just what you can say about the effort of your team to stay in it, stay with it no matter what runs came from Wake.

MIKE YOUNG: Well, that's been a characteristic of this team throughout. We had a miserable start Saturday in Charlottesville, and right back they come, as I knew they would.

Against a very good Virginia team, you go down five in the overtime, come clawing back. They've got a lot to them, and great kids to coach, and I look forward to coaching them more this season.

Q. You've spoken so highly about how good your team is for so long this season, but have just had so many games slip away at the end. When you think back on all the games this season, is there a common thread or is it a bunch of different things? How do you characterize those games and the tough losses?

MIKE YOUNG: I'm not there yet, and I'm not being evasive. I can't get there with my train of thought. Pardon me for not having a more intelligent answer.

Q. You've coached NCAA Tournament teams here and at Wofford, so you know what those teams feel like, look like. Was this team missing something, be it health, that some other NCAA Tournament teams had and this one didn't?

MIKE YOUNG: There was a lot of mixing and matching throughout the year. It wasn't a shoe-in. It wasn't a shoe-in, this team. They all matter. We did a lot of things right. 12-2, 11-2 maybe coming out of non-conference. We didn't have a blemish. We still don't have a blemish. We had great opportunities. We had unbelievable opportunities.

Now, a lot of those opportunities were on the road. North Carolina, Louisville. We won at Clemson, won at Syracuse, on and on. Had Duke at home, and they were playing really, really good basketball. We had our opportunities, and we came up just short. That's disappointing, infuriating, and I take a lot of responsibility there.

Q. Antonio Dorn tonight, how did you like his performance tonight?

MIKE YOUNG: I thought Tony played a great ballgame. He had a great look about him, great energy, competed his tail off. Had a bad block, but I don't fault him there. You know that he's going to put his body on people, and that is essential.

Neo stepped on the gas a little too much, and sometimes that's on the ball handler as much as it's on the screener. So the ball handler has got to give that guy a chance to get it set properly and then off he goes, and Tony blasted him for one of our 10 turnovers.

But that kid fought. He is about the right stuff, and I'm proud of him. We needed him for obvious reasons with Amani down.

Thanks, everybody. Have a nice night.

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