

# Jimmy V Classic: Clemson vs BYU

Tuesday, December 9, 2025

New York, New York, USA

Madison Square Garden

**Clemson Tigers**

**Coach Brad Brownell**

**Dillon Hunter**

Postgame Press Conference



PRESENTED BY Modelo

BYU - 67, Clemson - 64

BRAD BROWNELL: Obviously tale of two halves. I thought we played outstanding first 20 minutes and had them frustrated. Second half they flipped the script. Both teams capitalized off their defense and the energy of their defense.

Our defense was not as good in the second, which we knew they're really good players, they're going to start making some plays.

We didn't do a good enough job as a coaching staff helping our players on the offensive end. In the game in the second half, I thought we got a little stagnant. Their little zone press was bothersome and should not have been. I thought we got just a little casual and slowed us down more than it should have. But credit to them.

I'm proud of our guys. I thought our guys fought like crazy. The first 20 minutes, I thought we played our best basketball of the season. Had a couple shots early that we didn't make, so then we felt a little bit of pressure.

Unfortunately played our heart out, and guys made some plays down the stretch to gave us a chance to give us a chance to go to overtime. To their credit, they made a really tough shot to beat us. Questions for us?

**Q. Jestin was your leading scorer --**

BRAD BROWNELL: Dillon is going to answer the first questions.

**Q. Dillon, just from your point of view, what went wrong in the second half on the court, and how were you guys able to muster enough to get it close there at**

**the end?**

DILLON HUNTER: I would say as a group, we kind of got stagnant. We weren't flowing into our offense well. Then their zone kind of did mess us up a little bit. Then we kind of regrouped the last three minutes as a team, got the guys together and fought back harder.

**Q. Dillon, you guys did a great job on AJ in the first half, and then he got it going a little bit in the second half. What was different about the second half as opposed to the way they covered him in the first?**

DILLON HUNTER: Nothing much pretty much. He was a good player, so we know he's going to make a shot down the stretch, do what he needs to do to help the team win. We should have just guarded him better.

**Q. Dillon, what should have been the counter to that trap that they were playing? What should have you guys done in that situation when they were pressing you guys?**

DILLON HUNTER: I feel like we broke the press very well as a team, moved the ball. I felt like we handled it well.

**Q. Dillon, what do you think it says about you guys that after giving up that 22-point lead, you especially personally able to fight back, tie it again, and not give up and keep fighting there?**

DILLON HUNTER: We're a resilient group. We're built on toughness and grit. So we know the game's never over. The guys also believe it as well. Coach instills that in practice. We believe no lead is safe, no game is over, we're going to fight until the end.

**Q. Jestin finished as the game's leading scorer with 17 points. 14 of those came in the first half. What do you think prevented him from kind of keeping that going in the second half?**

BRAD BROWNELL: I think some of that's open court play. I just think in the first half when you're getting stops, it's



much easier for us to get in transition. He excels in that area.

Obviously sometimes his size can be problematic in half-court, but when we get out and get him down the floor, he can beat people with his speed. A couple of those threes for sure were transition shots.

In the second half when they're scoring and we're taking the ball out and dealing with press and half-court execution, it's much harder.

**Q. A loss like this so early in the season with so much time to go, what are you going to do to make sure your guys stay focused going forward?**

BRAD BROWNELL: Focus isn't the problem. You put yourself in these games to have opportunities for great wins, but you also learn a lot, right? This is a completely new group for us. We're still trying to figure out sometimes at the end of games, who do we trust?

We've had different lineups in different games. I don't think we have five guys that have clearly separated themselves to like these are the guys that always need to be in at the end.

I think that's part of -- when you have so much turnover like we do and so many new players, that's a big part of this. These are unbelievable opportunities for our program, for our guys, and for our staff to learn from all of it.

**Q. Coach, the final play of the game started off as a full court set, and then BYU called a timeout after they saw you guys defended it pretty well. What do you think broke down after the timeout, and how do you think --**

BRAD BROWNELL: Their first option was to run a curl action for Saunders around Dybantsa and go for a lob and try to throw to Dybantsa at the block, and he's going to score and win the game. We took the inbounders man and played three-on-two there to cover it.

Unfortunately, with the other two guys, RJ probably got a little low in his coverage. I think he saw the guy looping and felt like he needed to help on the lob. He probably really didn't. Then they just kind of ran into space.

It's a hard situation. Like you're not going to -- it's hard to keep teams from getting a shot. It was probably a little bit of a good look, but when you watch it on film, we actually have two guys kind of right there, and you're doing everything but fouling.

Again, it's hard. When you have a great player like Dybantsa, if we guard him one-on-one, they're just going to lob it to him, and now you're just hoping he misses.

Unfortunately, that's why BYU is really good. They've got a lot of really good players, and Wright made it.

**Q. Brad, just what was the defensive strategy for AJ going into the game, and what worked in the first half, what didn't in the second half, and how did you try to --**

BRAD BROWNELL: We were going to guard him one-on-one. I think he makes hard shots, takes hard shots. We did not want to foul him. That's point number one. One of the big keys in the first half was they only shot three free throws. We were guarding him without fouling. I think we had him a little frustrated. We were playing with tremendous energy, and obviously we were playing after makes, so our defense is always set.

In the second half we were not always set, so they're getting momentum. Then he's a great player. So he's going to eventually find some rhythm, and he made some big plays. I mean, it's hard. Saunders, we guard great tonight, and I know he was 0 for 7 from three. He probably won't do that again this year.

That's why these guys are so good. Pick your poison. There's so many of them. We did not want Dybantsa to get free throws. We were okay with him making some threes if he could shoot them. He only took two, made one. We knew he was going to make some twos, but we were going to live with that.

So I think all in all it was decent. Obviously, I need to watch the second half. There's some plays that he just makes because he's an elite player. There were some offensive rebounds that they got, he got that really hurt us in the second half.

**Q. You talked a lot about habit building this year in games where you have had big leads going into halftime and what that second half means even if it's against an inferior opponent. Do you see some of those habits that you didn't want to build come back to bite you in this game?**

BRAD BROWNELL: The games are so different because this team is so good. Yeah, we had a few rush possessions. We certainly had a couple of bad turnovers. We had a couple of bad shots. We looked hurried a couple times, no question. We lost our flow. A lot of that's a credit to BYU. They pressured a little more. They soft pressed us a little bit.

We had a couple times where we got the ball down deep and didn't score. Had a couple times where we got it down deep and turned it over. We missed a couple threes pretty early in the second half, which were better.

Then we kind of had to downsize to deal with some of it, and I don't know that that worked as well as it has in other games. It worked against Alabama. I don't know that our downsizing worked today. It helped us against Georgia. Today I don't know that that worked. I need to watch the film on that.

But there's no question we just lost some offensive rhythm. We as coaches have to do a better job of helping our players through that.

**Q. Coach, your team showed some great resilience tonight. You have some pretty extensive travel plans, a bus ride and then a plane ride. What do you do to regroup?**

BRAD BROWNELL: Yeah, I've got a great group of kids, and we fought all year. We've been down in games and come back and won a couple. Obviously we just lost a heartbreaker to Alabama on the road in similar fashion where we came all the way back and took the lead.

In this game, we had a lead and lost it, and it looked like it was over, and then we fought back and tied it. All of a sudden, we're right there again.

My guys keep playing, but we have to play better basketball against elite teams. That's what we've played this week. We've played Alabama and BYU, two top 15 teams in the country, and we just haven't quite played well enough for 40 minutes to beat them.

So we've got to get back to the drawing board, improve on a couple things. But in terms of competitive fight and spirit, really proud of my team.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports