

Jimmy V Classic: Florida vs UConn

Tuesday, December 9, 2025

New York, New York, USA

Madison Square Garden

Florida Gators

Coach Todd Golden

Xaivian Lee

Postgame Press Conference

UConn - 77, Florida - 73

TODD GOLDEN: Obviously a little frustrating. We fell short again against an elite opponent. I thought, similar to when we played Arizona, we played Duke, we did a lot of good things but not quite good enough to get over the hump and get one of these done.

A couple things that are going to hurt, we outrebounded them by 12. We had 16 offensive rebounds to their 7, and we had less second chance points than they did. That's something we've got to be able to capitalize on when given the opportunity. I thought we did a great job on the glass but didn't capitalize.

Defensively, much better second half, held them at 41 from the field. Credit to Karaban, obviously a really good winning player. I thought he made some big time shots in the second half at timely moments for them.

On the other side of the coin for us, we just didn't. I thought we had an opportunity in the second half to extend when we took a little bit of a lead and missed some shots. Then Reuben's free throws late hurt. He played really well but obviously struggled from the line tonight which is unlike him. He's done a better job this year making his free throws.

Proud of this guy next to me. I thought he had his best game in a Gator uniform. I tell him this all the time. He needs to shoot the ball a little bit better. 1 for 7 is not good enough, but I thought he played a great floor game. To finish with 19 and 5, no turnovers against a good offensive team, got on the glass. I thought he played really good winning basketball tonight.

Now we need him and Boogie to play well together. I



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thought Boog struggled a little early tonight. Tough whistle early on, picking up fouls. We just could never get in a flow that way.

I'm a pretty positive guy. We're close. We're right there. If we can get 5 percent better over the next couple weeks, we're going to be pretty good in SEC play.

Q. Can you take us through the last play? Nine seconds left. Was it great defense from them?

TODD GOLDEN: I thought they called it early, man, to be honest. I challenge everybody to time it and see what they come up with. We timed it in the locker room, and we got 4.6 and 4.7. In a moment like that -- I've been around the game for a long time, to get a call like that where it doesn't even get to 5 seconds -- usually they give you an extra second, to be honest. Just a really, really tough pill to swallow.

At the same time, we've got to do a better job getting available earlier. I just thought that was banged a little early.

Q. How much more complete is UConn than the team you played in the NCAA Tournament?

TODD GOLDEN: I thought that team was pretty good too, man. That club, they dealt with a lot of injuries last year. McNeeley was out. They were missing some guys. The we ran into a healthy UConn team in the second round, and that didn't feel like an 8 seed to be honest. That felt like a club that had a lot of experienced winners. Obviously a fantastic head coach and a really tough program.

This UConn team is very good also. Obviously I think they're top 5 or 6-ish team right now, and they're going to win a lot of games this year.

Q. Your 3-point defense has been really good this season. You limited them to 18 looks. What did you think of the looks they got? Was it their ability to knock down shots, hitting transition threes, that was

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kind of one of the defense makers in your mind?

TODD GOLDEN: I thought they hit some tough ones in the first half. Ball hit one or two tough ones. They hit a late clock, three in the middle of the floor. You've got to tip your cap when Reibe throws one in there. I don't think that's his strength, and he had a great game tonight.

I don't think we did a good enough job standing Karaban in space in the second half. I thought he had two big ones that were difference makers for us. The battle of the 3-point line was a big difference tonight.

Q. What's it going to take to get over the top? I know you're so close and we see it every game and see the spurts when you play so well. What's it going to take to put the complete game together?

TODD GOLDEN: The challenge that we put in front of ourselves playing Arizona in Vegas, going to Duke, playing UConn here at MSG -- Storrs South or whatever they call it -- we put ourselves in some really tough spots -- to prepare ourselves for the rest of the year. Obviously we wanted to win one of these.

The great thing for us is we're through the toughest part of our schedule. That's not a knock to anybody we're playing moving forward, but we don't have a top 5 team left on our schedule right now moving forward. So I think the combination of us improving in the areas that we know we need to be better -- I thought we did a better job taking care of the ball tonight.

We've got to shoot it a little bit better, and we've got to capitalize on our second chances. I thought that was a big part of why we weren't able to become victorious tonight.

Q. You talked about Boogie struggling, the foul trouble hurts him getting into rhythm. You guys id shoot 55, 56 percent the second half. Is that more what you want to look like offensively?

TODD GOLDEN: The way we're built, we're going to wear teams down a little bit. It's not always going to be pretty, but to shoot 55 percent in the second half -- we were 14 for 22 from two. We dominated the paint in the second half. We did not do that in the first half, and that was a huge part of our game plan. I think we were down 24-10 in paint points at halftime. Or 24-2. I can't remember what it was. We obviously did a much better job in the second half.

We've just got to be a little bit better in the first half and find a way to finish around the rim better.

Q. Xaivian, what was it like playing in the Garden, and

now Florida playing against three top 10 teams in Arizona, Duke, and now UConn?

XAIVIAN LEE: It's an incredible opportunity obviously playing great teams. I'd like to win more. But I've been trying to soak it all in and play well. Obviously MSG is one of the best venues in the whole world. So I didn't really feel it too much in the game. I was focused playing shootaround and stuff. I was kind of just looking around.

Q. Beyond Solo Ball, Alex Karaban, you have a lot of other guys who can beat you. What did you make of performances like Jaylin Stewart in the first half, Braylon Mullins in the second half, and how that makes UConn a tough team to beat?

TODD GOLDEN: They've got great players across the board. I thought we did a really good job on those guys, to be honest. Ball and Karaban got us a little bit, and their 5 man got us early, especially in the first half.

I thought we did a much better job on Tarris in the second half, Reibe as well, but they got us early. UConn and where they are as a program now, you can't take any of those guys for granted.

We gave up a strong side three to Stewart in the first half. That's just not acceptable. We've got to be there on his catch and take that away. He's a very capable shooter. We impressed that on our team during the scouting report.

Mullins was a top recruit, obviously a really talented offensive player. He gave them a lift, making some tough shots in the second half.

Q. There was a stretch in the first half you guys went 5:40 without a field goal, I think missed 12 of 13. What were some of the reasons for that? What did he do to help keep you guys in it? I think he scored 11 straight points for you guys during the stretch -- Xaivian.

TODD GOLDEN: They played good defense, and we just weren't able to capitalize and score. They're trying to limit our good shots and obviously did that for an extended period of time. We know that one area that we need to improve upon quickly is just being more efficient offensively and finding a way to find more baskets.

Q. Alex was pretty great in the second half -- 11 points, 5 rebounds, 3 blocks -- kind of the second straight game where he imposed himself in the second half. Obviously UConn and Duke are awesome, but is there something maybe to get him going a little earlier?



TODD GOLDEN: I think he wears guys down. Again, we're going up against a really good front line, they're physical. They're a very good two-point percentage defensive team. I think, if you ask Condo, I think he would tell you he probably should have put one or two of those in in the first half that he didn't.

I think just kind of feeling into the game, kind of absorbing the atmosphere, and he just slowed himself down a bit in the second half and was much more effective. I thought he did a great job defensively as well. He covered us up a couple times at the rim where we had some blown coverages.

He's a guy we're relying upon. We need to play very well for us to be the best we can be. Him, Tommy, and Rioux specifically maybe weren't the most efficient, but they're always going to play really, really hard, and they're always going to compete their ass off. We're going to be very excited to go to war with those guys every night.

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