

Camping World Maui Invitational

Tuesday, December 1, 2020
Asheville, North Carolina, USA

Stanford Cardinal Coach Jerod Haase Ziaire Williams Bryce Wills

Postgame Press Conference

Stanford - 82, Alabama - 64

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with an opening statement for coach.

JEROD HAASE: Obviously a great way to start our season. It was our closed scrimmage, it was our exhibition game and our game that was cancelled, there was certainly some signs of rust from being off a long time, but I think there were a lot more signs of, reasons for optimism and excitement around the program. I think Alabama is a heck of a team, well coached, lots of talent, difficult to guard. For us the transition defense piece was going to be really important. I thought we were good, maybe not great, but Alabama, it's hard to prepare for that just in practice and so I thought we did a good job considering. I thought we did a nice job on the boards. And then offensively, turnovers were a problem. It's been a problem for awhile, but I think our guys are continuing to learn to understand that part of it. But for us as a program it's a fantastic win and a great way to start our season.

Q. Ziaire was obviously a very highly-recruited player out of high school, but sometimes it's hard to expect how a freshman will perform in their opening game. What qualities of Ziaire have you noticed in practice that have contributed to his success thus far? And what do you expect from him going forward?

JEROD HAASE: I certainly have high expectations. The transition really at any level from middle school to high school or from obviously high school to college, college to the NBA, there's always challenges and the physicality of it and the whole bit. But Ziaire's game-ready on day one. Certainly he knows that he can continue to improve, but he



also comes in as a fantastic player. Expectation-wise, we're going to continue to coach him hard, continue to try to put him in positions where he can be successful, and we need to continue to try and get the ball in his hands. But I do think it's nice because I think there's a lot of pieces around him that are awfully good as well. But I've talked a lot about his ability. I think his ability is off the charts, but I also know that his character and the kind of person he is, I think really is the foundation for how he's built his game.

Q. I know you talked all about Ziaire, but the second half that Bryce turned in, I thought was remarkable. Your thoughts on him coming back after a slow first half and really carrying you guys for a stretch there in the second half.

JEROD HAASE: Absolutely. It's funny, one message I gave the team a lot was, Let's play really, really hard. Let's try and do the right thing and execute our a simple game plan but understand we're going to make mistakes. There's no way around it. We had over 200 days where we never touched a hardwood floor as a team and our pre-season was great we got a lot of work done, but you never know how it's going to be the first time you get in front of the bright lights and putting the team out there together, so I was not surprised mistakes happened. Bryce it was really funny he kept, in the first half almost apologizing to me. I said, Relax, it's going to happen, just keep playing hard. But he really took ownership of his play, and in the second half, I thought turned in a really good performance.

Q. Your thoughts about connecting with Roy again. I know it's happened before, but here you go again and what's the emotions like for this?

JEROD HAASE: I haven't put a lot of thought into that yet because we have done it before, and it will be a similar type deal that when we tip it up, it's just play as hard as we can, and I'll lose myself in the game, and really focus on our team. But having said that, the quote "lose yourself in the game" comes from Coach Williams, so -- so much of what I've done and the opportunities I've had are because of him. So many of the things I do now as a head coach are because of him. It's not easy, maybe not possible to express my gratitude towards him, but also just what I think



of him as a person and our relationship. So I was certainly cheering for them because I never will ever cheer against Coach Williams, but I also know that it's not my ideal situation to have to play against them either. But once we tip it up, we understand it's a great opportunity for us. We're playing against a great team, a great coach, great players, and that's the way we'll treat it.

Q. I'm just curious, I know turnovers aside, how close was this to the vision that you have for this team and how important was it for it to look as close to that vision as it did in the first time out?

JEROD HAASE: I don't know. The vision's an ongoing thing. This is not a destination we're going for. This is an understanding we're just going to keep growing. My vision's a lot bigger and greater than just tonight, but I love the step forward. I thought last year was a step forward for our program, but I think the plan is to continue to grow the program. This was a fantastic win. It's a major step in the right direction, and I think it helps us build confidence, but I think the vision for the program has many more pieces to it, but this was a great start and I think it does show that we're building the program in the right way.

Q. Could you just dig into a little bit the work on the boards tonight? I think they only had five offensive rebounds the whole game, and I know that was a priority coming in.

JEROD HAASE: It certainly was. And to be honest with you, in practice we tend to get back a lot more than go to the offensive boards, so I was really concerned about that because we haven't just, we haven't worked on it every day in practice because the other team we're playing against, ourselves, we're not always going to the boards. So we emphasized it. We did work on it, approaching this game, but I was very, very pleased with the way we swarmed the boards and had, some guards got some good numbers on the boards, too, and we need that. We need a group, gang rebounding kind of mentality.

ZIAIRE WILLIAMS: This is Ziaire Williams.

BRYCE WILLIS: This is Bryce willis. Z I A I R E.

Q. Bryce, good to see you again. How much did you have to work on, I guess you could say, off-season to improve this year with Tye going off into the pros? How important is it for you to run point at some point?

BRYCE WILLIS: I wouldn't say it's important for me to run point at all other than it's just to do my job on the team, and that's to be a leader and make sure everything is on point. I think we have a very versatile team that can have, like,

three, almost three point guards out there at the same time. So it's not as much as me playing point guard as much as it is keeping everybody on the same page.

Q. Ziaire, I'm curious your, kind of your feeling of getting to play a college game for the first time, the experience at this level, and getting the experience to this level, and I'm, and how much you think you may have lost in the off-season in terms of you didn't have an exhibition, the altered off-season, how that sort of affects you starting out here?

ZIAIRE WILLIAMS: Man, it was super fun being out there. I haven't played in so long. I'm just, I love the game, I was just super happy to be with my guys. They have been leading me all summer kind of or fall, I would sort of say. Even though we didn't have an exhibition game, no one else really has, so we were prepared for whoever came up with us and I'm glad we got to finish off with a win and off to the next one. Got to lock in for North Carolina tomorrow.

BRYCE WILLIS: My boy looked ready too. He came out firing in the first half.

ZIAIRE WILLIAMS: I had turnovers, though. I had four early ones just trying to get adjusted to the physicality and the pace of the game, but it's definitely an area to improve. I'll be all right.

Q. Bryce, just what were your thoughts on Ziaire's performance out there for a first time college player?

BRYCE WILLIS: To be honest with you, I wasn't surprised. I saw it. He puts the work in. The dude is, he's just ready. He's here. And I'm glad that we have him. I was tired of all of the doubts and saying that we lost Tye. And Tye's a great player, but we have built a program and it's important to understand that just because we lost a couple players from last year doesn't mean we can't come back stronger and he proved that and the rest of the team proved that tonight.

Q. Ziaire, can you just talk about the defense tonight, how you felt as a team and how you felt guarding college players.

ZIAIRE WILLIAMS: Well, this is the best defensive team by far I've ever been on. I was just telling Bryce last night, like, it's just so fun playing defense, getting stop after stop. I've never really enjoyed, like, having fun and being super excited on the defensive end. We're super disciplined. We listen to coach's plan and he prepared us well, so we have to go over scout for tomorrow and do the same thing.

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