

Asheville Championship

Friday, November 12, 2021

Asheville, North Carolina, USA

Western Kentucky Hilltoppers

Harrah's Cherokee Center

Coach Rick Stansbury

Dayvion McKnight

Josh Anderson

Press Conference

Minnesota - 73, Western Kentucky - 69

THE MODERATOR: We will begin with comments from Coach and then start with questions with players and finish up with questions for Coach.

RICK STANSBURY: Give Minnesota credit. They made the plays they had to make and made the shots. Jumped up and made timely threes when they had to make. I thought the difference in the game was that last four minutes of the first half.

Good teams, you got to find a way to win the last four minutes. I think it was 25-21, 3:54 to go, something like that. It was a four-point game. Not having all the stats in front of me, it seemed like they went on a 10-2 run the last 3:45. It's tough. It's tough to overcome when you are playing a good team.

Positive things are, you know, first half I thought offensively we quick shot it. The ball didn't move very well. We needed to control the game offensively. We didn't do a good job that first half at all. Second half was much better. I thought we were much more effective getting the ball in the paint, on the passing dribble.

You know, first half you score 23 points. Second half you score 46. You got to find that balance in between both of those, but you're not going to beat a lot of people scoring 23.

Again, I say give them credit. They finished that last four minutes. I think they hit three threes in that last minute and a half or two minutes. Again, our guys didn't give up, put themselves in position to make it a one-possession game late in the game. So there's no moral victories. I'm proud that we didn't lay down. We kept fighting, and I know we got new pieces, and we'll get better and learn from that.



There's a lot of good things that we'll take from this.

Q. Dayvion, (indiscernible) the second half?

DAYVION McKNIGHT: I was just worried about coming back in, trying to get that win today. Teammates are trying to find them open spots and getting to the free-throw line as much as I can.

Q. Josh, I know Coach talked about battling, them shooting three especially in the first half. Defensively, what do you think brought you down (indiscernible)?

JOSH ANDERSON: They made a lot of tough shots down the stretch, like Coach said. A lot of shots we had guys right in their face, and they was just knocking down big shots time after time, so just give credit to them making big shots.

Q. (Indiscernible) trying to limit that in the second half --

JOSH ANDERSON: The biggest what?

Q. The biggest key in making adjustments in trying to limit that.

JOSH ANDERSON: Just pressing up on them more. Like I said, it was just making tough shots, so --

Q. Dayvion, you got to the line -- obviously, that's always an emphasis with a Coach's team. Didn't seem like that was something you were able to do a ton in the first exhibitions in the last two games. How much of an importance was that in trying to get back?

DAYVION McKNIGHT: Getting to the free-throw line is very important. It means you're driving in hard and getting fouled, and that's an easy two points we can get on the scoreboard.

Q. Obviously, you don't know who you are going to get Sunday, but I guess overall, do you guys feel like you need to do better? You learn from the first two games to help in that one (indiscernible)?

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JOSH ANDERSON: For one, we need to come out more aggressive from the start of the game. We can't get down in the first half and just, like Coach said, we got to finish out the half strong and start the half strong, so at the end of the first half we got to come out more strong. The last four minutes of the first half, we have to win that. The first four minutes of the second half, we have to play strong and play hard, and we got to win those.

Q. (Indiscernible) he finished with nine rebounds, forces, no turnovers. I guess just specifically the second half effort trying to get you guys back in this, what would you say about --

RICK STANSBURY: As I say all the time, whatever he does never surprises me. That's who he is every day. He is not effective at scoring. He is just going to give you everything he has got. I think you see probably a little more confidence developing in him right now because we want to get him in that paint. We got him in there a bunch the second half. A bunch. You know, when you get into the paint, you got to make some shots.

We battled back and put this thing in position to make it a one-possession game and just didn't shoot it very well. I think we went 5 for 19 from three-point line. We made five, and I think they made 12.

I'm not very good in math, but, you know, that's a big separation. That just puts so much pressure on you getting into the lane, making free-throws. We got to be able to get some more things done without Dayvion being the only guy. You know this. You know we're down a couple of guards. We're down a couple of guards. It is what it is now.

What I'm pleased with is the second half we were better. Everything was better. We were more efficient offensively. Battle gets two if I'm correct about that. You know, he had those three three-pointers in that little span. Kind of stretched out the game. Outside of that, we did a good job. Second half he gets -- I think he got a put-back. I think he is one of the guys that got the offensive put-back over there.

A lot of things we got to get better from. A lot of things we can learn from, but to answer your question, yeah, Dayvi was a man, but he can be like that most nights because he is going to give you that every night.

Q. Coach, appreciate the time. In the second half there when you made your comeback, obviously, you held out two points the second half, but talk about some of the other guys that stepped up and made

free-throws at key times.

RICK STANSBURY: I don't remember which ones for sure. I remember this. They jumped up and made timely threes for us. I mean, timely threes. Second half they made -- that's not right. They go 4 for 11. Those four always seemed like they were late in shot clocks when they had to make a play. Even though it wasn't a shot clock, they jumped up and made some.

Give them credit. You know, we know Willis is low. Those same two guys. The guy tonight was probably different than they had seen so far with Stephens. Yeah, 4 for 7 three-point line. If I'm correct, he came into the game. Who has that stat? You Minnesota guys. One in the first two games? How many did he make last year? He transferred from --

Q. Lafayette.

RICK STANSBURY: How many did he make last year? What was the number, though? 7? 7. Made 7 on the season if I'm correct. Check that stat out. He goes 4 for 7 tonight. He shoots like that because you know he is good off the bounce. He is really good off that bounce. He was probably the difference in the team.

You know, those other guys are averaging -- they got their average. They were averaging 39 points between them, Battle and Willis was. They got 39. The difference was Stephens, 18. 18. You have Sutherlin off that bench and didn't score. They played those six guys, but Stephens was the difference in their team tonight. Yep.

Q. Coach, your three-point shooting -- the first of the regular season game and -- where is that offense at and trying to get things going right in that category?

RICK STANSBURY: Just confidence in themselves. Probably not as good as mine is still. What did you say the stat was?

Q. (Off microphone.)

RICK STANSBURY: It's not a very good stat. A guy that I say when you are open, shoot it. I have that kind of confidence in him. They get that one possession, you got three in a row off, and don't ask me why he is not making them. He shot the ball really well all fall long, but we need him to make some shots.

I mean, we got to have him make some shots. It just opens the lane up, takes some pressure off Dayvi. That three-pointer gives you so much energy too. If you are asking me, I have confidence in him tomorrow night or,

which, Sunday night? If he is open, he always has the green light. I.

Believe in him that much. And again, like I tell him all the time, you believe in yourself as much as I believe in you, keep shooting it, man. He is capable of knocking four or five in a row. For whatever reason, you're right, he hasn't the last three games done it. Two games. Three. Keep asking. All right. Stay right there.

Q. Coach, you know the last couple of games Camron Justice had the extra year of eligibility. Obviously, he is not here tonight because he is getting married tomorrow. What does he bring to this team when he is able to come back, and when do you expect him?

RICK STANSBURY: You know, we think he'll be here Sunday. He'll be here Sunday, or he will get a divorce, so we'll see. Those who don't know, he is getting married tomorrow. Young man just got eligible for us. He had started for us two years ago. He brings something that we need. Another ball handler. Another shooter. Another guy that can pass that basketball and get other people open. Six- or seven-year guy. Whatever he is. Maybe seven. Right? Seven-year guy. Be a married man. He is in the real world. You married yet?

THE MODERATOR: Not yet.

RICK STANSBURY: Get married, you're in the real world. That game will come to a halt for him. He worked in the real world last year. If that's not enough to make the game slow down, getting married for sure will make it come to a halt.

He brings a lot of things to our team. An ingredient that's missing badly right now. You guys will know. I've seen him most the fall. A guy that can make shots and play off the bounce. A guy that can pass the ball and gives you a lot. He is going to help us immensely.

Again, he called last night. You know, he was planning on playing tonight, but once he got home and decorated the church, I think he felt pressure to stay, so we told him to stay. We don't need him to get divorced before he gets married. He stayed and gets married tomorrow and he will be here Sunday.

THE MODERATOR: We wish him well. Thank you, Coach.

RICK STANSBURY: You got a question, man?

Q. The story, I hope people didn't miss that.

RICK STANSBURY: I wish it was a story that played tonight. We missed that part.

Q. Got plenty of games left, and he will be there for all of them?

RICK STANSBURY: He'll help us. Anybody else? Good?

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach.

RICK STANSBURY: Offensively we were really bad. Can't dig yourself a hole. Can't lose that last four minutes. You have to try to dig yourself out of that hole. It's too hard on us.

Q. (Off microphone.)

RICK STANSBURY: You're right. We'll get better from it. We will get better from it. We play what time Sunday? 5:00 Sunday.

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