

# Asheville Championship

Sunday, November 12, 2023

Asheville, North Carolina, USA

Harrah's Cherokee Center

## Clemson Tigers

## Brad Brownell

## Joseph Girard III

## PJ Hall

### Press Conference



Clemson - 68, Davidson - 65

THE MODERATOR: Congrats to Clemson for winning the Asheville Championship. We'll start with opening comments from Coach and then open it for questions.

Coach, over to you.

BRAD BROWNELL: Obviously ecstatic to win the championship. Really proud of our guys for just playing through things. This tournament exposed us on some things. We didn't play as well. Give Davidson a lot of credit. They're hard to play against. Extremely well coached. Just unbelievably sound, and they make you work, especially on the defensive end.

I thought we took the bait a little bit offensively in the first half and just didn't trust our offense enough and took some quick shots and they really made us pay.

In the tournament, in both games, we find ourselves behind nine with seven to go against UAB and then obviously 18 at the beginning of this game. We just kept talking about, hey, let's find a way and let's just try to win the next couple possessions and keep battling. We have an older group that I think has some confidence and that certainly showed down the stretch and in our comeback.

But ecstatic to win and really proud of the way my players competed this weekend.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

**Q. PJ, when they got up by 18, I mean, this is a veteran group, you guys have played a lot of basketball together, what was the attitude within the team like and what do you feel like was the biggest change?**

PJ HALL: Obviously the biggest change was just to slow down, calm down a little bit. We came out a little flat, not trusting what we do, and obviously on defense, we were getting diced up.

But the attitude didn't change -- obviously it changed to have more energy, but it was just focus on finding a way. Same thing as last game, find a way to win, chip away. There's no 17-point shots, and so just find a way to win, find a way to get back into it. Whenever we cut it down to 12, then 10, then 8, you see yourself getting back into the game and that gives you confidence.

**Q. Joseph, this game looked like some of the ones you had back at Syracuse. Just what, three, four games in, is there a comfort level that's developed that made you ready to break out tonight?**

JOSEPH GIRARD III: Just trusting the process. These guys do a good job of just staying consistent in everything we do, whether it's walkthroughs, practice, workouts, all that stuff. I'm just trying to stay consistent as well and trying to get into the flow of it. PJ did a good job throwing it out of double teams today to everybody and just the way that the offense was kind of moving today helped me out a lot.

**Q. Early in that second half RJ Godfrey had a big dunk, big layup, a couple different defensive steals, had a great game. Can you speak to what he brings to the team?**

BRAD BROWNELL: Tremendous energy giver. I've talked about it a great deal. He plays really hard, tremendous athlete. He's going to make something happen. He plays so hard. With that kind of athleticism, usually when you're figuring things out, good things are going to happen. The game is starting to slow down for him a little bit. I thought PJ really found him on a double team dive for one of the dunks. I thought PJ really handled the doubles a lot better today and that was a big part of it.

And then RJ's confidence as his skill level continues to improve, which it has, he's going to make plays around



there. He's a quick jumper, he's really improved his moves down there, he's a guy that we have a lot of confidence in. He and Ian and PJ are both -- are all three really good players. We're going to count on all three of those guys a great deal. Today, it was RJ and PJ's day.

**Q. Obviously these past couple of games you've been very challenged, challenged at the beginning. How will this help you as you continue to get into the season and then start to get into league play later on?**

BRAD BROWNELL: Well, it's good to play different styles. UAB was a little different than Davidson, which was different than Winthrop. So we've played three quality opponents, two of 'em away from home, which has been good. We need to work on ourselves a little bit for a couple days. There's some things that you find out about how you're playing and your team.

We got to get Jack Clark up to speed. He's trying, but he just doesn't know some of the things we need him to know to be out there all the time. We've got to trust him and get him fully healthy and part of our group. So there's a lot that this has done for us. This was a really good tournament against different styles of play. Obviously, still working to integrate Joe the way we want to.

I love the way our team has come together. We're a very unselfish group, we share the ball, guys really pull for each other. We have some depth, so we have enough guys that if a guy has an off night, that somebody else can pick him up. It's happened all tournament.

Joe was terrific today. Chase was terrific the other night. And then our bench has been giving us a lot of juice as well. So that gives us a chance to have a good team.

**Q. Chauncey played the first three minutes. Did something happen to him?**

BRAD BROWNELL: No. I kind of knew that this was a game I thought would -- because of the way they play, with all the movement defensively, that I knew that this was going to be a game where Dillon and Alex would play more to match some of that. I almost started a smaller lineup and kicked myself that I didn't.

But it was just one of those things. Chauncey's fine. He's going to be a really good player for us. We've got a lot of confidence in him, we love him. This maybe just wasn't the right game at this time for him.

**Q. You mentioned an event like this can expose you a little bit and show areas where there's room for improvement. What are some of those areas that jump**

**out?**

BRAD BROWNELL: We got to keep rebounding the ball better. We talked about it, we worked on it, but it's something that I think we understand that we have to do.

Offensively, we've got to trust our style and stick with things instead of sometimes trying to quick shoot our way out of things. We have some guys that can shoot, we have some guys that can make plays, we have offensive guys, but sometimes we're breaking too many things off and not sticking with it to like break the defense down and see if we can get -- go from a good shot to a great shot or get the defense to make a mistake.

We're doing things where sometimes we get a step and it's enough to take a shot or make a play, but there are times within the game where you got to learn that we need a really good possession here. We don't need to try to quick shoot our way out of it. You know, we're so excited and we're good shooters, and so we have confidence, but we also understand we've got to learn how to sustain and turn it over and work on some things. So I think that those are some things specifically that we really need to improve.

**Q. Joseph, I think this game that you had today was what Clemson fans were expecting to see from you. You obviously started cold, you were two of your first 11 from three, but then you made four in a row. Just watching your career from afar, it seems like it's always been kind of a streaky shooter at Syracuse. Do you feel like that's the case and what's your mentality out there when you're going through a down stretch like that?**

BRAD BROWNELL: He's not a streaky shooter. Any guy that can make 94 out of a hundred in a drill, and he's made 1,500 points, and I don't know, too many threes to count, I don't think he's streaky. Might not shoot great every night, but we obviously believe in him, trust him. He's going to have a great year for us.

JOSEPH GIRARD III: I appreciate it, Coach.

I mean, yeah, just going back to staying consistent. These guys, we rep so many times each and every day, each and every practice, you can't lose yourself, you just got to trust the teammates, trust that every shot's going in. As a shooter, you kind of -- whether three go in or three don't go in, you just kind of have to have the same mindset and keep getting better every day.

**Q. When I say streaky, I mean that he makes a lot in a row like he did today, Coach.**

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

BRAD BROWNELL: He can do that too. (Laughing). That's how you get 94 out of a hundred.

**Q. Also making the transition from playing that zone defense for Coach Boeheim, what's the transition been for you playing primarily now a man-to-man defense?**

JOSEPH GIRARD III: It's been good so far. Obviously I got a long way to go, got to keep getting better in some rotations and all that kind of stuff, but that was another big reason I came to Clemson. Coach Brownell and the staff do a really good job of teaching the proper way to play defense, and I wanted to learn it a lot faster than I probably could have at another place. They have done a good job helping me through it. A lot of the game plans, a lot of techniques that they teach changes from game to game. Obviously, as a player who's been in college for five years you kind have gotten used to playing different IQ's defending upon the game. Defense comes down to effort, and if you have effort you'll be all right.

**Q. Could you just touch on, obviously you got your non-conference to play -- congratulations on today -- just touch on the ACC schedule and the ACC this year.**

BRAD BROWNELL: Yeah, the ACC will be a great league again. Thankfully we don't play for awhile. I think we play Pitt in early December on the road. But it's going to be very balanced. Obviously we've got three or four teams that are in the top 25, and a lot of those are the schools you would expect. But I think there's more depth in the league than there has been for the last several years.

We got to all do our part and play well in November and December, but it will be a war like it always is. 20 long games and I really don't want to be thinking a lot about it right now.

**Q. Do you think in the first half, when they went through a bit of a cold spell, you guys maybe improved some things defensively, maybe playing some of their back cuts, showing more awareness of all their movement?**

BRAD BROWNELL: Yeah, you know, you hope you adjust a little bit. You can talk about it, but stylistically, the way they play, the motion that they run, there's not many teams that run it like that any more. So when you're guarding something unique on a one-day prep, and you haven't guarded it live at all, that's challenging.

I just, it was funny, I just looked at the stat sheet and we held 'em to 39 percent field goals. I think we got 'em to turn it over, I guess only nine times, so our turnover situation wasn't great. But their field goal percentage was

low. I thought we did protect the basket.

We talked about, hey, they're going to make a few threes. We wanted to do a good job on Durkin, because he's played at an unbelievable level. But I feel like the layups are what really break your back when you play them. They slip you for a layup, sometimes you're just guarding the shooters and they drive by you and nobody rotates because you're so worried about the shooting, so we really wanted to protect the basket as much as we could. I think we did a pretty good job. I would take 39 percent field goal D against them just about every time.

**Q. Back-to-back games that y'all faced adversity away from home and found a way to win. How valuable are those experiences going forward?**

PJ HALL: Extremely. Obviously, we have an older group. Experienced coaching staff, too. We have a coaching staff that has, in total, I mean, probably like 150 years together. I can't remember what it was. It's ridiculous.

BRAD BROWNELL: We're old.

PJ HALL: Yeah, but we got a lot of experience, and obviously games like this is what builds confidence in your team, builds confidence in each other. Whenever you're down, with older guys like this, you never give up, you never think you're out of it. You think you can chip away. Like I said earlier, there's no 10-, 15-point shots, just keep on chipping a way and get stops on defense.

THE MODERATOR: Congrats on the win, guys. Good luck the rest of the season.

BRAD BROWNELL: Thank you so much. Appreciate it. Thank y'all.

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