

Atlantic Coast Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Thursday, March 11, 2021
Greensboro, North Carolina, USA

Virginia Tech Hokies Mike Young

Postgame Press Conference



North Carolina 81, Virginia Tech 73

Q. Mike, they had two offensive rebounds in the first half and 13 in the second half. What changed?

MIKE YOUNG: I think they got bigger, if that's possible, at the half. You can say what you want about a pause. A pause is not the reason we lost. Your conditioning is affected by the pause. It was against Georgia Tech. It's hard to simulate in practice. You don't want to get somebody banged up in practice. I saw the same look in the Georgia Tech game. Again, Georgia Tech outplayed us and won the game. North Carolina outplayed us and won the game.

You combine some conditioning issues and then you're banging with -- it's like they've got seven big people. That's hard. My guys did everything they could. We just didn't have quite enough to win it.

Q. Keve has been a surprise in the ACC this year --

MIKE YOUNG: What gave that away?

Q. His numbers.

MIKE YOUNG: Yep, they're pretty good.

Q. Probably could have been first-team all-ACC. He's been really good but was kind of a non-factor tonight. How do you expect him to respond?

MIKE YOUNG: Looked a little spooked, and he's played against so many really good front-line defenders in our league. He had some looks at it that he's had all year, and he looked a little hesitant. I'm not sure what to attribute that to. He had good looks from three. I really don't know how to answer, but I agree with you, he was a little hesitant.

Q. Along similar lines, you guys worked so hard to get bigger and more experienced in the front court this year. Was this the first game that you really felt overmatched again in the front court, the way it was last season?

MIKE YOUNG: Yeah, yeah. Yeah.

Q. Is there an answer when you have a match-up like that?

MIKE YOUNG: You have to hope that you get favorable caroms. Boy, we were physical on the glass in the first half, but gosh sakes, they gobbled up -- essentially gobbled up what appeared to be every carom in the second half. We'll be fine with whomever we draw out there. You know, I think we got one out of our system. We look forward to getting to Indianapolis.

Q. Justyn and Tyrece especially seemed very effective playing the angles and the post defensively and denying entry passes. Was that the only way you could go about it given their preponderance to feeding the post?

MIKE YOUNG: Yeah, gosh, we got so much on our plate. We're helping off of him, we're guarding Walton. We want to short close on him. We tinkered pressuring the ball on the perimeter when they play hollow with Garrison and whomever else might be in the high post. Garrison can make a three. Just kind of different looks. We got hurt with some ball screen action about the 12-minute mark of the second half.

You know, they're playing pretty well right now. Played a good ball game tonight, and needless to say, we all know that they have good players, and they outplayed us a little bit.

Q. As difficult as their size is to deal with, just what about their pace? They had 20 fast break points tonight, which is very unusual for your team to give up that many.

MIKE YOUNG: Yeah, yeah, it is. I thought everything was spot-on. Really good at the half. They had a made three opposite our bench. They did have a couple of fast break baskets, but the score was where we wanted it -- what was it, 35-32, which is good. I thought -- I told you guys early in the week that I thought we had to keep it in the 50s, low 60s. And needless to say, they got after us in the second half.

Q. You said on Monday and Tuesday that you felt better coming out this time because you guys had been able to practice during this time and had most of your guys available to practice. Had you privately been worrying about the conditioning, though? How did the conditioning become a factor during the layoff?

MIKE YOUNG: I didn't say -- North Carolina won the game. Let's make that very clear. I've never wavered in that assessment, okay. But again, as I said earlier, we can do everything possible to maintain -- this is a hard game, man. This is fast. And it's big and physical. Lose a bit of sharpness when you go that kind of period. But cannot ask another thing from our Hokie team. These guys gave me everything in their tank. We came up against a North Carolina team that's playing pretty well at the right time.

Q. When you mentioned conditioning here, is that something you were privately worried about?

MIKE YOUNG: Yes. Yeah, I was.

Q. Did you see it most on display in the second half with rebounding or defense or both?

MIKE YOUNG: I think kind of across the board. A couple of miscues. I thought we still got to our stuff and still got great shots. We hung in there. It wasn't due to a lack of offense. We simply -- we didn't have enough left to get that defensive stop, three defensive stops in a row, three defensive rebounds in a row.

We did cut it back to four or five at about the three-minute mark. I called time-out. I think we cut it back to five and I called time-out, which I never do. But I just thought we're never going to win this thing, we're not going to get out of here playing the way we're playing, and I couldn't turn the light switch back on. I tried. They really tried to reverse course. But you know, not tonight.

Q. Had you seen in practice that the guys didn't have their legs or had you seen --

MIKE YOUNG: No, it's just so hard. Again -- it's just so hard to replicate playing a game in this league. It's so hard

to replicate playing a game in the Atlantic Coast Conference tournament against the North Carolina Tar Heels. It's difficult. I did spend an inordinate amount of time with our staff, and what more could we do. But we're way into this thing, and I'm not one to pound on them ever for three hours a day and run them and conditioning. They're big, strong, athletic, well-conditioned people.

It's just that game pace and that game physicality that you miss.

Q. Keve hit a little jump hook with 11 minutes left, it got 49-all at that point and that's when Carolina went on an 11-2 run after that and got a little cushion there. Just before Keve hit that jump hook, you had a media time-out, 11:43 left. As you kind of gathered the guys over there at that point, is that when you kind of sensed the air was coming out of the balloon a little bit?

MIKE YOUNG: It wasn't. It wasn't. The best group -- I've said it a bunch. The best group -- they've got the want-to and they want to do exactly what you ask. Just a bit of a faraway look, not that same level of engagement that I see so often throughout the course of the year. Nothing intentional. They want to lay it on the line. They want to play the right way.

The other thing, goodness gracious, the guys are enormous. We hadn't seen them in the regular season. I don't know what more to add.

Q. We've talked a lot about how you were concerned about conditioning coming into this. You've seen it now. What do you do over the course of about a week to eight days here to get it back again? Or do you feel like there's kind of a cumulative effect of just continuing to practice?

MIKE YOUNG: I thought -- we're going to play -- you guys know how I feel about Steve Forbes and the Demon Deacons. We're going to play somebody a little bit better than Wake Forest in round 1. But I looked at the Georgia Tech game, I looked at this game as kind of our restart and an opportunity to sharpen our teeth. I think we can use this experience and carry it into the NCAA Tournament, and we'll be just fine.

I'm all over the place. We didn't play bad tonight, now. We did not play a poor basketball game. Just not quite good enough against a North Carolina team that's playing well.

Q. How much of this game film are you planning to watch going into the NCAA Tournament, given you're probably not going to see a team that's as physical



and long as Carolina in the first round?

MIKE YOUNG: I'll watch it tonight. I'll watch it tonight. I'm curious, more of just -- I love my team and I love watching them play. There will be some frustration in the second half, but I'm going to feel really good about some things throughout the course of the game, too. We'll watch some of it on Saturday. We'll take tomorrow off. We'll watch some of it on Saturday. I'm not one to beat them over the head with a bunch of film. We'll watch 15 minutes of it, some good, some bad, and then Sunday we'll find out when, where and all that sort of thing as it pertains to Indianapolis. I told them in there, our sadness will be replaced with sheer joy here real soon when I find out what we're doing on Sunday.

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