

Atlantic Coast Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Saturday, March 13, 2021

Greensboro, North Carolina, USA

Florida State Seminoles

Leonard Hamilton

Postgame Press Conference



Georgia Tech 80, Florida State 75

LEONARD HAMILTON: Obviously we're extremely disappointed. Your hat goes off to a team that -- Georgia Tech was extremely scrappy. They kind of showed you what intensity and sound defensive principles was like. It's very unusual for you to have a team that shoots 56 percent from the floor and 53 percent from three and 78 percent from the free-throw line, and then lose. Well, but how you lose doing that well offensively is turning the ball over 25 times.

For whatever reason, we've been a team that really has seemed to always light up when we see a zone defense. But for whatever reason tonight, we played with a lot of -- we played a lot like we were unsure of our cuts. We were unsure in our decision making as we attacked their zone defense. The uncertainty with which we executed I thought led us to a lot of turnovers.

You've got to give them credit. They have a knack for forcing turnovers unlike anyone that we've seen, especially the ability to steal and knock the ball out of your hands and then not foul. That's a skill that they have developed to the highest, and you have to give them credit for being who they are a lot better than we were able to be who we are.

Q. Was there a common denominator in the turnovers or was it the fact that you guys had equally as many unforced as they forced it seemed?

LEONARD HAMILTON: Well, you know, sometimes it's difficult to evaluate the game without going back and watching the film and doing your statistical analysis. I just thought generally speaking, from what I think I saw, was that it was all of the above. I thought we was indecisive. I thought they did a good job of coming behind us, stripping us, and knocking the ball out of our hands, which means either they knocked the ball loose from us -- which is

challenging to do that without fouling -- but somehow they've developed that skill to do that.

We did turn the ball over a couple of times ourselves, what we call self-inflicted turnovers. But for the most part, I think that they forced us into turnovers. They had 15 steals and they turned them into -- and they only had seven turnovers themselves.

This is a team that has a unique style and system that tonight I thought affected us in an adverse way. When you look back at it, you're emotional right now and you're happy that you come in second for the regular season. You play in the championship for the conference and you're down and you're disappointed, and you're feeling some kind of way. But I want to give them credit because they did an unbelievable job of just stripping us from the ball, and their defense created a mindset with us where we were unsure as to what we were supposed to do.

Normally it's not like we run a whole lot of different zone defenses. We just -- for whatever reason tonight, it was one of those nights where we were indecisive in our execution, and I thought we were very lucky to only be down one at halftime. We made a lot of mental errors, I thought, in the first half. We fought back, went up 7 or 9, and then we had the rest of the turnovers that really cost us the game.

Q. Georgia Tech didn't shoot any free throws in the first half and I think they shot 28 in the second. What were they doing to be able to get to the line so much in the second half?

A. Well, I think they decided not to try to run a whole lot of offense and they just drove the ball. Obviously we're a pretty decent defensive team. They're really clever with the ball. They protected the ball, and they drove the ball to the basket, and we were called for the fouls and I'm sure we committed some of them. We drove to the basket and they were able to defend us without fouling. They did a much better job of not fouling than we did with them. Seems we put them on the foul line when they were driving the ball.



Q. You've been in your share of games in March. After tonight, what type of mindset does this type of game get you prepared for as you get ready for the tournament starting next weekend?

LEONARD HAMILTON: Well, I think that the mindset that we have to be in is learn from the mistakes we make, and hopefully we will be smarter and execute better going to the tournament because we realize what our shortcomings have been. I think we'll be mentally prepared. I expect us to give tremendous effort. I think we'll rejuvenate our spirits and we'll be mentally prepared to go to the NCAA Tournament.

I think it will be a challenge because of the quality of our depth. I think the way we normally play on the offensive end and defensive end, tonight we didn't play to, I think, our potential. But I think -- overall, I think that we'll be prepared because we'll rejuvenate our spirits.

Sure, we're disappointed, got a lot of kids with tears in the locker room, but that's part of the pain of losing a game when you don't play as well as you think you're capable of playing.

But I feel very confident with the character we have on the team, the culture that we've been able to develop, that we'll bounce back and come together as a team and be prepared for the NCAA Tournament.

The good news is that we know we're going to the NCAA Tournament.

Q. Balsa, was he already coming in with -- dealing with something on the hand? Did he reaggravate that tonight on that block early in the game?

LEONARD HAMILTON: No, there was nothing from an injury standpoint that was affecting us tonight. We just got outplayed by a team that strips the ball. We turned the ball over 25 times, and we didn't answer the bell tonight. That's the story of this game.

They did an unbelievable job of stripping us of the ball. We weren't strong enough, weren't clever enough with the ball, and our poor execution against their zone was something -- was a step back from the way we normally execute.

We've got to learn from this, and we've just got to move on. We can't have a pity party. We'll look at the films, dissect it, look at the pluses and minuses, and prepare ourselves for the tournament next week.

Q. What's the plan now? Do you guys head to

Indianapolis right now? When do you get up there?

LEONARD HAMILTON: We leave tomorrow late. I think sometime late afternoon or early evening.

Q. And you'll stay in Greensboro until then?

LEONARD HAMILTON: Tomorrow, yes.

Q. I wanted to ask you about the game. You talk about wanting to learn from something like this, but do you expect -- unless you face them again -- are there other zones that are like this?

LEONARD HAMILTON: You know, it wasn't necessarily the zone, it was just our lack of execution against the zone. You've seen us play against zones before. This was not a zone that was unlike the other zones that we have gone against. Now, we have not played -- I don't know whether we played against a zone -- this might have been the first time we played against anyone who run the zone all year long to any extent. Maybe a few people have played zone here and there, but because we shoot the ball so well, most people have not challenged us from a zone defensive standpoint.

We shot the ball well tonight, but I think once we were indecisive, I thought that he did the wise thing by sticking with the zone, and that seemed to create some difficulty for us.

Now, even when they went man-to-man, I thought we were a little better. Our statistics show that when we got shots and didn't turn the ball over that we were pretty efficient. But the turnovers before we got to shoot the ball was the Achilles heel for us tonight.

Q. One steal tonight for the whole entire game; is that something you've got to work on for the NCAA Tournament, work on steals to get more points and get everything rolling?

LEONARD HAMILTON: You know, normally we're a team that gets a lot of deflections, but tonight they kept the ball in the hands of really sure dribblers. They didn't put themselves in a position where they could turn the ball over. Rather than passing the ball, they did a very good job of dribbling. You've got to give them credit.

If you go back and check, we're one of the better teams in the country with getting deflections and steals. Tonight they did a very good job of protecting the ball, and tonight we did not do a very good job protecting the ball. And you're going to have those nights.



Q. You mentioned that Scottie was 8 for 10 from the floor tonight. You did have the six turnovers, but on the offensive side was he the efficient type of player you wanted on the offensive side? We're not talking about on the turnover side.

LEONARD HAMILTON: Most of the points that he scored were down the stretch and were kind of in desperation, and you're not going to win many basketball games if that's the way you've got to score your points. You know if you're going to win, it's normally with ball movement, ball reversal, and good decision making. And the fact that he was able to score points when we was trying to come from behind is admirable and shows a lot about his talents and his skills.

But most of the time when you're winning, you have actually a team that's executing your system and everybody kind of is involved. Those parts he showed tonight showed that he has tremendous potential to do a lot of things from an offensive standpoint. He is to be commended for that.

But as a team, I thought that we just didn't execute as well, and that caused us to turn the ball over a lot more than at any time I think -- this might be a record, all-time record that I can remember, turning the ball over.

And you have to give this team credit. They've done that to everybody in the ACC for eight straight games. Sometimes you can complain about what you didn't do and sometimes you've just got to give the team credit for just doing an excellent job, and tonight they did an excellent job of creating havoc for us, creating a lot of indecision on our guys' part. They were in our space poking and reaching and grabbing.

You know, some of the steals probably you could say were questionable from a contact standpoint, but we have to protect the ball, and we didn't protect the ball, and they poked it from us. Some of it looked like there was contact, but still, when you have the ball in your possession and you're holding it with some strength, regardless of whether they're fouling you or not, you normally shouldn't lose the ball. And tonight we just didn't do a very good job of protecting the ball.

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