

Atlantic Coast Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Saturday, March 12, 2022

Virginia Tech Hokies

Brooklyn, New York, USA

Barclays Center

Mike Young Darius Maddox Keve Aluma

Postgame Press Conference



Virginia Tech - 72, North Carolina - 59

MIKE YOUNG: Darius will be here any minute. Mind if we go ahead and get started? When you're done with me, tell me. I'd love to get off of this stage.

THE MODERATOR: We're getting ready to begin the Virginia Tech press conference now. We'll go ahead and jump right into questions.

Q. Mike, could you share a little or any of what you said to the team at halftime that had them come out with that 9-0 start that really kind of tipped the game?

MIKE YOUNG: You'd be underwhelmed if you heard our halftime. I mean, you would. They understand the significance of that first four minutes. Man, we had an edge to us all night defensively. We had a good pop. I thought we were a little too dependent on Keve and Mutts in the first half. We weren't bad offensively, but we weren't great. Three turnovers in the first half was significant. They had three offensive rebounds, which was significant.

But I thought our defense really carried us. I thought we made a couple of shots, but our defense carried us in that 9-0 run to get some separation and make a little hay.

Q. Darius, this is your third game in three nights. Carolina had a double bye and rested a lot of players. You looked like the more energetic team. What do you attribute that to?

DARIUS MADDOX: One, me as a shooter, we got used to the rims and the arena feeling. Playing games here before

them actually helped us, and it showed tonight.

Q. Mike, about that defensive approach, what was different from the last time you guys played them?

MIKE YOUNG: We played better. We played better. We didn't alter anything, did we?

KEVE ALUMA: No, we didn't change anything.

MIKE YOUNG: We didn't alter anything. We just did it better. A little better connectivity. A little quicker to the ball. We have great admiration for Leaky and Armando, Caleb, RJ. Those guys are -- Brady Manek is an enormous matchup, and he has scored over 20 their last three games, and he is ripping people to shreds.

His cuts out of the corner to the basket on Caleb Love's dribble penetration, his exit screen to the corner in the front of their bench is lethal. We did a whale of a job in keeping a body on a body.

Now, we're going to switch stuff, and he got one on Pedulla in the second half, that's something we're giving up, right? He may have a couple of those, and he did, but over the long haul, we thought that would pay dividends and certainly thought that it did. Just keeping a body on a body. If you try to hedge it, he's got such a quick trigger that you can't get back to him, and now you're in rotation. That's too long of an answer here at 11:45 p.m. sorry.

Q. Congratulations, guys. You're part of the first team in school history to make the ACC Championship game. What does it mean to pull that off?

DARIUS MADDOX: I feel like it's big, not only for me, but for our team, definitely send our seniors out the right way. I didn't even know that was the first time in history. So it's a blessing.

MIKE YOUNG: I think he wants you to talk.

KEVE ALUMA: I think he got it. I don't know.

Q. Mike, what did you like about the four-guard lineup

ASAP . . . when all is said, we're done.®
sports

preparing for UNC? What kind of edge did that bring?

MIKE YOUNG: Didn't like it. Didn't like it. Then the doggoned thing worked so well. They had a hard time matching Brady on a guard. I think they went with Puff Johnson, with a smaller lineup. The ball was moving. Darius was great. It gave us the opportunity to get Keve off the floor a little bit more, which I wanted to do.

Guarding Armando is such -- the physicality of guarding him is so taxing, which is good. That three made opposite our bench and one -- was that you or Na? It was maybe the key to our team in the second half, another mover, another ball handler, another catch and shoot guy. This one can floor it and get between his legs and create stuff for himself. That's a pretty special guy.

Q. For the players, what do you recall about your first meeting with Duke, and what are going to be some of the keys tomorrow to finish the way you want?

KEVE ALUMA: I think we started off, the first half was good, but then I think the second half, they just started getting better. I know Paolo played pretty well the second half. So it will be a good game.

DARIUS MADDOX: Mainly for me, it's just containing the guards. Like he said, the first time I felt we were pretty solid defensively, but second half they started to hit more and more shots. They've got a bunch of good players, so just contain them defensively and just be Virginia Tech offensively.

Q. This is for Coach Young. I know we talked about it here throughout this stretch run of the season. We talked about it here at the end of the season, your bench. But to know that you can turn to these guys any night throughout this week and there's no let-up and no switch-up in terms of the intensity, how big has that been for you all?

MIKE YOUNG: Well, you think big picture. Talking about one game, you get through that one by the skin of your teeth, and then you come back and play a good ballgame against Notre Dame. Then you get into this thing two, three, now four games, the luxury of having eight dependable guys, guys that you know that you can plug in and are going to move the team forward is a big, big deal.

What he's doing is just remarkable.

Q. Mike, you guys are up 20 when Carolina goes on a 9-0 run. The building's getting loud. Your team has gone four straight possessions without a bucket, and Mutts backs down Manek and throws up that little

left-handed hook and kind of rights the ship. In hindsight, how large is that bucket right there? Because then right after that, Darius has his four-point play.

MIKE YOUNG: That's exactly right. That's exactly right. I kind of jumbled that sequence. We liked that matchup. We liked that matchup in Game 1 and Game 2. Brady's size bothered him. He just seemed to maneuver himself -- and he does an unbelievable job of lowering his center of gravity, and he's strong as an ox, his lower body. And rooting that defender down underneath the charge circle and getting over him, right shoulder, left shoulder. He can do it with a bunch of players, just had a little more success doing it tonight.

But I agree, maybe the shot of the game, kind of got us righted, got us going in the proper direction again.

Q. That last question leads me into mine. Darius, could you go through that four-point play. From a player's perspective, did you kind of feel that was pretty much of a turning point where maybe you'd held them off?

DARIUS MADDOX: Most definitely. I think the play we ran -- I think we ran it twice before, and the defender seemed like he knew exactly where I was going, so I gave him a little push. Coming off it, I got a good amount of separation, and when I let it go, I knew it was good. I think he hit my foot or my arm, but the ref caught it.

Q. Keve, can you talk about what it's like to play defense so intensely like you have tonight, or for that matter, the last couple nights?

KEVE ALUMA: Definitely, that's something that's been drilled into us. If we can guard them and keep them at a low score, then offense comes easier and everything just starts to click.

Q. This is for both Mike and Keve. You guys have both coached and played with Storm for a long time. He had a quiet seven points, seven assists tonight. When North Carolina started pressing, really calmed you guys down, it seemed. How much of a help is that to have him and look to him and know that he's going to carry you guys?

KEVE ALUMA: It's great to be back with him and have that calming sense. We all trust him a lot, and it's good to have him.

MIKE YOUNG: He's sharp. He tries to do -- a really good foul shooter, knows how things are supposed to play out.



He's been in that situation a number of times, maybe not in the Atlantic Coast Conference tournament, but great comfort with him in the backcourt with him with the ball in his hands.

Q. For everybody, as one win has turned into two has turned into three, what's that vibe in the locker room? Storm was up here Wednesday saying you were a desperate team. Are you guys still playing like that, or has desperation been replaced by confidence? What's kind of the mood in there?

DARIUS MADDIX: No question, we're going to stick to what we've been doing the last couple games because that's what's been getting us wins. We're a hungry team, and we're just going to go out there and fight like we did yesterday, today, and the day before.

KEVE ALUMA: I think, just because we're desperate doesn't mean we're not confident. Everybody in the locker room works hard and is in the gym, and I think everybody is super confident. We just know we've got to win.

Q. You're in such a rhythm offensively. It's so balanced. There's such flow. When you guys aren't scoring, you're usually getting a good look most possessions. I'm curious, Coach, is there anything you think your team can do better offensively tomorrow that you've seen in these last few days?

MIKE YOUNG: Yeah, we can screen better. We can move and hit multiple sides of the floor. We're going to need to do that against Duke in their pressure. We can make even more shots. That would make me happy. I wouldn't fret about that.

I do think we can play a little bit better on that end, but we are in a good rhythm. We're playing good basketball on that side of it.

But we'll win tomorrow if we can defend and we can rebound. Can we defend Duke? Can we rebound with Banchemo and A.J. Griffin and those others? Tall order but we'll get back tonight and begin our preparations. Look forward to coming over tomorrow evening.

Thanks, everybody. Have a nice night.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports