

Atlantic Coast Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Saturday, March 12, 2022

Virginia Tech Hokies

Brooklyn, New York, USA

Barclays Center

Mike Young

Keve Aluma

Storm Murphy

Hunter Cattoor

Postgame Press Conference



have achieved this milestone considering where you were in late January?

KEVE ALUMA: It means everything. I don't think a lot of people thought we would do this or even end up with a positive record. I mean, it means everything. I think it just shows that this team was resilient and that we fight.

STORM MURPHY: Yeah, I think as we're 2-7 and losing games we're not expecting to lose, that weight, that burden, that doubt creeps in, and that's tough. It's tough to have that.

We were talking about it in those moments, it was a dark place. We didn't want to be there. We didn't expect to be there. But the resilience of this team and the belief never wavered. I think we had more belief in those moments even than we did in the summer in the preseason with all the expectation.

When it really got real we pushed through and continued to grind and have fun, and now here we are.

MIKE YOUNG: Maybe it speaks to you guys, relax. I had a friend of mine, really good friend. He's an excellent writer. We got our doors blown off against Wake Forest. It was fair. He was right; we weren't very good. Here was the headline, maybe this Virginia Tech team isn't very good.

Come on, man. It's a long year.

We weren't playing very well. I hope we get the ship righted. Just start throwing those blades in December in a college basketball season? I think that's a bit much.

Q. You talked when you first got hired about watching games in Cassell Coliseum. To win an ACC championship with Virginia Tech, what does it mean to you?

MIKE YOUNG: I mean, it's really a special thing for our basketball team. This is a special thing for Blacksburg; for southwest Virginia where I'm from, where I grew up; for the state of Virginia; for our unbelievable Hokie fan base. They'll always remember this, this team, and what they've

Virginia Tech 82, Duke 67

Q. I mentioned the hot start last time, but today you shot 50 percent for the entire game, never really let your foot off the gas pedal. What was clicking offensively and defensively that let you maintain your energy out there on the court?

MIKE YOUNG: We played good basketball. We were not clicking defensively. My point at the half was if you think we can outscore them, you're sadly mistaken. We were much better. I don't think they're shooting the ball great right now. They're average 5, 5 1/2 made threes a game, so we really wanted to shrink it in the second half.

I couldn't convince them of that during the media time-outs in the first half where they only made two, but we had a couple of poor close-outs to guys that we didn't think were going to make that particular shot this night.

Now, it looked like a video game through the first media. I think it was 15-14. We couldn't stop them, they couldn't stop us.

But much better second half. Got our feet on the ground defensively but continued to play good basketball on the offensive end of the floor.

Q. When Charlie Moore hit that shot in late January you were in last place at 2-7 in the league and here you are making Virginia Tech history as the first ACC champions in school history. What does it mean to



accomplished.

I'll tell you something else: Holy cow, I don't watch the prognosticators, bracketologists. I'm thinking we get to the ACC final, maybe we lose this game. Holy cow, we've got to be in the tournament, aren't we? We are now, so to heck with that stuff. Our name will be called tomorrow and we'll be excited wherever we may go.

Q. Storm, can you give us an idea what it's like when you're playing next to Hunter and he's hitting everything he's throwing up there? How aware are you of it and what do you say to him in the huddle?

STORM MURPHY: Yeah, my goodness, it's just like sitting on the couch watching TV. He's just not missing a thing. We want him to just get every shot up when he's hot like that. We saw that at Florida State, and yeah, we're talking to him about continuing to just shoot it.

I think the really cool thing about Hunt is over the last month or whatnot he hasn't shot it so great, and he's owned that struggle. He's talked about that. He's embraced that. He hasn't hid from it. So we've all come around to him and continued to just tell him, my goodness, you're the best shooter in the gym anywhere we go. He's believed that and then popped off today like that.

Q. As you walk up that ladder to cut down a piece of the net, what's the first thing that went through each of your minds as you were going up there?

MIKE YOUNG: Hope I don't fall. True. True. I had our strength coach hold the ladder. You guys got a better answer than that.

KEVE ALUMA: First thing that went through my mind, champs.

STORM MURPHY: Yeah, I think we talked about it as a team, that now it's forever. Like it's etched, it's engrained that we're forever champions. That's just something to be proud of, and it's really special and no one will be able to take that away. I think that was one of the first things that popped in my head.

MIKE YOUNG: He's a man of few words. He just said to me -- this is Aluma. This is Aluma. He just got my attention and he said, with a wink, seven assists. This guy didn't have seven assists his first two years as a college player, truthfully.

KEVE ALUMA: I felt like Justyn.

Q. Coach, when Mark Williams got in foul trouble in

that second half, it seemed like you guys were able to get pretty much whatever you wanted offensively. How were you able to exploit that when Duke had to go smaller?

MIKE YOUNG: We were going to roll the dice a little bit. We thought our small lineup last night was really effective against North Carolina. We thought with Mark and Theo off the floor, so with Paolo at the 5, A.J. at the 4, maybe we could get away with our four-guard lineup with Keve or Justyn.

Again, as I said last night, another move or another ball handler, passer, catch and shoot guy, wasn't as effective for us tonight. But I thought it does allow us to get him off the floor a little bit more and Justyn off the floor a little bit more.

Had his third foul at about the 13-minute mark maybe, and I think I was able to get him to nine or something like that. Those numbers might be a little off.

Q. Hunter is not quite as big as Fletcher Magee, but are there similarities, and did you have Fletcher Magee flashbacks at any moment tonight?

MIKE YOUNG: I almost didn't get him because of Fletcher Magee. Fletcher is from Orlando. Hunter is from Orlando. He said to me during the recruiting process -- I thought I was going to lose him. He said, Coach, I don't think I can be Fletcher Magee. I said, hey, buddy, I don't need you to be Fletcher Magee, I need you to be Hunter Cattoor. So I just kind of wiped that out.

Those were four unbelievable years with an unbelievable player and an unbelievable young man and family. We're three years into a heck of a career and a lot of great fun with him and his family.

You know, you just keep on rolling. I'd like to have a couple more of them, I can tell you that.

Q. Three years ago today, Mike, you were still at Wofford; Keve, you were still at Wofford; Storm, you were still at Wofford; and Hunter you were planning to go to Wofford. What's it like three years later to have played a key role at Virginia Tech on an ACC championship team?

HUNTER CATTOOR: It's crazy. I went and watched them play at the first round NCAA tournament when you-all played Seton Hall. I was preparing to go to Wofford since September when I committed. So just to have this moment right now, it speaks about Coach Young and how he can coach. And just these players, Keve and Storm, that can

play at any level. Whenever people doubted them and said they couldn't do it throughout the whole season, we just proved it all tonight.

MIKE YOUNG: I said to Kevin Giltner, I knew he was going to be very good. I said, we got here three years ago and we took Hunter, did you ever think he'd be named the ACC Tournament most valuable player, and we had a chuckle. Most deserving. What a great tournament he had.

Q. Hunter, you hadn't had big games yet in the tournament. Was there something tonight that got you going and kind of led to this?

HUNTER CATTOOR: I think just the rhythm of the game, my teammates and Coach Young trusting in me, just the system that we play in. I was going through a rough shooting slump and every time in practice, every time in the games, my teammates would tell me I'm the best shooter in the gym. So just having that mindset and that trust from my players, it's welcoming to hear that.

Q. At what point in the game did you realize this was going to be a big night for you? Maybe you hit your first four threes in a row and you took off from there; what was a spark for you?

HUNTER CATTOOR: Honestly it was kind of a blur going through it. Like Coach Young talked to us before in the locker room, just go out there and have fun and so I was kind of doing that. He mentioned like out there playing on the playground so I just felt like I was in my front yard, shooting on the front grill. I dreamed of moments like this, and it happened, so I'm grateful.

Q. Hunter, what does it mean to you to win the ACC championship and to do it against the Duke team in Coach K's last season?

HUNTER CATTOOR: It means a lot just for the history of Virginia Tech. Coach Young mentioned before we're not going it just for our team here in that locker room. We were doing it for all the players before and everyone that came through Virginia Tech before. So it's a history thing for the Virginia Tech school and the program, and it means a lot to be the first ones.

Q. Hunter, I saw you shove that confetti in your shoe when you came up. What are you going to do with it when you get back to Blacksburg?

HUNTER CATTOOR: I have no idea, but I just wanted to keep some, put it in the scrapbook or something.

Q. Coach, regarding Wednesday night, you called that win luckier than hell. What do you call this one?

MIKE YOUNG: Gratifying. Gratifying. To get here with a group of people that I love, staff, our administration, Stephanie Ballein, our chief of staff; Bruce Garnes, our equipment manager; David Jack. Gratifying.

A lot of people carrying a lot of water every day to help these guys. A special night. Really cool night.

Q. Mike, you talked about what winning the ACC championship meant for the community and the fan base. What does it mean for the program?

MIKE YOUNG: Pretty big, man. Pretty big, man. I referenced it last night, we have a box, and we put all these cool things. I'll process, and at the end of the season, we'll pull it all out and we'll savor and we'll congratulate and pat one another on the back. It's significant. But we're going to play in the NCAA Tournament next week. We did it last year. We didn't play poorly. We didn't play well enough to beat Florida in overtime.

We're going to put a lot of time and effort into our next opponent, and there will come a time we'll look back on it. This is very significant for our program, for our coaching staff. A lot of fun.

Q. Storm, I don't think any of you guys know this, but Keve had a career high seven assists tonight. He out-assisted you.

STORM MURPHY: I know.

Q. You guys are such close friends, but when he's passing the way he did tonight, how gratifying is this offense? How beautiful is it?

STORM MURPHY: I think to start, I think he missed one of my passes on purpose just so he could have that.

But no, oh, my goodness, to have a play maker so versatile who can pass like that, him and Justyn, it's really lethal. It makes it hard for other teams to guard, and it's just fun to play with. At any moment I can expect to zip out for a catch and shoot or for him to go score it. It just makes it tough for other teams, and it's just fun to play with.

Q. At what point did it sink in that it was actually going to happen? It looked like when Justyn had that slam on Paolo that sent him to the ground late. It looked like you guys realized. Was that the moment and what are you feeling when it sort of does sink in?

KEVE ALUMA: How much time was left?

Q. Two or three minutes?

KEVE ALUMA: Was that after I had the and-one lay-up?

Q. You had the second one thereafter.

KEVE ALUMA: I think it was that moment, and I just started smiling. I didn't want to smile too much, but it was showing a little bit, so I think that one.

STORM MURPHY: Yeah, I think it was definitely -- that moment was huge. I think that kind of was a cap, a seal to realize. There was a break right after that, I think the next dead ball we went to the huddle, we were like, we can taste it, we can taste it now.

But I think even it started on the way here to Brooklyn and even this morning. I think a lot of the guys just had no doubt that we were going to lose, and we completely realized we already had the game won. We just had to do our job.

HUNTER CATTOOR: Probably when the buzzer went off. I was still scared even when we were up. But you kind of -- when that play happened, you kind of get a good feeling about it. But as soon as the confetti started coming down, all the emotions kind of left my body, and that's when it hit.

Q. Mike and Storm, Coach Krzyzewski said he feels like you guys have become the team you thought you were going to be. Is that a good description or have you had to change?

MIKE YOUNG: Yeah, I think Coach is spot on. I think Coach is spot on.

Again, it takes some time. Maybe a failure on my part, we were a lot more talented than we were playing, and that is -- you can take that to heart. That's hard to stomach.

Again, I've said it a couple times, I knew when it came together it was going to be a beautiful thing, and it came together. You know, I didn't think it would culminate in this, but here we are and we're not giving it back, I can tell you that.

Q. Keve, Paolo said yesterday that he wanted UNC in the tournament final. Was that bulletin board material for you guys?

KEVE ALUMA: I think Storm was the first one that saw that and he sent it in the group chat. That was fuel for us.

But obviously we know that they just beat them at their place, but yeah, it was fuel.

Q. Coming from the Southern Conference, such a long and illustrious history of basketball in the Southern Conference, and even in the past few years whichever team made the NCAA Tournament would cause problems if not win in the tournament. How much is this a testament to the greatness of the Southern Conference as well with you guys coming over from Wofford?

MIKE YOUNG: I think that's an astute point. It's a great league. Great players' league. Really, really, really well-coached league. You cut your teeth going night in and night out with Larry Hunter at Western Carolina, who's no longer with us; Bob McKillop at Davidson; John Kresse of College of Charleston, you'd better figure some things out or you'll get your rear end whipped. It is a wonderful league. I have great administration and respect for that league. Continues to do very well.

I think they were 13th nationally in Ken Pom or one of those things, and I think that's fair. That's a heck of a league, night in, night out. Excellent point. Excellent point.

Q. Storm, conventional wisdom would say that the team playing its fourth game in as many days might have some fatigue in the final, but yet you guys seemed to hit another gear in the second half while Duke could not. Where did that burst come from?

STORM MURPHY: Maybe the nightmares and flashbacks of 5:00 a.m. conditioning with these guys and Coach Jackson maybe. But I think like honestly, those mornings, pushing through with that mindset and that mentality kind of helped us.

Whenever we felt some fatigue or whatnot, had to tell ourselves we don't feel it, we have to push through. Maybe that was a little bit of the defensive sluggish start, but I think we turned it up a notch, finally woke up, and ended out right.

Q. If I could get you three to answer what Hunter answered before when I was asking, three years ago this month you're champions at Wofford, champions in another conference and now your journey three years later. Now you've proven yourself at a new school and are now champions at a new school and a new conference?

MIKE YOUNG: There are a lot of good players, a lot of good players. These guys proved themselves in a really



good league at the Southern Conference. We won a championship together as a sophomore.

As luck would have it, I was able to bring Keve along right away. Hunter came along right away. Storm finished his other two years there, and all three have been really good players. They're old, they're strong, they're tough. They're really, really skilled.

I know this: It has been so enjoyable, an honor to coach them, as it has Justyn Mutts, Nahiem Alleyne, and Darius Maddox and others, but it's an honor to coach young people like these three guys.

STORM MURPHY: We won at Wofford and different school, different colors. What's it like for you, Keve?

KEVE ALUMA: It's crazy, I don't think I expected to come here and maybe play this well and for us to win, but we worked hard, and I'm glad things have turned out like this.

Q. Hunter, I know Mike has said you guys haven't talked about the NCAA Tournament, but in these last few weeks trying to get your resume boosted, quad 1 wins, what's it like to know you're going to be in the big dance?

HUNTER CATTOOR: It's amazing. I feel like the past two months, our next game has felt like a must-win game, so just having that mentality going in and out. We know going into this tournament we're going to have to win a couple, and then once we won our first one, we were just saying, why not the whole thing; we won't have to worry about waiting on Selection Sunday to see if our name is called. Now knowing that our name is definitely going to be called, it's a little bit more relaxing.

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