

Atlantic Coast Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Saturday, March 11, 2023

Clemson Tigers

Greensboro, North Carolina, USA

Coach Brad Brownell

PJ Hall

Hunter Tyson

Postgame Press Conference

Virginia 76, Clemson 56

BRAD BROWNELL: Congratulations to Virginia. They played really well tonight. They obviously were clearly better than we were. We thought at times we were a little step slow, and some of it is stylistically playing them. They're probably the hardest team in the league to play against in terms of what it takes, consistency of effort and discipline. Their offensive movement is very good and taxing on you, and if you're just a little fatigued and wear down a little bit, you're going to get burned.

I thought that happened to us some. I thought we got a little frustrated by some missed shots. I did think we had some decent shots for a while. Beginning of the second half, I thought we had some good ones.

But I thought that probably took the air out of our sails a little bit. But they were just better, a little bit quicker to the ball, and they just played much better than we did tonight.

Q. Coach, I know a lot of teams don't think you guys deserve to be in the NCAA Tournament. What would your argument to the committee be with a 23-10 record?

BRAD BROWNELL: Yeah, you know, four or five -- I don't know where Virginia Tech is, if they're 74 or they're 75 or they're 76. So if they're 76, we have four Quad 1 wins; if they're 75 or 74, we have five. I think what's impressive about it is four of them are away from home. I think that's significant.

I think you have to prove that you can beat good teams, and some teams do it at home. If you do it away from



home and if you do it -- you know, consistency versus the amount of games you get to play. Unfortunately our league didn't have quite as many and some of the non-conference games, tournaments and things we tried to schedule, the teams didn't play quite as well.

But the games we got to play, we were .500 or better in those Quad 1 games. There's teams that they have in the tournament ahead of us, some in our league, that we've beaten. Some multiple times. Others at their place. In other leagues we've beaten teams.

So I think just for those reasons, if you're truly looking for the 68 best teams, we're one of the 68 best teams. Finishing third in this league, too, by the way.

Q. Brad, how hard is it to guard some of their ball screen action, and how did you feel like you guys did with it?

BRAD BROWNELL: Not very well. I mean, it's all hard. They run their sides motion where they're coming off flares, pin downs, bending the ball screens. It's just constant movement, and there's a wearing effect.

You get a little bit behind and it's on any kind of cut, and there's going to be a crease. And whether it's a shot off the cut or a drive off the cut, a lot of times it's a drive off the cut, that puts you behind, and now you're kind of in some rotations. We got put in some rotations in the first half and we had trouble blocking out bigger players, so they hurt us on the glass.

Yeah, it's obviously an outstanding offense. I think the thing that I always say about Tony and his program and his team, their offense and defense fit together perfectly. And so that's why they're consistently very hard to beat and play against is their system fits. It's obviously hard to guard.

And then you go down on the other end, and it's hard to score against them, and you've got to really work physically to cut hard, screen hard, move the ball quickly and attack a close-out. And then to score on them, it's challenging. So you're using a lot of energy on both instances. And when



you play this team after playing the night before at 9:30, it's probably doubly hard unless you get off to a good start, get your crowd into it, make some shots, get your juice going.

And we just couldn't get enough of that going in this game to sustain it.

Q. For the players, we just heard Brad's pitch to the committee. Having been in all these games, played all these games, what's your pitch to the committee about why Clemson deserves to be in the field?

PJ HALL: The 23 & 10, 33 games, you look at our complete body of work, I think there's plenty of wins home and away that show we can play with anyone in the country when we play our best. Obviously tonight wasn't a great showcase of that.

I have to take a lot of responsibility for that. The first five out there, we didn't quite bring the heat we needed to. But if you look at some of the games we played this year, how we played on the road, how we played with backs on the ropes late in games and finished, there's not a doubt in my mind that we're one of the best teams in the country and belong in the tournament.

I say that wholeheartedly, and there's nothing more to it.

HUNTER TYSON: Yeah, I agree with PJ. I just worked so hard, this team has worked so hard, and I can honestly say I feel like we've left it all out there. I'm not looking for sympathy. I'm just looking for recognition of what we've earned. Like Coach said, if you really want the best 68 teams, we're one of them. And we'll have our fingers crossed on Sunday, but I truly believe we should get in.

I believe our body of work has earned us a spot in the tournament. Obviously I understand we have some tough losses, but at the end of the day, we should be in the tournament.

Q. Brad, you were down four with four to go in the first half and then it kind of turned, went on a long stretch of missing shots. What did you see then? Did you feel good at that point?

BRAD BROWNELL: I told the guys in some of the time-outs preceding that I didn't think we were playing as well, that we were playing just okay, that I felt like we were a step slow, and that we had to -- we hung in there, we were fighting and competing, but we're going to have to kick it up a notch, and we're going to have to play better, and we're going to have to make some shots for this thing to flip.

Off the top of my head without seeing it, I can't remember exactly what happened right at the end of the first half where it got away from us, but obviously that was critical because when Virginia gets a double-figure lead against you, your tendency is to press a little bit, and they just don't make many mistakes, if any, to give you a chance to come back.

You tend to then press a little bit more, and it can get away from you, and that's probably what happened. I thought we did get some good shots at the beginning of the second half and we didn't make them. And eventually you've got to start making some shots, and we couldn't do it.

Q. Brad, it seems like RJ and Dillon really played well for you guys here and at times down the stretch. How have you seen those guys grow?

BRAD BROWNELL: Yeah, I thought they had a little more energy. Obviously they don't play quite as much. In most games I thought they brought great toughness and athleticism and juice to the game for our team. That's why they play. Physically they can impact the game. We've got to continue to work with them on their skills, but they've really improved.

That's a big environment out there, and for those guys to compete as well as they did, I'm really proud of those young players.

Q. For PJ and Hunter, I don't think you guys have had a press conference for the last month where you haven't been asked about the NCAA Tournament. Does that start to have a weighing effect on you every time you're out on the floor?

HUNTER TYSON: I don't know if it really weighs on you. I think we've used it as motivation here down the stretch. Honestly tonight didn't go like we wanted it to, but I think it was a bit of a motivator here down the stretch, last night especially.

But every time we just hear about it, but we just try to focus on what we can control, coming in every day, doing our jobs, and letting everybody else talk about it. Like I said, I believe we should be in the tournament, and I guess that's all I have to say about that.

PJ HALL: Really I'd say no. I think that's a credit to our team and why we should be in there. We don't worry about the kind of outside noise. We came into the tournament as a 3 seed. Everybody was saying, oh, you get to play the team that just drug Virginia Tech through the dirt, and we came out there and we did that to them.

We're not worried about the outside noise. We came out there guns firing, and we don't get too rattled by that stuff. Obviously tonight you've got to hand it to them, but we try not to worry about that and go out there and do our jobs.

I think with that being said, we don't get too bothered by the outside noise. That's what makes us a good team. We just keep fighting for each other and playing for each other.

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