

Atlantic Coast Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Wednesday, March 13, 2024

Washington, D.C., USA

Capital One Arena

Virginia Tech Hokies

Coach Mike Young

Sean Pedulla

Tyler Nickel

Postgame Press Conference

Florida State 86, Virginia Tech 76

Q. You talked yesterday about ball security. What about Florida State's defense, especially in the last seven minutes when they made that run, what made it hard to be able to achieve that goal today?

MIKE YOUNG: Yeah, we had five at the half. I thought we were in pretty good shape. We had some bad ones, and it is persistent, and it's active, and we had a couple of head scratchers. That's a credit to the Seminoles.

Q. In the first half it seemed like your offense was clicking. In the second half it kind of went down. You talked about the turnovers; do you think that contributed to not being able to get into the flow on offense in the second half?

MIKE YOUNG: Well, that's what they've done in his time at Florida State. They're really good and very disruptive. It's uncomfortable. Yes, you're exactly right.

I thought we had some very good shots that we got down in the first half. Consequently we go in at the half up one, but I thought we had some very good shots in the second half, but we weren't shooting the ball -- Hunter had a couple of great ones, and he's been terrific throughout his career. Just didn't have his best stuff.

Again, a credit to Florida State.

Q. Sean, what did you think about the way you attacked in the second half? You got into the double bonus early. How much did that help offset at times



the offensive struggles?

SEAN PEDULLA: I thought we did a good job getting downhill. Part of our game plan was just getting into the paint and playing off two feet, and we kind of did that a little bit less in the second half.

I thought we even did it a lot in the first half, but one-foot plays, making the 50/50 passes, and that kind of led to some of the turnovers, and their length kind of makes it hard to finish around the rim. It kind of baits you into taking tough shots and 50/50 passes.

We just didn't do a good enough job offensively in the second half down the stretch.

Q. Coach, what was the approach in trying to contain Watkins, and what was he able to take advantage of this afternoon?

MIKE YOUNG: Well, his tendencies are very obvious. It doesn't take you long. He's a good player. He is going to drive the ball with his right hand, and he wants to get to the middle of the floor, and he wants to use his power and his length and athleticism to get over the top of you and score that, and we allowed him to do that a little bit.

Out of his left hand he's going to catch and shoot it, he's going to bounce and shoot it from three. Made a three in the first half. We had our hands down, and he did a good job getting to the middle of the lane.

In the second half we had to bring a double-team to him, turned him over once. Then they moved to the middle of the floor. It's not as hard to get a second person to him, and they run a little rub screen off the primary defender, and he was able to get downhill with that.

Doggone, I don't know if he missed a foul shot. He missed a foul shot in the first half, but I don't know that we've had anybody clip us for 34 points this year. He was very good.

Q. Tyler, you shot the ball well, but as a team you guys only made six of your 24 threes. Did you like the looks as a team that you guys were getting?

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Offensively what kind of did you see in terms of your struggles? Did you like the shots and they just didn't fall?

TYLER NICKEL: I think we did get a lot of good shots. Like Sean had mentioned, when we get past the first layer of defense, play on two feet, drive and kicks, we got a lot of good shots from guys that can shoot the real really well, but sometimes they just don't drop.

Q. Sean, they had 10 steals today including some big ones in the last seven minutes. What was it like to have to deal with that Florida State defense today?

SEAN PEDULLA: Just more of the same from the last time we played them. Just very ratty on the ball and slapping at the ball in your hand, and you've got to be really strong with it, especially when you get into the paint.

They live off of those turnovers and getting out in transition. It's hard to do, but you've got to do it if you want to win.

Q. Mike, you had said after the Notre Dame game that it's a new world in postseason, that a three-game winning streak to end the regular season might not be predictive. As you watched your team prepare to come here, were you encouraged, and did you think they would perform well?

MIKE YOUNG: I did. I did. A great look. We had a good 10-day, two-week stretch there.

I don't know that -- and I say this with great admiration -- I don't know that anybody would sign up to play Florida State, no matter what year, because of their style, because of their players.

I really liked how we played in our game at our place and watched an inordinate amount of film. Probably a little more film with our team than we typically do.

Again, they played a little bit better than we did. But the lead-up and our readiness coming into this game I thought was spot on. We were ready to roll.

Again, they played better than the Hokies.

Q. Sean, you got into a bit of foul trouble in the first half and MJ was able to facilitate the offense pretty well. What can you say about him not just in his development over the course of this game but this season as he figures to be one of the key players going into next season?

SEAN PEDULLA: Yeah, he's done a great job, and there

was times where I got in foul trouble like tonight and he kind of had to slide over to the point guard role. He ran the show as good as you really can run it in the first half and took care of the ball.

That's an impressive thing to do from a guy that doesn't usually play that spot. Credit to MJ.

Q. You talked about the importance of rebounding yesterday. How did you feel you did in that regard today?

MIKE YOUNG: See the number? These don't lie. These are right at you, black and white, football, rushing yards, sacks, turnovers.

In basketball -- you look at it, I did tell you that we had to take care of the ball. 13 is too many. We needed to rebound. We out-rebounded them 14 at our place. They out-rebounded us today by nine. It's a pretty easy game. I so help me goodness think I could sit here with this young lady, not know anything about it, bring me the final stats, and I could tell you the outcome. Don't show me the score, and I could -- I was correct in my assessment.

Q. Mike, would you like to continue playing with this squad? Would you welcome an NIT bid to continue --

MIKE YOUNG: Hell yeah, absolutely. To play in the postseason? Sign me up.

We all want to play in the big one, but to coach these guys again and make a run at that thing, you're doggone right. I'm never going to be too big for my pants that that won't be the opportunity to play in the postseason. I don't care what anybody says, not what all of us want to do, but it is still a great tournament, and I'd like to do that.

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