

# Atlantic Coast Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Friday, March 15, 2024

Washington, D.C., USA

Capital One Arena

Virginia Cavaliers

Coach Tony Bennett

Jake Groves

Taine Murray

Postgame Press Conference

Virginia 66, Boston College 60 (OT)

TONY BENNETT: Just obviously a hard-fought game. Had to overcome a lot. I thought Taine got us off. We were struggling a little bit, and he really was tough and got us going with some hard plays.

Jordan Minor's defense down the stretch. It was a little bit of every man when they were called upon had to do it, and we had to fight to get that one.

Missed some free throws, obviously, but very thankful and obviously a meaningful game.

**Q. Tony, you mentioned kind of the all-hands-on-deck mantra, but Jordan's defense late against Post and also Dante Harris hits a big shot and Taine and then --**

TONY BENNETT: Andrew Rohde --

**Q. Did you anticipate it was going to be this way?**

TONY BENNETT: I thought it would. We had a couple guys get injured on Monday or Tuesday that couldn't practice, so they were really hobbling, and I could see that, and I thought we were going to have to use everybody.

But it was just a game where Ryan fought his heart out to guard Post. Obviously then we had Blake doing it, Jordan early, and then I went back to him and he did a great job.

Again, it really was Dante's on-ball D was good, so it really was that. This team this year I think that's really been -- Reece and I-Mack were a little out of sorts early, but they



made big plays when they had to as well.

**Q. Issac was out of the game for a good part of the second half. You put him back in late. He got fouled on the three-pointer, then hit the three in overtime. Did you have any idea what to expect from him tonight?**

TONY BENNETT: Yeah, I mean, he hadn't practiced for four days. He sprained his ankle pretty bad on Monday or Tuesday. He didn't do anything until a little bit at shootaround and basically we said test it in warmups and see how it goes. He moved good. You could tell he was a little ginger, but I think as the game wore on it was good, and again, he made some big plays that we needed. It was good.

But again, Taine did a great job, and Taine picked up where he left off from our last game and then just carried it, and we knew we were going to need that. But I thought Andrew Rohde gave us a great gift on the perimeter.

**Q. The way that Boston College got things going early, what was the toughest part for you guys trying to contain them, and what were they able to take advantage of when they were able to jump out?**

TONY BENNETT: Yeah, well, they've done a really good job. Earl has done a great job with their team. It's just -- I think the way they're tough-minded, post as an inside-outside attack, Harris has played so well, and you could tell they were sort of used to playing. We've got 20 minutes to warm up, it felt a little off for us, they got some transition buckets and some offensive rebounds, and I just thought they hit us in the mouth first, but we stayed the course, got some stops, and then got to it.

But we were a little just not quite ready to start. We tried to be, but didn't play out that way.

**Q. Jake and Taine, you guys kept them scoreless for five plus minutes at the end of regulation and they hit that shot. How difficult was it to regroup given that you guys had largely done everything you were supposed to do other than get the rebound on that play?**

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JAKE GROVES: Yeah, I think a lot of it was, obviously, you said it, we didn't get the rebound. I think a lot of the reason it was that close, some missed shots, but one thing that never changed towards the end was our defense.

I thought guys were really gritty, especially like Coach said Jordan coming in, and that was a huge lift, huge help. And then guys just playing team defense around him. I know we didn't clean up that one rebound, but coming back into the huddle, we were optimistic about overtime. It was good.

**Q. Jake, you were out there at the start of the game when BC is draining threes, especially Harris, from everywhere. Were you afraid they were never going to miss? What was the mindset at that moment when you're down considerable?**

JAKE GROVES: Yeah, no, I mean, that's not the first time we've gotten out to kind of a slow start this season. So we've kind of learned from those experiences.

But you start seeing those shots falling, and I think a couple of them came on our mistakes. But he hit a few really tough shots with a hand in his face. We're living with those. We're going to clean up the mistakes, obviously, and not give a good shooter like that wide-open shots and then live with the results if he's making shots with a hand in his face.

**Q. Coach, Andrew Rohde played zero minutes in the end-of-the-season game against Georgia Tech but 25 minutes tonight, and you mentioned he was a significant contributor. Was there something you saw on film that led you to play him or was it something in practice or just a decision as the game more on?**

TONY BENNETT: I think against Georgia Tech Taine played so well we tightened our rotation. I knew Andrew would play again, and I think with Issac McKneely not being full strength with his ankle I said we're going to probably have to see how it goes.

And Andrew has helped us all year. He moves without the ball well, and it was great to see him knock down some of those shots because his feel is good. I thought he actually defended well on Harris because Harris got it going.

But I just thought Taine got us going. It was kind of both of them. I was like, boy, maybe thinking of bringing Taine back, maybe bringing Ryan back, but with group with Jake and Jordan and I-Mack, he was rested, he certainly was, and then Reece and Andrew, I thought they were guarding well. They were moving, they had a little rhythm, and

those are decisions that you've got to make, and they stuck it out.

**Q. Tony, on the Reece Beekman three in over time, I saw Jason Williford and Johnny Carpenter kind of nudging each other almost laughing. What was the play designed there? Why were they so excited about that play?**

TONY BENNETT: You'll have to ask them. He missed one, and did it bound out to him? It's a play that they designed. It was their play, so I think they were just excited that he hit the shot. That's the extra pass that Issac made and then he banged it.

I just think the excitement of him knocking down that shot at that moment after he was a little cold was obviously a big-time play and then he had a nice pass to Jordan to seal it, too.

**Q. Is there anything you can do about the free throws at this point in the season? How do you work on that going forward?**

TONY BENNETT: We're saving them until we need them. That's part of the deal.

**Q. Taine, going into overtime, how did you guys regroup after that last shot and find your way back?**

TAINÉ MURRAY: Yeah, obviously it's tough when they hit a shot like that, but I think we just have confidence in everyone. Obviously the guys who played in overtime defensively also hit shots at the right time.

Yeah, obviously hurts, but I think we have confidence in this team, and just awesome to have the result that we did.

**Q. Taine, you got a little bit of time in the ACC Tournament last year. This was the first time you'd really played in a significant part of the game. Did that experience last year kind of help you get ready for this year?**

TAINÉ MURRAY: Yeah, for sure. I think all the moments throughout my first two years of kind of getting exposure here and there was definitely a big help, and it was pretty cool to be able to have minutes tonight, but I think the experience in the past few years has definitely helped, yeah.

**Q. Taine, you're an experienced guy. You've been here, I remember the Iowa game three, four years ago. What have you learned about yourself over the last three, four years here at UVA, and what has it meant to**

**have this opportunity, especially at this crucial juncture?**

TAINÉ MURRAY: Yeah, obviously super grateful for the opportunity I have to help this team try and win, especially in critical times. I think, yeah, just trying to remain focused on getting better and just trusting the process.

Obviously trust Coach and the coaching staff with their decisions. I've just tried to remain as ready as I can, and hopefully when I'm called upon, I can help this team win.

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