

Atlantic Coast Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Wednesday, March 12, 2025

Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

Spectrum Center

Virginia Cavaliers

Ron Sanchez

Isaac McKneely

Andrew Rohde

Postgame Press Conference

Georgia Tech 66, Virginia 60

RON SANCHEZ: Just proud of the guys for battling, not only today but throughout this entire season. For them, it's been a season of tremendous adversity at times and a lot of unknowns and just give them all a lot of credit for their maturity, for their willingness to really fight all the way to the last buzzer.

Today was a perfect example of that, and that was led by these two guys sitting here next to me. They were leaders in the locker room, kept the group together, kept the group playing hard, and kind of established and sustained our culture in our locker room.

So just thankful for the opportunity to have coached this team this season. I'm thankful for these two guys next to me. Really appreciate just the fight and effort of the group all season long.

Q. Guys, can you take me back to the end of the first half, where it felt like it was never going to end, the constant foul calls and times at the free-throw line, the changing of the time?

ISAAC McKNEELY: Yeah, I thought there were some calls toward the end of the half. I got my second one at the end of the half, but we can't blame it on the refs at all. They're doing their job. They're not going to be perfect.

It's going to be different every game, the refs, but we just go out there and try and defend as best we can without fouling, but there were some fouls down toward the end that I didn't agree with, but they're not going to be perfect,



like I said.

Q. Late in the second half all the three-pointers to keep you guys in the game, what was the mentality, and can you describe the last 40 seconds you hit to trim the lead to two?

ISAAC McKNEELY: Speaking for me and Rohde, we don't have any quit. We have no quit inside of us. We thought we had a chance to win, even when we were down 10 with a few minutes, so we were just going to keep fighting. We knew our season was on the line.

We knew we wanted to win that game really bad. I saw a few go down, so I was just trying to hunt my shot. My teammates did a great job of finding me down the stretch, as well. But yeah, we don't quit at all, so we were just trying to do whatever we could to fight back.

Q. For the players, as Coach said, you faced a lot of adversity this season. It started with Coach Bennett's decision. How do you think you'll look back when you have a little time to reflect on this season?

ISAAC McKNEELY: Yeah, Coach Sanchez said it in the locker room afterwards. He hopes that we look back and remember the season, and he hopes that we were the closest team that we've ever been a part of, and I think that's true. I can speak for Rohde beside me, Coach Sanchez, everyone in that locker room, I can speak for all of us.

We're a super close-knit group, especially the teammates. We never quit, like I said, even through the tough losses, big wins. We stayed together through it all.

Our record wasn't as good as we wanted it to be, but through wins and losses, I love these guys. It was a great season. I wouldn't want to be a part of any other team for sure.

ANDREW ROHDE: Yeah, looking back on it, for me, I'm just going to remember all the great moments. I think this was kind of the first year in my college basketball career where every day in practice I'm truly enjoying it and I'm

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enjoying going to practice with my brothers and my coaches, and we're out there competing and having fun and going at each other. I'm just so blessed to be a part of this team and playing, and I'm going to look back at all the great things that happened.

Q. You guys played such a great defensive first half. What changed in the second? I know Georgia Tech spread you out a little. Was there any fatigue, or what did you see changing?

ISAAC MCKNEELY: It wasn't changes. I just think they started executing better. In the first half we stunned them with our switching 1 through 5. They like to hit the short roll. We were trying to take that away early. They made adjustments down the stretch.

I thought we were sub-par on our floods toward the end of the game. They were getting easy lay-ups at the rim and stuff, offensive rebounds hurt us again. But yeah, they just executed down the stretch, and credit to them, they played a great game.

ANDREW ROHDE: Yeah, going off that, I think the biggest thing was just our floods and things like that because our switching, like Mac said, caused them some problems in the first half.

I think the other part was just trying to keep competing on the glass and getting those little tip-outs and things like that. They're a very athletic team and they do great on the O-boards, and we just had to kind of try to do our best.

Q. Coach Sanchez mentioned sustaining the culture in the locker room this year. How did he contribute to that and allow it to happen?

ISAAC MCKNEELY: Yeah, he showed up every day, gave it his all. He watched tons of game film, came prepared to practice. He was energetic in practice. He did a great job even through the losses, keeping us together after the games. So credit to him for that.

He was put in a tough situation. Just a couple weeks before the season, he had to step into the head coaching job, but I think he handled it really well, and like he said, we went through a lot of adversity for sure, but I think Coach Sanchez, he stayed high through it all.

Q. Andrew, in the back half of the season, you put up a lot of assists. Today it seemed like you were having a difficult time finding the right cutters or people setting the picks in the right place or whatever. But you were struggling.

What were they doing defensively that made it so hard?

ANDREW ROHDE: I think they were just being really aggressive with us, trying to push our offense out towards the half court, and when we're running our offense like that we've got to try to get as close to the basket as we can.

I don't know if that's them recognizing that and things like that, but we just kind of try to do our best and just isolate the defense and see our openings. Mac was on fire today, so we were just kind of trying to find him, especially towards the end.

Q. If you get the interim tag taken off and become the official head coach, talk about what changes you would like to bring to this team next year, if any.

RON SANCHEZ: I've got to be honest, I don't have a single thought about that right now. My thoughts right now are making sure that those guys feel, one, respected and appreciated, loved. I really haven't put one thought into any of that. Sorry.

Q. Ron, you were getting a little misty eyed there as Isaac was talking about your work this year. What has this group of guys meant to you and to go through this together?

RON SANCHEZ: Well, I think coaches want their players to say what he just said, which is, man, Coach brought energy, he was encouraging, he appreciated me. Basically he loved me; it wasn't a transaction. When I played well, he treated me well. When I played poorly, he treated me poorly.

We wanted to be consistent as a staff every day to make sure that we had a sustained behavior that didn't waver, regardless of results.

I had my own definition for what success for Virginia basketball was this season, and it had nothing to do with the scoreboard or the record. It literally was what he just said.

Q. Dai Dai had been such a positive offensive force for you, and you're not a team that has a huge margin of error to begin with. When he's off and Elijah is off from long-range, how difficult does that make it against a good opponent?

RON SANCHEZ: Well, I feel like Elijah got a lot of really good looks today. We just needed a couple of those to go down.

You know, we're not the deepest team. We're not



one-on-one, kind of go create your own kind of team. So when two of your starters don't produce, whoever is close to double figures, it makes it hard.

Our defense sustained us and kept us in the first half, which is something we've been growing on, so really proud of the defensive effort in the first half. Lost it in the second half. We've been shooting the ball so well all season long, and Isaac is the only one that made shots today.

We didn't really have anybody else to contribute there, and thank you for Taine for knocking one down there.

But we didn't shoot the ball well today. When two of your starters that are close to your double-digit scorers, they haven't scored in double figures the last six or seven games and struggled in the first half.

But not because of effort. We can deal with it because he was trying the best that he could. He played hard, he just didn't make shots.

Q. Ron, who or what sustained you through this season and allowed you to stay upbeat? I'm sure you had some moments maybe in private when you weren't as upbeat, but who or what pushed you?

RON SANCHEZ: Oh, man. First of all, if you're not willing to go through hard things, you shouldn't do this. I never thought that my next step in growth would be taking over an interim tag. I never put that on my wish list to go over a tough situation.

I had a great staff, a lot of individuals that I could talk to that I could lean on. It was challenging. I was responsible for all our athletes, but I was also responsible for our staff, making sure that they stayed encouraged.

This is a heavy crown, and I'm fortunate that I had a chance to wear it prior to arriving here, and that experience gave me the sustainability, the foundation to be able to navigate this. This was a new for me.

I've been through hard times before, and I knew that this storm was going to pass. But nothing is forever.

You know, actually my faith helped me through it, but my staff did, as well.

Q. Ron, just along those lines, the challenges up front of replacing Tony, what were the biggest things to wrap your arms around in those moments and as the season went along?

RON SANCHEZ: Tony is a massive figure, not only in

Charlottesville but in college basketball. I was sitting in the back room with Kyle Guy and I said, remember the last time you and I sat in this room. It was the same room, and I was sitting in the back. It was an NCAA Tournament loss.

How Tony has handled adversity, successes, all the things that he's done at the University of Virginia with the way that he's represented college basketball in this country has been phenomenal. Taking over someone like that, you'd better have some big shoes to fill that.

I never wanted to be Tony. Not at all. I am who I am. I respect what he's built. My desire was to do the best that I could with this group.

If you ask me do I feel like I did that, the answer is absolutely yes.

Q. Along those lines, and I know you said you don't really have thoughts yet on the future, but do you feel like you did kind of what you set out to do? Do you believe you deserve the opportunity to keep this position?

RON SANCHEZ: Absolutely. I'm a good basketball coach. I am. I have confidence in that. I've been tutored by the right people. I have enough experience with me. Whatever job I get, I take, I'm going to do a good job. People can measure it with wins and losses, but there's so much more than the 30 games that you play.

How you sustain a group, how you treat people, how you manage, what kind of leader are you when things are hard. Anybody can do this when it's easy. It takes something different to navigate the ship in stormy waters.

I think that's what I'm most thankful for. Not the victories -- now, I'm thankful for the hard times that we had because today I'm 10 times a better coach than I was on October 18th.

Q. In that regard, have you had the opportunity to sit with Carla and her advisors to make your case and present your vision for UVA basketball?

RON SANCHEZ: Well, I believe that I've had four months to do that. I think that Carla and her advisors gave me the opportunity to interview every day, and my job now is done. My interview is over. Whatever they decide will be what's best for the University of Virginia, and Ron is going to be very supportive of whatever Carla and her advisors decide.

I love this place. I want it to be successful. No matter what happens with their decision, Virginia has my respect, my love, and I will continue to appreciate this place for all that



it's done for me throughout the years.

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