

NCAA Men's 1st and 2nd

Rounds: Orlando

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Orlando, Florida



Leonard Hamilton

Florida State Seminoles

THE MODERATOR: We're going to open it up right to questions. If you'd raise your hand with any questions, please.

Q. Leonard, what did you like the most about what your kids did last night? Overcame a little adversity. Overcame some turnovers. Didn't shoot very well from the three-point line and free-throw shooting, but a whole lot of good things happened. What did you like the best?

LEONARD HAMILTON: We're fairly consistent the way we've been all year. We're not a great free-throw shooting team. Sometimes we have a tendency not to take care of the ball. We kind of find ways to win.

We would love to be a real smooth, solid, pinpoint-execution team, but that's not the kind of how we're built. We're aggressive. We like to push the ball down the court. We like to move the ball at times. We like to attack the basket.

I think what this team has done is we figure out ways to win. We have a lot of holes in our game, but this team's well connected. They like each other. We have great camaraderie and togetherness and esprit de corps. They're connected. When we have to pull together, we find ways to do that.

A lot of it is because we play a lot of people. Probably if we play six or seven kids, eight maybe, maybe we might be a little more connected. We might execute a little better. But I think the strength of this team is in the quality of our depth, that we keep guys fresh for long periods of time.

So I was pleased with the fact we stayed true to who we are. We made two unfortunate fouls -- no, three unfortunate fouls in critical stages of the game, and we missed our free throws. It makes it look like we're a little helter-skelter, but I think that's the aggressiveness we've been playing with all year long, and sometimes it's kind of hard. The tempo goes down. I thought Johnson got fouled when he stepped out of bounds, but you're going to have those types of things that's going to happen.

So I was just pleased we stayed focused. We stayed

connected. And we did the little things it takes to win. Obviously, as we move forward, we know we need to hit better from the free-throw line, and I think we will. We've had games where we've missed very few free throws. We were just a little inconsistent with that.

I was very pleased overall with our focus and effort. I thought we started the game out playing with a tremendous amount of energy, and I had eight, nine guys in the first two or three times down the court, they asked to come out of the game. That's part of the nervousness and energy in the NCAA Tournament. A guy like Koumadje, he never gets tired. When I saw him get tired, I knew we had some challenges with the guys being excited.

Q. Coach, after watching the brief amount of film that you have thus far, what matchup do you see being the most distinct advantage your team has over Xavier?

LEONARD HAMILTON: We don't worry necessarily about particular matchups going against opponents because we switch a lot. Everybody be guarding all the teams. It's our defensive system against their offensive system. Our offensive system against their defensive system.

They do a great job of executing. They get what they want every time down the court. They have guys inside. They have big, physical, strong guys inside. They have guys like Bluiett, who's an unbelievable go-to guy. He's been consistent all year long with coming up with big baskets.

They're just a very solid team, and that's evident in the fact they played against a very good Maryland team that I think was No. 2 seed -- I mean, finished No. 2 in the Big Ten. Is that correct?

THE MODERATOR: I think Wisconsin was the 2 seed, but they may have tied.

LEONARD HAMILTON: But they were the top two or three teams in the league. That speaks for itself. I mean, that -- after the first few minutes, I thought they did a great job. They controlled the game. They mixed the defenses up, and that says a lot about who they are and what they're capable of doing.

Q. Obviously, a quick turnaround for your team playing tomorrow, but what experiences have you guys already had playing in the ACC Tournament earlier this season, and even before that, playing in Brooklyn, how does that help you?

LEONARD HAMILTON: We're not going to change very much from who we are. At this time of year, we might tweak a little bit and make some adjustments to individual players. Right now it's more just managing your rest, trying to be mentally and emotionally engaged. We're not going to change very much. They're not going to change very much. We've just got to continue doing what we're doing.

It's not like there's going to be any exceptional challenge because the way we defend is the way we defend. The offenses that we have, we've just got to make sure that we execute what we have in our game plan, and the team that's going to win is the one that comes the closest to playing who they are and playing up to their potential. That's what we're looking at.

Q. Coach, last year FSU missed the Tournament for the fourth year in a row. A lot of fans were uneasy and put you on the hot seat. Do you feel any vindication for the year you've had and the run you're currently making?

LEONARD HAMILTON: I don't know who the fans are. No one told me. I got an extension in my salary. You don't have any control over it. So I don't have any idea what you're talking about.

Q. Leonard, Gulf Coast was probably a lot better than your typical 14 seed. They're pretty talented. How does having that game, even though they hung in there and hung in there, how is that going to help you going forward? Do you feel like you got a better test than a 3 versus a 14 ordinarily would get?

LEONARD HAMILTON: I think sometimes when you win a game by a large margin, sometimes it gives you a false sense of security. Obviously, we would love not to be as stressed as we were the last couple of minutes through the game, but the main thing is just winning and moving on.

We have a tremendous amount of respect for Florida Gulf Coast. They do a great job. They have really committed themselves to giving them the resources to have an outstanding basketball program. They just started basketball not too long ago on the Division I level. That says a lot about the administration, the president, the athletic department, the boosters in the school and the commitment they've made. So we have a tremendous amount of respect for what they have done. We expected a very hard fought game. We went into it, and that's what we got. We got a tough

game.

I think any time you can get the challenge of playing a tough opponent that prepares you to move forward, I just feel very fortunate we were able to overcome the challenge of playing against a team that was very hungry for a victory.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach.