

VIRGINIA TECH

MEN'S BASKETBALL

Virginia Tech Head Coach Mike Young Q&A Highlights Postgame Media Conference vs. Pitt Feb. 15, 2020

On what was different about today's game:

"I'm not sure what was different. To their credit, we talk about youth and all that. They've always worked and come back. I feel it. They feel it. To continue to work and believe, and trust one another, I thought they had a great look from the start. Our starts have been better over the last week. Everybody made a contribution to that win. I thought [John] Ojiako was pretty good in the first half. Jalen Cone bangs four 3s. Just a camaraderie and a level of toughness throughout. I thought we were exceptional defensively throughout the course of the game. We limit them to 35 percent from the field and five made 3s. Not sure that I can put my finger on any one thing, but a great effort from the Hokies."

On the play of P.J. Horne:

"I thought he was really searching. We had some matchups against Boston College, and the previous team, he wasn't moving as well. His shot preparation wasn't what it had been. He had a great look. Team does a good job. We finished the game with 21 assists and 10 turnovers. Those are our types of numbers, and encouraging. I'm happy about that."

On the defensive adjustments:

"As good as I think [Pitt is], they don't shoot the ball great. Their best scoring opportunities are with Trey [McGowens] and [Xavier Johnson] just driving the fire out of it. We talked and talked and worked and drilled throughout the week – we want six eyes. The primary ball defender, and the two guys in those gaps. We want six eyes on the ball when Trey and Xavier have the ball in their hands. I thought all in all, we did a very nice job with it."

On the growth of the team's young players like Jalen Cone and John Ojiako:

"I want to play Ojiako more. John should be a high school senior. It looks like I'm doing a bad job with his conditioning. John has to get bigger and stronger, and that comes with time. That's not going to happen overnight. He's played limited minutes. But he's getting better and better. He's going to be a really good player around here. Jalen Cone, boy did he have a great approach. His work leading up to tonight was exemplary. He had another big night for us. Landers [Nolley] was not in double figures, but he helped our team in other areas. He did a nice job with the ball. He had 12 rebounds. We have to have him play with a greater level of physicality. He did that. Our ability to keep [Au'Diese] Toney and [Justin] Champagne, to keep

those two kids off the glass. We weren't perfect, but throughout the course of the game, all in all, we were pretty good."

On the defensive physicality being a point of emphasis:

"We needed it. We were a bit on our last leg there. Couldn't have come at a better time. I gave [the players] Sunday and Tuesday off, and then we had three really good days of practice. Monday's practice was good. A lot of these kids were finishing their high school career at this time last year. Hopefully, we play in the postseason. We've still got a lot to look forward to, a lot to work on. But with the time off, the opportunity to practice and work on Virginia Tech and our stuff... I thought offensively, our sharpness in the first half was as good as we've had in a while."

On what the team has been doing to better finish games:

"It's not an easy thing to work on. It's just being in those situations. We've finished some games, we've not finished some games. That's just relying on habits and relying on the things that got you to that point. We defended. We rebounded. I thought if we got outrebounded 10, we'd get clobbered. We outrebounded them in the first half a whopping two, and competed like crazy in the second half. There's no magic formula to finishing. Do the things you've done from the start: defend, rebound, get a quality shot each time down. That'll get you out of a lot of situations."

On Tyrece Radford's development:

"There's not a darn thing I've done. It is college basketball. It is coaching. He guarded Champagnie. Tyrece is six-foot-one. He might be six-foot-and-a-half. [Champagnie] is a good-looking athlete. He fought him tooth and nail. It's just developing trust as you go through the season. He just does it night in and night out. He's too valuable to our team and level of play to take him out."

Pitt Head Coach Jeff Capel Q&A Highlights

Opening statement:

“Congrats to Virginia Tech. They really shot the basketball well, especially from the 3. We played against a team that was rested and hungry, they had lost five in a row. You could feel the sense of urgency. It was incredible energy in the building, they have an amazing crowd. Congrats to them. I thought we did some good things but we have to be able to finish. I would imagine we probably missed seven to eight layups, so we have to be able to finish those plays. And we have to be able to make free throws. If we can do that, then maybe the outcome would have been a little bit different or a little bit closer. We cannot dig ourselves a hole like we did again. We showed we can get up off the mat and fight back, but we have to figure out a way where we don’t have a hole that big.”

On how the team has battled back:

“I’m frustrated for our guys; I hate it for them. We were trying to push buttons and figure out a way to change it and obviously what we did today didn’t work. So, we have to figure out some other things. We have some more road games, one coming up on Tuesday [at Florida State] so we have to try and figure different things out.”

On how he addressed the team:

“We have to keep playing, we have to be smarter, we have to finish. It depends on the game, today that was the message. We have to play together we have to talk. Defensively we gave up eight points in the first half just on runups. Those are things we can control, but we have to be together to control them. Stuff we talked about in preparation like over helping, we did that a few times and they make you pay with the way they shoot the basketball. Not communicating on the ball screen, if it’s a switch then switch but if it’s not, we have to be up there to hedge it. All those things have to be on point all the time, especially on the road. They can’t just be sometimes, if we do it sometimes it works, but we have to have the discipline to do it all the time.”

On Xavier Johnson not starting:

“He didn’t deserve to start in the second half, that is not trying to push a button. You deserve what you get when you play for me. It’s not a birthright or whatever that you are going to start. It’s no big story, he just didn’t deserve to start. Those other guys played the half well and we thought we had something good with them. We wanted to play those guys to start the second half. It is not about trying to push a button, it is about what is best for our team. He played better in the second half but we need everybody on this team to play how they are capable of all the time in order for us to have a chance to win.”

On Abdoul Karim Coulibaly’s play:

“I thought he did some good stuff. He screened, he rebounded and he had offensive rebounds. He got off screens really well. I thought he did some good stuff for us.”

On Virginia Tech making 3s:

“I thought the two that (P.J.) Horne hit late were a combination of being a little bit fatigued and gambling a little bit in our press. They got it to the middle and, instead of us flowing back, we tried to gamble and swipe at the ball and then we were out manned. Early in the first half, I thought some of them came from over penetration, they were able to get out and transition and we didn’t communicate. To start the second half, it happened a couple of times where we didn’t communicate and transition. They are a good shooting team; I know they haven’t been shooting the ball well [as of late], but for the season they have been one of the better shooting teams in the ACC and at one point in the country. When you have a week off and you are able to regroup and refresh, especially in February, this is the grind. When you have that it gives you a chance. I was hoping they wouldn’t shoot the ball well today; I was hoping we would be there defensively. I felt like with them having a week off and this time of year it’s a grind, if you can get a couple of days away to refresh and get your body recharged to work and practice and actually work on some things to watch film and have time to prepare, that helps and I think it really helped them tonight.”

Virginia Tech Players Q&A Highlights

TYRECE RADFORD

On what led the team to victory:

“Coming off this five-game losing streak, we had to bring even more energy and belief in each other. That group this whole week was our main focus and that losing streak. Now it’s on to the next game. I feel like our energy was up today.”

On getting that feeling of winning a game back and how that feels:

“It’s a relief to be honest. Like I said coming off that losing streak, all you want to do is get off it and the energy inside my body right now is through the roof, it’s jumping through the roof. So, now we have to keep it up.”

On what makes him so successful in turning a normal rebound back off the floor into a quick transition bucket:

“Coach [Mike Young] emphasizes get out and run the floor. We have to run the floor better. That was my main objective tonight – to run the floor and how we scouted them. They’re a good team, but if you really transition, you look up and the ball’s going be there and then you just got to finish.”

On what was different about the team making many 3-pointers:

“It’s just the flow of the game. No matter how hard they played, we have to match their energy and play just as well, maybe even harder. Just have to go out there and shoot.”

P.J. HORNE

On the 23-point first half run and what ignited that big run:

“Just coming out of halftime, knowing that we have to come out and compete. The first meet is always the biggest medium. We have to bring that mentality to every meet.”

On having the five-game losing streak snapped and how important was the week off?

“We enjoyed our week off. We made sure we took care of our bodies and made sure that we had to get back to what we do best. As far as playing on the floor together and playing as a team.”

JALEN CONE

On the 3-pointers falling today, which hasn’t happened during the losing streak:

“We just weren’t knocking down shots the previous games, and today our shots were falling.”

On what the next opponent being Miami (Fla.) entails:

“They are a great team that can score the ball. They guard heavy and guard deep. It’s going to be another day we have to be physical, play hard and ‘guard our yard’ as the coaches say.”

On how he thought the team played and how the team can take that into its next matchup:

“Energy and physicality. Everybody played tough today and with a lot of energy. We all had each other’s’ backs today and that’s what helped us get the win.”