

Atlantic Coast Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Tuesday March 10, 2020

Mike Young Landers Nolley Jalen Cone Virginia Tech

North Carolina - 78, Virginia Tech - 56

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with an opening statement from Coach.

MIKE YOUNG: There will be better days ahead for the Hokies; I can assure you of that. You guys go ahead.

Q. What about North Carolina's defense made it a tough shooting night for the team?

JALEN CONE: They can shoot the ball really well. Brandon Robinson, we knew coming into the game he was a great shooter, and we gave them some wide open opportunities, so next year that's just something we got to work on on the defensive end is getting to those shooters.

Q. Landers, you guys scored 56 points tonight; 45 of those were scored by freshmen. What does it say about the youth of this group and how do you think that group kind of gelled all year?

LANDERS NOLLEY: We played well together, got better as the season went on, did what we always did. That got us some success early in the season. Hit some rough patches but tried to weather the storm and get back to playing Hokies basketball and we just came up short.

Q. Jalen, you mentioned Brandon Robinson; at that point when he made those two back-to-back 3-pointers, did it feel -- did you see anything specific on that play and did it feel like that was sort of a turning point momentum wise?

JALEN CONE: When he hit those shots he definitely got the arena into it, and he gave their team a lot of energy and momentum, and I think at that moment we should have shut his water off and not let him hit any more and really got some stops. But we failed to do so, and they kept knocking down shots.

Q. Tough shooting night for your team. What about



North Carolina's defense made it a tough shooting night, or was it just kind of missing good looks?

LANDERS NOLLEY: Got great looks, just missed some open shots. Shot a couple contested shots, defense was -- they play a pretty good defense. I mean, credit them, they got the win. But we had good opportunities, we just didn't capitalize.

Q. Jalen, I think the team went 5-14 on lay-ups today. Something about their size that when you go in for a lay-up that it's a little nerve-racking in there, or do you have any explanation for why it was so tough to make lay-ups tonight?

JALEN CONE: They are big down there, so when you get down there in the lane they kind of force you to get it up a little higher, but some of those were on me. I'm going to see that in the film to where I actually should have kept my dribble alive and got it out to one of my shooters because they like to crash. But we just weren't knocking down shots that we normally make tonight.

Q. Landers, how much difference, if at all, did kind of the atmosphere make in what was supposed to be a neutral site game but kind of felt like a North Carolina home game?

LANDERS NOLLEY: Great atmosphere for them, great atmosphere for us. I mean we just came to play basketball. The atmosphere was good, it contributed to their run, got them sparked. It was a good atmosphere to play in.

Q. Jalen, you committed to the Hokies a little bit after Mike took the job. What are some of your biggest takeaways from your freshman year? You had some very successful games here as a freshman.

JALEN CONE: I knew Coach Young was a great coach coming in and I liked the style of play, and I knew most importantly he was a winner. He was able to win with the team he had versus bigger teams, so that's the main thing, I wanted to play for a winner and I know we're going to look back on the season and look at our takeaways and this off-season be a different team when we come back.

Q. You guys beat these guys during the regular season. Obviously they didn't have Cole Anthony,

but how different a team did they look like feel like tonight?

LANDERS NOLLEY: Different pace, kind of a different style of play, more not really running plays, just good movement, good basketball. It was just a different look.

JALEN CONE: The game was a lot faster. They play faster with Cole on the floor. On our make and miss shots, he's getting the ball at the three-point line and pushing it full speed. So it causes us to have to get back on transition. Last game they really didn't have much transition, but this game they had a lot more with him on the floor and Brandon Robinson shooting the ball well, running the lane lines.

Q. Landers, you finished with 16 wins this year, seven in the ACC. With a young team, how do you view the season and what does that mean for you guys looking ahead to next year?

LANDERS NOLLEY: Great season, great takeaways from it to help us get better for next year. I enjoyed it, playing with the guys. It was fun. I mean we're going to get better in the off-season and come back stronger.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks, guys. Take questions for Coach.

Q. You're not only the youngest team in the league but you're the smallest team. Given those circumstances, how would you assess your first season?

MIKE YOUNG: You know what, pretty damned good. Considering what I found on April 8th with good players graduating, 7-13 is never going to be good enough in Blacksburg nor should it be. 16-16 is never going to be good enough in Blacksburg, nor should it be. But to cobble that together and do so with some really quality people and scrap and claw and some great moments, some not-so-great moments, but we're off and running now, if you will. Things are in place. The foundation is in place.

We start back with our spring workouts and it's not new. We have done it. We know what we're looking at now. We know how things are going to operate and how we're going to run. And I am looking forward to that. I'll be honest with you now, there were times I thought I was hanging on for dear life trying to get a little bit more and we did. We had a tough stretch late January, February. This isn't the best league to be young and small in. As many of you that have covered this league for many years, I'm not sure that there's a league in America that's good to be young and small. We're going to look a lot different a year from now, I can assure you of that.

Q. What about North Carolina was a tougher

matchup today than when you beat them in January at your place?

MIKE YOUNG: Well, obviously not being in the Castle. It was like being in the Smith Center in there tonight. Bacot and Garrison are just big physical presence type of people, and Cole gives them the opportunity to push the ball at a different pace than what we encountered in our first meeting with Black and Francis playing the point. That's just a different game. And that's not a knock on Leaky; I think Leaky is a terrific player, but that's not his natural spot and he doesn't move as briskly up after a made shot, after a missed shot, what have you.

And I think Brandon Robinson has had really a nice year for them. I thought going into our first meeting he was their best perimeter shooter. I certainly feel that way coming out. That's difficult for any of us to lose two front-line guys like that, to have them on the shelf as they were in the first meeting, so there were a lot of things that went into it.

Q. You heard me say 45 of your 56 points come from freshmen. You mentioned the crowd, the Smith Center atmosphere. How do you think your young guys handled the ACC Tournament this week?

MIKE YOUNG: You know what, you know, fine. We're still, we're hanging on, we just can't put a couple of stops together, we can't get a couple of shots down and we're trying like crazy to get Cone and others behind some things. All of those experiences, I go back to Maui, Michigan State and playing that terrific Dayton team and all of these experiences that we have had throughout the year will benefit us greatly. That can be overwhelming, that can be intimidating for young people. I thought they acquitted themselves quite nicely throughout the year, I really did.

Q. You had some momentum going into halftime.

MIKE YOUNG: Yeah, we did.

Q. You started the second half with seven straight empty possessions, and I think you only scored on two of your first 12.

MIKE YOUNG: I recall. I recall.

Q. Just your thoughts about what happened to the offense?

MIKE YOUNG: Well you've got to score. I mean, you've got to score the basketball. I can remember three of the first seven, four of the first seven. There was a quick shot in there, I'll go back and look at it tonight, tomorrow morning and I'm going to -- I know I'll say that was a kid that we want shooting the basketball, and it was a rhythm shot, it was a practice shot, he just missed it. Certainly North Carolina's defense had

something to do with it, but as I said earlier, you put so much pressure on your defense -- I haven't that a lot in my career. You put so much pressure on your defense when you don't score it. At some point the levy breaks and you got a problem against, you know, I think a more explosive North Carolina team here in the last two, three weeks than we have seen to this point.

Q. When you go into game that on paper is a neutral site but in reality is a home game for North Carolina, how does that impact your preparation? Did it affect the execution at all?

MIKE YOUNG: You know, somebody does those probabilities, you know, and I think going into Saturday's game I think our probability to play North Carolina down here was not very good. That's my luck this year. We get that, but, you know, certainly special to be here, Tobacco Road, Greensboro and to play the Tar Heels and see Coach Smith compete against, pardon me, Coach Williams, and compete against Coach Williams again, we'll look forward to wherever we go next year. This is a special event and it was a treat to be a part of it.

Q. 29 percent from the field; was that a lot of bad looks because of their defense, good looks that just weren't falling?

MIKE YOUNG: Let me go back and look at it. I thought we had great shots. Now we had a couple, the environment, we haven't had very much of that at all through out the year. We had a couple of -- we had a terrible turnover. We weren't aware of the shot clock. The awareness of the shot clock offensively is every bit as important as the defensive end, and we had a couple of cracks at it and we were looking for something a little bit better. I would say when it's all said and done, go back and watch it, a combination of the two.

Atlantic Coast Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Tuesday March 10, 2020

Roy Williams Brandon Robinson Garrison Brooks North Carolina

North Carolina - 78, Virginia Tech - 56

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with an opening statement from Coach and then take questions for the student-athletes.

ROY WILLIAMS: Well, we're glad we're here. I'll donate some money to the conference office to get a lightbulb in those steps up there where I am almost broke my dadgum neck. If we had lost the game, I would have done it intentionally probably, so if you'll let me know how much a lightbulb costs there, I know John Swofford, I'll send him a check.

Very happy to still be here. Told the kids, let's play as hard as we can play, as well as we can play, and at the end somebody may let us stay around and play another one, and I thought that's what we did. I thought we were really lucky early in the second half because they had a tremendous number of shots, lay-ups and shots that just rolled off the rim. I think they just missed them. Our defense wasn't making them do that.

And after the first five or six minutes of the second half I thought our defense got a lot better. We fouled one of the three-point attempts, which we don't like to do, but I thought our defense was better.

But in the second half we were good offensively, we only had two turnovers I think in the second half. We tried to make an effort to get the ball into Garrison and he made baskets. He also found B-Rob on one big three, and B-Rob going five for six from the three-point line was extremely important to us, as well. So we're lucky, we played well enough and we now we get to stay and play another game. Unless they cancel the tournament or something we'll be here playing tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Garrison and Brandon, please.



Q. Garrison, what did you guys do to get you more involved in the second half? You had a couple of slips and some other stuff in the lane?

GARRISON BROOKS: Just basically executing our game plan. There's a couple plays that Coach drew up and we just executed well.

Q. Brandon, after the step-back three, I believe you yelled, "I'm here." What was kind of the emotion there and what was going through your mind?

BRANDON ROBINSON: I'm just fired up. I get another opportunity to put this jersey on. It is my senior year and I don't want it to end, and just our fans were doing a great job tonight. It felt like a home game and I just love being here.

Q. Garrison, what did you make of B-Rob's night? Did you think he had a cross-over like that?

GARRISON BROOKS: Yeah, for sure. I know B-Rob had that cross-over since high school. I saw it a real long time ago.

Q. Garrison, sort of a related question, when you see B-Rob's shot "I'm here," what are you thinking when you see that sort of energy?

GARRISON BROOKS: I'm really excited to see him out there, playing with him. He's been just really big for us this year and just seem seeing him do all these good things for our team is great.

Q. Brandon, when you're hot for that, five for six, what does that feel like to you?

BRANDON ROBINSON: It's a credit to Garrison, honestly, because he did a good job of scoring the ball besides just playing his butt off all year, and so teams have been looking to double down on him, so when they leave me open, it's my job to knock it in, and he's been doing a good job of finding me and just always in my ear just telling me to shoot the ball.

Q. Brandon, you mentioned this feeling like a home game tonight. Given the hill you guys are trying to climb this week, how critical is it to have the fan support like that?

BRANDON ROBINSON: It's definitely good to have the fan support. They were getting into the game and they were getting loud and they made it difficult for the other team to hear their offensive sets because every time down the court they were calling plays and looking over

at their bench so it was good to disrupt their communication.

GARRISON BROOKS: What B-Rob said. (Laughing.)

BRANDON ROBINSON: You can just say the same thing over again. I feel you.

Q. Garrison, you started just one for five from the field in the first half. You made our free throws. You made everything in the second half. First time you played a game in this building this year, was that it? Or why did you shoot so much better in the second half?

GARRISON BROOKS: I took the goggles off. Yeah, that's it. I think that's the thing. I take the goggles off, I think I shoot a little bit better.

Q. For either, can you speak to the brotherhood that you guys have, because Christian Keeling went out and he was seriously hurt and then he came back and you could see him pushing over the trainer's help, like he wanted to get back in that game. Can you guys speak to him wanting to come back and be with you all?

BRANDON ROBINSON: That's Paul Pierce right there. Go look up the Paul Pierce video.

No, but we all love each other. This whole year we have all been battling injuries, we all have been going through tough times. So just to see him come back out there and push through it, I was proud of him, and it just speaks volumes to this team. We all care about each other. We all have one goal, and that's just to win this tournament, but we got to take it game by game and we need all hands on deck to be able to do that.

THE MODERATOR: All right, thank you. We'll take questions for Coach.

Q. You said at the end of your opening statement that you guys will play as long as the tournament doesn't get cancelled. Other tournaments are not allowing spectators, one tournament has been cancelled. What are you hearing from your end as far as the possibility of the ACC deciding to cancel this tournament or not allow spectators to participate?

ROY WILLIAMS: The only thing I'm hearing is because of this that we're going to cancel the ACC spring meetings. I think that would be the greatest thing in the history of this conference. (Smiling.) No, I'm like you guys, I watch TV and don't hear anything else. Bubba is in constant contact. Different leagues make their decisions for their reasons. The ACC will make whatever decision is continued to be made for the right reasons, as well.

It's a terrible situation. I mean, it's scary. I mean, at the end of the game I was mad at myself because I shook hands with all the other guys and I meant to give them the elbow hit, but, no, it's -- this is not a good situation in our country right now and we don't have a great handle on what's going to happen next. I watched CNN most of the day today and about every hour the numbers go up of the cases and numbers continue to go up about the people that lost their lives.

So on a humorous note, I get frustrated because they talk about old people and they started that at 60. I'm 69, God almighty. So that's the humorous thing that I can put. But it's not a humorous situation, I mean it really is not. It's sad that it's happening, and our country is always very resilient and make great decisions in what to do and people are -- the governor of New York, for example, closes down one area trying to get people to come in to clean things and to provide help, and it's very scattered. You listen to one news station compared to the other news stations it's like we're in two different countries and that frustrates me.

But with the ACC, if they tell me to show up and coach a game, I'm going to show up and coach a game. But I do think you guys should try to promote no ACC meetings this spring. I'll play 36 more if we can do that.

Q. Mike Young and his players touched on the difference that Cole made running and getting the pace faster than it was up in Blacksburg. What did you see from your vantage point?

ROY WILLIAMS: Cole was very important to us and was good. And he can be really good. I mean, he ran the play that we sincerely put it in -- maybe it was yesterday or today one. I just wanted something different to play and he ran it to perfection twice in a row and Garrison got dunks out of it.

But having Cole in the game makes me a lot better coach. He didn't have one of his great games. He's four for four on assist-to-error ratio, but he was the man in charge out there, he was the guy that put us where we needed to be and made some shots, missed two straight free throws, which he hasn't done that very often, but the good news is he got his feet wet today in his first ACC Tournament, and we need him to play better tomorrow.

But there's no question Virginia Tech beat North Carolina at Virginia Tech, but there's also no question that we're better off with Brandon Robinson and Cole Anthony on our team.

Q. Was this one of your more balanced games in terms of inside offensive production and

production from numerous players across the board?

ROY WILLIAMS: I was trying to remember what we -- we shot 7-13 from three and B-Rob's five of six, and then Andrew made one from downtown Greensboro at the end, so that's probably better than any game we shot this year. But Garrison has been effective inside, and I thought Armando was effective inside. He had four offensive rebounds, 11 total, so we did have a little bit.

Christian's been really shooting the ball really well and didn't make any in the first half. I think he made one in the second half or something, or no, maybe he made one late in the first half. But we did have a lot of guys that got involved, and that usually is the best team when you have more than one guy scoring.

Q. You play every night as long as you keep winning. Does that affect your substitution plans and pattern?

ROY WILLIAMS: In some ways, but if you plan -- make substitutions hoping you're going to be there the next night, sometimes you're not there the next night. So what we're trying to do is put the best guys in the game at that time to give us the best chance to win the game and then at the end if it's a margin that you can get them out, then get them out. When I was 18, 19, 20 years old I never thought I was tired, so I think it's overrated.

Q. B-Rob made those back-to-back 3-pointers you mentioned. What's the value of him then showing that sort of energy afterwards, and is that something that even at the beginning of the year you maybe would have expected from him?

ROY WILLIAMS: I didn't hear him say it and didn't see him. I know he was excited. We had a player one time for Coach Smith that took a bad shot and it went in and took a bad shot and went in and took a bad one and missed it and he came over and Coach Smith took him out, and he said, "I was feeling it, Coach, I was feeling it." And Coach Smith said, "Well, see how that bench feels." If I had known he had said "I'm here," I would have said "Well, come right over here and be right here." You know, just play the game. Kids are going to be kids though.

Q. How much of a benefit at all is there playing a team from a preparation standpoint on day 2 that you faced nine, 10 days ago?

ROY WILLIAMS: It's the same for both teams. So it's not an advantage either way. In one situation that's the only team we have played all year long that's played almost an entire game in the zone. And that's what Jimmy does and they can press and they can play man-to-man, they work on that regardless of what

people think, but they press and they play zone. So in one way that possibly could help, but again that's the only team we faced all year long that played zone the whole game.

Q. Can you speak to Christian or speak for Christian and bringing him back in, what was your decision making going with that?

ROY WILLIAMS: Well, if he was going to sit over there, if he was able to go back in and play, I wanted to put him in because if he is sitting over there he gets even more stiff. And then if he goes out and plays and perhaps loosened up and feeling better about it and feel more confident about it, that if we do win, then he's got a chance to a better chance, in my opinion he's got a better chance to play the next day.

THE MODERATOR: Okay, thank you, Coach.

ROY WILLIAMS: Remember what I said when we were talking about ACC meetings.

