

NCAA Men's Regional Semifinals and Finals: Los Angeles

Saturday, March 24, 2018
Los Angeles, California



Leonard Hamilton Braian Angola Phil Cofer

Florida State Seminoles

Michigan - 58, Florida State - 54

THE MODERATOR: We welcome the Florida State Seminoles. Coach, an opening statement?

LEONARD HAMILTON: I thought we lost to a team that showed that they were a little more poised than we were tonight. I thought the beginning of the game, I thought we were very, very anxious, sped up somewhat just because I think the importance of the moment. We had 14 turnovers in the first half. At one point the latter part of the first half I think we were shooting 50% from the floor, they were shooting like 30% from the floor. It was a one- or two-point game because we had 11 or 12 turnovers.

Obviously, I was very disappointed. I thought we came out in the second half kind of nip and tuck, and they got on a little run, and it was very challenging for us to catch back up, because we just couldn't seem to get in a good offensive rhythm tonight.

You've got to give them credit. I thought their defense really, really took certain things away from the floor. But at the point there toward the end of the game, I thought we got some good drives to the basket that we just couldn't finish. Had several lay-ups right around the hole, and they had equally difficult shots on the other end that went in, and they deserved the victory.

Q. Phil, before I ask you anything, I want to tell I thought you played a great game tonight. How frustrating is it for you to, again -- you guys played terrific defense, held them to a very low shooting percentage. How frustrating is it to do that again and still come out on the short end?

PHIL COFER: It's definitely very frustrating just because we lost. But I think we played great, and we just didn't get the job done.

Q. Braian, it seemed like they did such a really

good job of getting back on defense, Michigan did. Did you feel like you guys had some chances to score in transition, or do you just credit their defense?

BRAIAN ANGOLA: Well, like you said, they did a pretty good job getting back into position. But I feel like we had some lay-ups that were right there on the rim, and we missed some lay-ups that we've made before, and the ball didn't go our way.

We just didn't make baskets. We played great defense, but we didn't convert on offense when we had the opportunity.

Q. The fact that your team did not play its best basketball, how hard is that to take, to go out that way?

PHIL COFER: It's definitely hard just because we lost. But I think we played our best basketball, this run that we had in March Madness, but we just didn't get the job done.

Q. You guys made several runs. They got it to ten a couple times, but you guys made those cuts and got it back to two or three points. Were you resolved that you were going to win this game even when they kept pushing the lead out?

PHIL COFER: I mean, of course you're going into the game to try to win. No matter what the runs is, we're still going to keep the same mindset of trying to win. But, I mean, they had their runs. But like Braian said, we didn't finish our plays. But besides that, I think we played a good game.

Q. You seemed to do pretty well defensively against Wagner. What was the plan there, and how do you evaluate that part of it?

LEONARD HAMILTON: I didn't understand your question.

Q. The defense against Wagner, he had a pretty unproductive night. What were you guys doing, and were you happy with that part of it?

LEONARD HAMILTON: Well, obviously, we had a defensive game plan that was fairly effective. But they had a good defensive game plan as well. I thought that they took three guys off the boards, and when we did get stops, we couldn't get out in transition because they got everybody back. Which was a very wise defensive

strategy on their part.

So now we had to come down in the half court, and tonight was just one of those games where we were not sharp in the half court.

I think what they did, they kind of crowded the lane up. They kept us from getting to the basket, and I thought where we faltered was when a team's playing kind of a contained type of defense, you need to move the ball and move bodies with some speed and some aggressiveness. And I think that's where we fell short.

We normally don't run a lot of sets. We normally run a system where we move the ball and move our bodies. But tonight, somehow or another, they did a very good job of just crowding the lane. They didn't give us a lot of lanes. And when we did try to drive in there, I thought we turned the ball over and gave them some extra possessions.

Normally when you hold a team to as low a field goal percentage as we did in the first half and shoot it as well as we were the majority of the other half, you're probably going into halftime a little up.

Because of our inability to take care of the ball, I thought that we were very, very -- at a disadvantage. It was just one of those nights where I thought their defensive philosophy bothered us as much as our defensive philosophy bothered them.

Q. With about a minute to go, you guys were down 55-52, and you let like half the shot clock go before you fouled. Is that what you wanted? Did you want them to foul right away?

LEONARD HAMILTON: Well, I believe it was about -- I don't remember exactly, but I want to say that it was a four-point game. The situation was that if they missed that shot, we would have had an opportunity to come down --

Q. That's the one I'm talking about. They missed the front end of a one and one, you were down three, and you went down and a kid took what looked like a rushed three.

LEONARD HAMILTON: Yeah, we didn't have any more timeouts left. We had used all our timeouts. The only thing we could do was foul.

Q. Did you want them to foul right away, though?

LEONARD HAMILTON: What we wanted -- I don't remember exactly what the situation was to be very honest with you. But there was one situation where we thought it was best not to foul because we thought that we could get the ball back and still have an opportunity to score because it seemed like there were like 15

seconds difference in the shot clock, if we could just hold them. It might have been a one- or two-point game at that point. Maybe a two-point game. And we thought if we stopped them, we'd have an opportunity to come down and score.

But I think that's what happened in that one particular situation that I have in my mind. If we got a stop, we still would have an opportunity to score. If we fouled them, they'd be up four and we'd come down and we still would not be able to win the game.

Q. Michigan has won games varied in style. What about their personnel allows them to be successful in different types of games?

LEONARD HAMILTON: Excuse me, repeat yourself?

Q. Michigan has won in a few types of games, high-scoring game, low-scoring game. What is it about their personnel that allows them to be successful when the style changes?

LEONARD HAMILTON: I think whenever you have guys that are outstanding three-point shooters, that sometimes becomes the equalizer. We defended them as well as we could. But there were about three or four occasions there late where they knocked down some threes and kind of extended the lead a little bit more, which we did a very good job, I thought, of contesting for the most part. But when you have guys that are that accurate, it's very difficult to contest all of them. If I remember correctly, they hit some very timely perimeter shots that kind of kept us at bay.

Q. Your team had three excellent wins, and really just like that your season is over. Does it kind of reinforce the notion just how really difficult it is to get to the Final Four?

LEONARD HAMILTON: Well, there's no doubt that the NCAA Tournament, in my opinion, is the greatest sporting event in the world. Because you have something that the kids are working toward all year long and trying to put themselves in position where they have a chance to go to the NCAA Championship -- go to the NCAA Tournament to compete for a national title, and then there's only one person -- one school that will win it.

What makes it so unique is that in some cases it's not necessarily the team with the most talent. Sometimes not even the team that's the best coached that's capable of going out on that one particular day and one particular night and play exceptionally well and having a chance to win the game.

That's what makes it so unique. That's unlike some of the sporting events where you play like four out of seven, you have some type of robin before it's one and

done. So it gives everybody a chance, a fighting chance.

Tonight I thought that Michigan was a little bit better than we were for an eight-, nine-, ten-minute period, and it was very difficult for us to overcome that. I think that's -- it's painful, but I think it's unique. I think that it's special and it gives a lot of kids an opportunity to be a part of it.

But I think sometimes we think about how difficult it is to get to a national title.

But the positive thing is you have a lot of kids on scholarships, getting their education. They're growing, the opportunity to compete, what they learn from the daily practices, the discipline, the opportunity to grow as young men is, in my opinion -- it's such a positive level, playing college basketball, that there's really no downside to it. I'm happy to be a part of it.

Q. When you guys were down three with 1:10 left, you guys got a stop. PJ came down and chucked up a quick three. And after Michigan came down and made a free throw, you guys got three or four threes up, kind of rushed after that. Would you have liked your guys to continue to keep attacking the basket?

LEONARD HAMILTON: Well, if you remember correctly, you can always go back -- hindsight's always 20/20. If we had made those lay-ups. But if you remember correctly, we must have missed four or five point-blank lay-ups where as we were going through that, they had just as difficult shots on the other end that went in, and I was really, really disappointed with the three or four shots that we had point blank that did not go in.

So just because you drive to the basket, it doesn't necessarily mean that it's going to go through.

It's very easy to micro-evaluate when the game's over. You can go back and really try to dissect it and see what you could have done. But there are no absolutes.

I think what we have to do is give Michigan credit for being able to make the plays, to get the stops. They really bogged us up, and it was extremely challenging for us to be consistent offensively.

They did a very good job taking us out of transition by getting three or four guys back in transition. Even though we were getting good stops, we couldn't get into an offensive flow because they took away channels to the basket. Then when we did get to the lane, I thought we didn't finish our plays at the lane.

Then on the other end, when they got into the lane, they did a much better job finishing their plays than we did.

Q. Can you speak to the play of Abdur-Rahkman today and how he hurt you guys and what you saw out of him?

LEONARD HAMILTON: Well, I think that he's a very good athlete. He's very clever with the ball. He's extremely quick and fast. He was the one guy on the court that I thought that athletically really challenged us.

He made -- if I remember correctly, he made a couple of what you might call shots with high degree of difficulty, where he hung in the air and moved the ball around and put the ball high up on the glass and made several very difficult shots.

That just says a little bit about how talented he is and how you can anticipate him growing and continuing to improve as a player at Michigan.

He has a tremendous amount of upside, and he's a guy who you can expect great things from as he moves through the remainder of his career.

Q. Michigan's big man, Wagner, had 12 points. He made three baskets. He did not make any threes. Had you known going into the game that he would have those kind of moments, would you have liked your chances a lot to win?

LEONARD HAMILTON: Well, the thing about Michigan's team, they're not totally defined by one particular player. You know, they have several guys that they're a complete basketball team. You can't expect one guy to carry the load of a team all the time.

Sure, we did a pretty good job defending him, but I also think the effort that we spent on him, we opened up some opportunities for some other guys, and I think that's one reason why they were probably a little bit more effective. In order to get to him, being the type of three-point shooter that he is -- I think he shoots over 40% from the floor -- when you're trying to get to him and he's a seven-footer, he's their center, well, obviously, he opens up the lane.

And I think that's one of the reasons why they were able to get into the interior of our defense and get some easy ups, some high-percentage baskets because we had to put forth so much effort to close out on him because he's such an outstanding shooter.