

Atlantic Coast Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Wednesday, March 10, 2021
Greensboro, North Carolina, USA

Clemson Tigers

Brad Brownell

Postgame Press Conference



Miami 67, Clemson 64

BRAD BROWNELL: Just congratulate Miami; their kids played great. They're a handful. They can really -- they're great shot makers, and we had a lot of trouble guarding them. Their field goal percentages were outstanding. You don't see guards very often that combine to shoot whatever, over 50 percent, especially on a lot of pull-ups. That's the shot that most people in the game don't want you to take. But they've got guys that have size and athleticism, and Wong and McGusty, they were a real handful for us defensively.

And then offensively, I thought we moved it well. I thought we shot it well, especially from the perimeter. But again, we've had some issues with turnovers in this year during the season, and in a low-possession game, that's a major problem. We had 15 turnovers, and that's just hard to overcome.

Miami is a good team that has really good players. They don't have a lot of players, but the six, seven guys they play, their starting five is a handful. We've played those guys three times this year and beat them on a one-possession game down there, won about a four-possession game at home, and then lost on a one-possession game here.

I'm sure if we played them 10 times, they'd all come down to that, and they were just able to play a little bit better than we were today. Disappointing.

Q. You were able to get the two big steals in the last 30 seconds. Were you happy with the look that you got for Honor, the short jumper?

BRAD BROWNELL: Yeah, their guys were making a heck of a lot more shots that were difficult than that. But at the end of the day, it didn't go in. That's basketball. Nick is the

same guy that made a 25-footer at the buzzer to beat Georgia Tech. I mean, I'd take that shot every day.

We had a nice little slip action, got him the ball in space, had some options if he didn't like what he saw. He took it to eight or ten feet and missed it. It's a good look, but it didn't go.

Obviously that's not what cost us. We had some other possessions that were poor. We panicked just a little bit at times midway through the second half. But yeah, that was pretty good. And we executed late defensively with some trapping and some things to give us an opportunity when we got behind.

Q. Is it a little easier to take when you guys know that you're in a good spot as far as the NCAA Tournament, and how do you get those guys to regroup?

BRAD BROWNELL: Yeah. I mean, yeah, it is easier from the standpoint of the NCAA Tournament is the reward for your whole season. It's been a heck of a season. Our guys have accomplished a lot so far. We obviously have bigger goals in front of us. We wanted to do better here. We thought if we could just get a win and get some momentum. We're looking forward to the next game, but -- yeah, we're still disappointed because we wanted to play well here. We wanted to do better.

Yeah. Are we excited about Indianapolis and the NCAA Tournament? Yes. Are we excited right now? No. But tomorrow when we wake up and we know that it looks like we're going to be in, that's awesome. We get a couple days to regroup and try to get ourselves ready to go, find out what's next, and we'll be excited and ready to roll when that opportunity presents itself.

Q. You're going into uncharted waters now that they've never played the NCAA Tournament in a bubble and this situation. What are your thoughts on that, going into kind of an unexpected situation?

BRAD BROWNELL: Well, I mean, it's the same for everybody, so that's just what it is. We've had weird

games all year. It's crazy playing in the ACC Tournament with not too many folks up there. No bands and all the pageantry that comes with it.

That part of it is -- the part that is unfortunate is I've been to some NCAA tournaments. And the last time we went a couple years back, an incredible experience when you go to your hotel and your fan base is there and your band is there and everybody is cheering and patting you on the back. And then you win a game and it's unbelievable. You're not going to have any of that. Selection Sunday is going to be quarantine basically with our team. Even that's going to be different.

You still get to say that you're participating and you get a chance to compete at the highest level against the best teams in the country, and that's enough. There will be some what-ifs, so I've been through it so I know what it's like. I feel bad they won't be able to experience all of that this year, but it's still a heck of a honor and it's a reward for a job well done over the length of several months.

Q. Is the possession that maybe stings more the one where Honor missed the one off the inbounds, the one that went off of Hunter's hands?

BRAD BROWNELL: Yeah, we had a slip play set up that was open. It was going to be a lay-up, and Clyde just probably led him a little bit too much, and it went out of bounds.

Yeah, that stings. We tried for a lay-up play because you're deep, you're behind, and you're trying to score quick, and it was open. We just didn't pull the trigger the right way. Led him just a little bit too much, had to lay up. And then I'm disappointed Aamir didn't catch that last ball on the full-court play. We've been practicing it, we had it in our pocket. And be interested to see how he didn't catch that because I thought it was a decent pass by Clyde.

That's part of basketball. You're trying to execute under pressure. There were plenty of times guys made big plays. We executed our press. We've had a bunch of games all year where we have executed down the stretch and won a bunch of close games, making shots and making really good passes.

But yeah, that play was one that was open, and I know Clyde is our best passer that way. He just missed him. But it happens.

Q. After you got the steal there by Aamir and you got fortunate there by Al-Amir keeping the ball in, did you just call time-out there, just kind of calm everybody down and set it up and plan it out?

BRAD BROWNELL: Yeah, there was a different -- I've done it all. Sometimes we let them play, and you feel like you like what you see, or maybe there's a broken chord or there's a matchup that you see that you like, let's go attack that matchup. But in that scenario, it was broken. Our guys were kind of all over the place. You could tell there wasn't a lot of organization and structure. And it was kind of a panicky situation anyway leading up to that with all the other steals and turnovers and the way the game was going. So let's just call time-out, get our team settled, get exactly what we want.

I thought about going inside to Aamir, but he'd really kind of had a tough day inside. He was struggling. Against Brooks, it's hard for him to catch it deep enough to make a play. They had done some good things, I thought, within their defense to make it a little harder on him. And so we tried to use the ball screen slip action. And again, if we had it again and you told me Nick is going to get a little eight-footer in the lane, we're going to run that again. It just didn't go.

Q. Anything you can point to as far as maybe shooting better from three and kind of struggling more inside today?

BRAD BROWNELL: Well, you know, there were times that we're -- it's just hard. I don't know that we have -- we don't have a guard like they do that can just kind of go break one off as easily and maybe jump up at 12 feet and shoot over somebody and score. So we really have to kind of create some other kinds of baskets.

It's part of why we bring Aamir away from the basket and open the basket area up for other things. Or certain games, certainly when Aamir has got it going, we're going to feed him down in there. It wasn't a game where he had it really going down there. It was harder for whatever reason. He made a couple shots, but he wasn't a guy that was just scoring as much as he did maybe one of the other times we played them.

That happens. But again, we just kind of try to read situations, see what we can do.

Q. Unusual just to see 11 combined free throws between both teams. What do you make of that? Was it just a pretty clean game?

BRAD BROWNELL: Yeah, I mean, both teams pride themselves on not fouling a lot, so I think both teams are pretty disciplined. They're disciplined defensively. It was a well-officiated game, even on both sides. I would have liked to have gotten a five-second call on that BOB. I'm

going to count that off. Other than that, I thought the officials did a really good job and let the kids play.

There's always going to be contact on a few plays, but by and large, the game was clean. Both teams I think, they're not out there playing haphazardly. There's pretty good defensive discipline on both teams' part, and that's why there weren't as many free throws.

Q. In your opening statement, you mentioned that their guards are really effective at getting to the basket and scoring, and in particular Isaiah Wong. In the two games before this, he was their leading scorer. What was your game plan to try to stop him, and why wasn't it as effective as you thought?

BRAD BROWNELL: I mean, our game plan to stop him was just guard him well and make him take some tough shots. He made a lot of tough shots. I don't think he got to the basket as much as you think he did. I think he made guarded shots. He has some size over us. It's hard. You can't just put Clyde on him and then who's -- if you're going to play Al or Nick, then they've got to guard McGusty, and McGusty can do the same thing.

So the fact that they've got multiple guys that can do that makes it hard. Again, try to keep them out of the paint, make them shoot a contested shot. It wasn't as effective as we'd like it to be, and then give those guys credit for making shots.

Anthony Walker had a good game. He hit a couple threes and was 6 for 12. It was just one of those games where we did create some turnovers. They had 13 turnovers, but we had 15, which is too many in a low-possession, back-and-forth game. Give their kids credit; they jumped up and made some shots.

Q. You get another pause for eight or nine days. How do you keep everybody sharp? What's your plan during this next lull?

BRAD BROWNELL: Yeah, it's funny. I thought about it, I would have liked to have won a couple just to stay here longer and keep us a little isolated, keep us practicing, keep us playing, keep us sharp, keep us executing. I've got to go back and think about it. We're going to take a couple days initially just to -- physically, because there are a lot of guys -- Clyde's knee was really bothering him. We took him out of the game early. He really had a hard time in the first half. Couldn't really get his knee loose. That doesn't happen very often. It's probably happened three or four games this year.

We just have had a lot of guys log a lot of minutes. So

we'll kind of refresh that way, then we'll look at what we're doing and try to figure out some things to do a little bit better, if there's anything we need to change or enhance leading into the tournament. But it's going to be on us quick. Selection Sunday is right around the corner, and we'll be traveling, so there will be a bunch of things that we've got to get in place for that, as well. So we'll be busy. But we're going to learn from this film, too, as well.

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Q. What happened there in the second half? It looked like maybe with about nine minutes to play, they really turned up that defensive intensity and made it hard for you guys to get shots?

AAMIR SIMMS: First off, hats off to Miami. Like you said, they played really well and down the stretch they performed their best. I just think we kind of got sped up a little bit and let their pressure bother us and take us out of our offense. A situation like that you get frustrated and you have mental lapses and then you start to make mistake after mistake. And I think that was just the thing with our game late down the stretch was just making mistakes. The pressure really wasn't bothering us too much, but we let it get to us mentally and then we just started messing up from there.

Q. I know y'all were hitting a lot of threes in the first half, but were you surprised by how lopsided the scoring was in the paint today?

AAMIR SIMMS: No, honestly not. We didn't step up to the challenge and guard them one-on-one, and that's as simple as it is. We've got to be a lot tougher in that area. And when it comes to guarding a man and you're on an island, we've just got to do a better job staying in front, keeping them off the paint. With smaller guards, a lot of teams will try to shoot over us and we let that happen a little bit too much today.

Q. I kind of felt like that last play, that last offensive set for you guys would maybe run through you. Was the play supposed to come to you or was that designed for Nick?

AAMIR SIMMS: I don't think it was exactly supposed to be a drive and kick situation, but Nick thought he had a shot

and he took it, and that's really about it. I don't think it was designed for me specifically, but Nick got a pretty good look coming off that screen. He thought he had a good shot, so he took it. You know the rest.

Q. You had two close games, you defeated them earlier this year. What did they try to do different in the third game today?

AAMIR SIMMS: Just a ton of pressure. I noticed a lot more physicality, bumping, and trying to knock passes, and just bother us a little bit, and I think it definitely affected us in our offense.

And on defense, they were just as physical. I think they did an unbelievable job of doing that on the defensive side, just trying to bother us and shake up our offense a little bit more, more than they did the first two games.

Q. That last play, it looked like Trapp was looking for you at half court to try to make a buzzer beater three. Was that the case and how often do you all practice that?

AAMIR SIMMS: We practice that a little bit. I think that's a play we just put in recently, but he threw a pretty good pass, I just couldn't finish the play and execute. I just let it get through my hands.

Q. Despite the loss, you guys were really effective from three. How do you carry this into momentum into the March Madness tournament?

AAMIR SIMMS: It's definitely going to be a lot of momentum for us. We've just got to regroup and get back on our feet and figure out what's going on with our defense, I think. The offense is fine. We're just having too many mental lapses on defense. We've just got to come together as a team and figure out how to get back to our defensive roots.

Q. What are your thoughts going to Indianapolis? The tournament this year is going to be new to everybody and kind of in a bubble, all playing in that area. What

are your thoughts going into continued postseason play?

AAMIR SIMMS: Honestly, just looking forward to improving ourselves, first off. We did not perform well here today, and that's the only thing that's on my mind right now.

I'm really not looking at Indianapolis as of right now, but I definitely think going into that week, we've definitely got to refocus and figure out what's the problem on defense and just focus on that and just try to make improvements.

We're definitely excited to go there, to say the least, and we're looking forward to our matchup come Sunday.

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