

UVA vs. Syracuse Post-Game Quotes

Jan. 25, 2021

Virginia Head Coach Tony Bennett

What do you think of how the newcomers (three of five starters) handled the Syracuse zone for the first time?

“Obviously I can’t complain and I thought when you make shots that helps but I liked our movement, how we shared the ball, took a lot of threes and made a lot (of threes). We got a variation of some high-low pass seams, some back cuts, some decent dribble penetration so I think, I don’t have a stat sheet in front of me, but I think it was a 22-assist night. Again, sharing the ball and when Sam (Hauser), Trey (Murphy) and Jay (Huff) are shooting like that and the other guys making good decisions. I thought it felt right.”

On breaking the Syracuse press:

“Syracuse, as we experienced firsthand in a real hard way (2016 vs. Syracuse in Elite Eight), is so good in their zone at anticipating when they move it down the floor and press, they can kind of bluff, you think they’re trapped and they cover stuff, they’re long and they put pressure. I didn’t think we got to spots quite quick enough, but then we picked it up. We had a two-on-one and Reese (Beekman) drove and didn’t finish. I can replay almost every scenario here, but I thought we were a little wobbly. But then we kind of got a couple stops with it, made a couple baskets and that was enough.”

On Doug Doughty:

“Doug, I just want to tell you first off, what a service you’ve done for the journalism industry. Thanks for following us faithfully and I’ve said this before but the best compliment I can give you is, I see the way your daughter looks at you, I know how proud she is of you and I got to know her through the years and thank you. You have a well-deserved break coming up so your last game at JPJ you saw a pretty good one, so I’m glad we didn’t disappoint.”

Did you anything away from that game (last year vs. Syracuse? Was there something you felt you had to correct? Or do you just have a bad night last year?

“Last year, that was a hard game. We played them the very first game of the season and played well. Then down here they had a good shooting night. We’re a different team when you spread the floor offensively with the Sam and Trey. Last year we struggled to shoot and had a rough game and it happened. Certainly, we learned from it, I watched that and looked at the tape to see what didn’t work and what did work, then tried to use our personnel’s strength to play.”

What was your expectation for your three-point shooting coming into the year?

“I knew it’d be a little bit like a couple years ago. We’re going to get our shooting a lot from Jay (Huff), Sam (Hauser) and we didn’t know Trey was going to be eligible, and thought he was going to redshirt. Then when that happened, I’m like okay our 3-4-5 positions is where we can stretch the floor. So that’s a little different, we got playmaking and not that Kihei (Clark) won’t take threes and knock them down or other guys, but I thought we’d be able to stretch the floor with those guys and wanted them to shoot. I knew Sam (Hauser) could obviously (shoot) Trey

Murphy III) and I've seen it with Jay (Huff) so I thought we'd be able to stretch it. I knew that would be important and obviously at times you can't live by it, but it's an important piece of our offensive production."

It's not unprecedented for your teams to get better defensively as the season goes on but what is this group doing specifically, that it wasn't doing early in the year when defense seemed to be a little bit of an issue?

"I think we're guarding the ball better. I think Reese Beekman has done a really good job. He's really guarded some terrific offensive players. We say shooting can cover over a lot of mistakes well, on-ball defense, shot blockers can erase a lot of stuff which Jay (Huff) has done at times of course. On-ball defense can cover a lot of mistakes for your defense and when Reese (Beekman), is right, and Kihei, then Trey's getting better, Casey Morsell last game. When those guys are sliding well and making it hard to get into the lane, boy that helps. I thought Jay (Huff) did a good job last game and again today. Sam (Hauser) is a position-smart, tough defender so I think that the improvement of that and a comfort with the system has helped our defense not yield as many easy shots. Taking care of the basketball, when you don't turn it over, you don't get as many run outs or transition baskets."

Redshirt Senior Guard Sam Hauser

On pregame back spasms:

"Yeah, it was weird. Just in warmups it started spasming. I don't know why but I just said I was going to go out there and see how it felt. And it felt good enough to play so I figured I'd just play. Obviously, I shot the ball pretty well so maybe it wasn't the worst thing. But overall, just a great team tonight."

Improving his defensive play:

"Yeah, I think, just from the daily practice habits, each and every day that the coaches harp on and the drills that we do. If you work hard at it, you're going to get better because that's what this program is built on. If you want to play a lot of minutes you're going to have to be able to guard. I've tried to take some pride on that end and I hope, I hope it's showing, because I think I've gotten better."

On the team having a pass-first mentality:

"It's just making the right play, honestly, and those guys are really good at it. I think even Jay and Trey and myself, and guys come off the bench as well, I think everybody has the mindset like, 'You know, we might have a good shot but if we make one more baskets a great shot.' So playing with unselfish guys is awesome, and it showed tonight and obviously everybody kind of had their two cents on the game because of the way the ball moves. It was a great job, everyone."

On facing Syracuse's zone for the first time:

"I thought our green team or our scout team earlier in the week it was a pretty good look. They played really hard and made us work for really good shots so I think that helped. Kind of in the flow of the game you get a feel for it, you can understand where to attack it, and

where you might be able to get an open shot. Throughout the game were able to find pockets or windows were able to get a good shot off or just make a make a winning play. We made enough of those tonight to win."

On playing Virginia Tech for the first time:

"Yeah, I'm definitely excited. Practice will be fun this week. It'll ramp up a little bit, probably just because you know the whole rivalry so excited. The first one got postponed or canceled or whatever I don't know what it was, it deals was with that one. It'll be really fun to play them because they're really good team."

On sharing the ball and getting good shots:

"Like I said before, it's just like just trying to get the best shot possible. Our guys were smart enough to know when someone's hot to get them the ball. Early in the game it was me and Trey got hot and then Jay got hot and Reese hit a couple. I think when attention is drawn to one player, it opens up the floor for another, and that's what makes us dangerous on that end of the floor."

On winning big despite numerous turnovers:

"Absolutely I don't think we hung our head too much on those turnovers. We'd like to clean them up and not have that many obviously. It shows that we have some fight us knowing that if we make a mistake you just got to move on and go to the next play. Hopefully they didn't score too many points off our turnovers. We can't let that happen again because it gets a lot of teams, including Syracuse, a lot of times when you turn the ball over that much you get in trouble."

On the team's strong rebounding efforts:

"I think it was a big game for rebounding for our guards like Trey, Kihei and Reese because Syracuse really crashed the glass hard on offense. Being able to block someone out and go get rebounds is a hard thing to do. And I think those guys came back and helped Jay and I rebound. Also on the offensive, I think we attacked the boards pretty well too and got us some extra possessions. I think that's just a point of emphasis on every single game for us to try to and out-rebound the other team so that's touché to us."

Redshirt Senior Center Jay Huff

On how far the team has come on defense this season:

"I think we've come a long way. There were games where we let teams like that get out in transition a little bit more and get a few more open shots and they made some very not open shots So, congrats to them. That was very impressive. But I think for the most part we were able to stifle their transition and we made them have to play in the half court. I think that was really big for us and I still think that we can improve. You know, there's still things that we can do better, which is always really cool about this team."

On high number of assists by the team:

"A lot of our offense has just been moving the ball around. We don't over dribble all that much. Especially against a team like Syracuse, you can't, because they collapse and have guys with long arms and can bump the ball away from you. We would move it into the middle of the zone and then kick it back out. I think we were really able to do that well in a way that just led to no dribble shots, which was really big."

On Sam Hauser having pregame back issues:

"When we got back on the court after going in for the last time to the locker room, I noticed he had like a hot pack on. He didn't let it faze him too much, obviously. It was, it was actually really impressive because I know playing with a bad back is no easy feat. But he didn't let it faze too much."

Getting the ball to Hauser when he was hot:

"Against a team like Syracuse, with a zone that they play, a pass fake, and then kick to someone different typically works well. They left him open a few times at the top, which you can't do. It's just got to be the biggest no-no on the scouting report their team probably said. We're just glad that he was able to get some open looks which was obviously active and he capitalize on."

On sharing knowledge with other players about playing the Syracuse zone:

"Just the way that we prepared in practice with the Green Machine, who was able to prepare us just by doing what the Syracuse zone does pretty darn well. Syracuse recruits guys with long arms, and that's hard to replicate. But our green machine does a really good job of that. I think that that was really big for us, especially for the guys that have played against it before."

On chemistry with Kihei Clark:

"That's just something against Syracuse's zone, every once in a while, you're going to get one of those. I think we can definitely exploit that, in a lot of games. It's hard to stop Kihei when it gets going down the lane. And if you stop him then he's really good at making that pass. So it's, it's a lot of fun. When we can get a game going like."