

NCAA Men's Regional Semifinals and Finals: Chicago

Friday, March 25, 2016

Chicago, Illinois



Tony Bennett

Mike Tobey

Anthony Gill

Malcolm Brogdon

Virginia

Virginia - 84, Iowa State - 71

Q. Mike, probably the biggest game of your career to play the way you did. What does it feel like right now to help get Virginia to the Elite 8 and also to have that kind of performance?

MIKE TOBEY: Yeah, I think we did a -- I mean, just tried to really go out and play aggressive. This was really obviously a big game for us at this point, us three seniors, and Evan and Caid, as well, it's win to go home, or win or be done for us. Just trying to really attack every game with that mentality.

Q. You guys have talked about wanting to have a more aggressive approach to this tournament, be the aggressors. Obviously that worked early on. How good was it to see kind of the story you've been telling us all year play out on the floor there the first half?

ANTHONY GILL: You know, it felt really good. It's been something that Coach Bennett has been drilling in our heads that we have to attack it, and we just can't let the game come to us, and we have to be ready from the start. You know, it's something that we work on in practice. If we're not doing what we need to at the start of practice, he lets us know. For us to go out there tonight and really execute at the beginning of the game was awesome for us.

Q. What did you think when you came out and you saw all those Iowa State fans in such large numbers and you could see how loud they were? Did you have to do anything different in your preparation or throughout the game?

MALCOLM BROGDON: No. It's something you take notice of. It was like a home game for them more than anything, but that's something that fires us up as competitors. We got to the point where we were playing well during away games towards the end of ACC play, so we embraced it. It was a challenge, and

we were able to overcome it.

Q. Mike, your performance in the second half can't be understated. Second-chance points, it seems you were just towering over the Iowa State defenders. How did you keep attacking and getting your teammates to feed you the ball down low?

MIKE TOBEY: Yeah, when they took McKay out, I had a size advantage, so I really just tried to take advantage of that. That's something we work on in practice if there's an advantage, trying to get the ball to whoever has the advantage, so just really tried to execute off that. Teammates did a great job of feeding me the ball when I had the advantage, as well.

Q. Mike, was your father here tonight?

MIKE TOBEY: Yes, sir.

Q. They showed him on TV. I wasn't sure it was him, but he looked proud as can be. Can you talk a little bit about what this might mean to him and your family just to see you do this?

MIKE TOBEY: Yeah, I think everyone in my family is just extremely excited for us to be in the Elite 8. I think that's a huge step for this program, and obviously they're happy for me to be a part of a team that makes it to the Elite 8, so I think that's what we're really excited about.

Q. Malcolm, your shots weren't all falling tonight, but you didn't really force anything. Was there a point in your career where you might have kind of kept shooting when things weren't going instead of looking to get your teammates involved the way you did?

MALCOLM BROGDON: Yeah, I think so. I think earlier this season I would have. Before the Georgia Tech loss and Florida State loss, I think I would have kept shooting. But we've gotten this far because we play as a team, because I defer when other people are playing really well, because other guys defer when I'm playing well, and we just play well together. We embrace our pillar of unity, and I tried to get other guys involved but stay aggressive tonight, and we were able to get the win.

Q. Anthony, can you walk us through that sequence at the end of the first half? You slammed

real hard on your back. Were you almost angry at that point because you got fouled, went to the line and had that big block? How much did that take the momentum away from them to close the half?

ANTHONY GILL: Yeah, I was more shocked that they didn't call a foul more than anything, not angry, but it did kind of hurt a little bit, but just got back on defense because I knew we needed a defensive stop, but I think the block was me just trying to help out my team, trying to get the momentum back, because it sort of felt like they were trying to get the game back in their hands, and I just wanted to do something to help the team out.

TONY BENNETT: I think his hair protected his head when he fell, so he was okay, so there you go.

Q. Malcolm, can you talk about, I know you have unfinished business, but talk about what it means to get to the Elite 8.

MALCOLM BROGDON: You know, we've had a long season, and I feel like we've just gotten better and better. We've battled through our ups and downs, and it's a huge accomplishment. We're not done, but we do have to take it one game at a time, and we need to enjoy this for a few hours but we need to refocus because this game is the day after tomorrow. We'll enjoy it, but we'll watch film and learn from this one but prepare for the next.

Q. I know it's been written a lot. I don't know whether you've read it, but I'm sure you've been asked a lot of questions before games like this about pace of play. Everybody thought, well, it was their pace against your pace. Do you ever really think there's much to it? It seemed like you guys are comfortable playing whatever pace.

MALCOLM BROGDON: I actually do think there's something to it. I think we're comfortable playing our pace. I think when we win games, it's because we get other teams to slow down. We make them use their shot clock and we use ours, and that's the pace we like to play at.

Q. Malcolm, when you guys are playing that aggressive style with the mentality you want to have in this tournament, is it hard to protect the ball? Is it hard to be aggressive and not lose control of that?

MALCOLM BROGDON: No, you know, protecting the ball is not just something you decide to do, it's something you work on. We do drills in practice to protect the ball and to have ball security. You know, Coach Bennett encourages us to be aggressive but be tough with the ball and take care of it, so that's what we try to do.

Q. Malcolm, Anthony, you guys said yesterday that

the difference for this year's team is you all are relaxed and you go out and attack first, and even though Iowa State comes back in the second half and starts to surge ahead and you come out strong, how does your confidence continue to build knowing what you've been preaching is continuing to perform and coming out with the results you want?

ANTHONY GILL: I think our confidence grows when we look at each other and we know that we've done something. We know that we're doing what our system is built upon, and when we're really embracing the five pillars that we go by each and every day. I think that's where we get our confidence from. If we're going out there and doing everything that we need to do in order to get wins and play together as a team, I think that's where our confidence comes from.

Q. Malcolm or Anthony, what was it like to see Mike have a game like that, arguably his best game of the season on this kind of stage?

MALCOLM BROGDON: Huge. Mike is a guy that's come into his own towards the end of ACC play. I'm not even sure if this was his best game. That Louisville game towards the end was a monster game. But this was a huge game for him, huge game for us. When Mike comes out and he's aggressive and confident and plays like that, the way he's been playing, we're another level team. He's playing with a lot of confidence, and we're happy he's doing that.

Q. Malcolm, you guys came out and hit 7 of 10 from the floor to start the game. What were you seeing on the floor that led to that hot start?

MALCOLM BROGDON: I think we were just playing inside out. The big guys were able to make a few shots, and then it opened up the guards for a few rhythm shots and we were able to attack off the sides. Once they played sides a little differently and made adjustments, we switched to a few different offenses and continued to make adjustments to be effective offensively.

Q. When you talk about the aggressive approach and that mindset, was this the best example of that so far in this tournament of kind of coming out the way you wanted them to?

TONY BENNETT: Yeah, I mean, I think we hit some shots, and that got us going. But they did; at this level, as I said about the Butler game, they're not going to lose, you're going to have to beat them. I thought the guys came -- I thought London got us off to a really good start and Devon Hall. Defensively we were aggressive. That's both ends of the floor, and I thought that was significant for the start because they are potent offensively and you could see it. So we had -- I think our offense really helped us.

Q. It seemed like tonight the guys checked off all the boxes that you've been talking about all season. Just without seeing tape were there any nits to pick, anything you thought right away we've got to work on that?

TONY BENNETT: I thought we got a little stagnant late. Marial had a couple turnovers and we were sort of standing and there was a stretch where maybe we took a couple of just OK shots where we could have gotten better ones in that second half, missed a few free throws and those kind of things, a couple breakdowns in the ball screen coverage where they got back and got down the lane and attacked which they're good at, but those are the things where they said they're going to score against our tough defense, they're that good. If we have breakdowns and they start scoring, then we said that could be curtains for us so don't allow that to happen, and overall it was a well-played game, and we needed the offense, even breaking the press and getting some of those buckets kept it in a good spot for us.

Q. They cut it to seven at one point in the second half. I think some of us on press row were thinking, are they going to call time-out here? You just stood there, raised three fingers, got the ball in the post to Tobey who scored on a three-point play. How much confidence does that show you have in your team to weather that type of storm without a time-out?

TONY BENNETT: Yeah, we knew they'd make a run. They're that good. They had missed some shots and we were shooting it so well, and to say we were going to keep that up, hard to say. So when they got it, I thought, maybe one more possession I would have called one, but we just thought we needed to go inside. That's where I mentioned maybe we took a couple just okay shots and not good ones, but those were big plays. I was so happy to see what Mike did. Something you haven't asked about, I thought Anthony did a really good job defensively on -- well, on McKay but I thought on Niang. I thought Anthony was significant. And even Isaiah, he's had a little trouble when we challenged him, those two guys did a good job. He's a special player. He scored 30, and some of the things he can do offensively, he's just so gifted, and that was a concern heading into this game.

Q. Can you just talk about Tobey and what he did, and was it your -- was your game plan to attack inside?

TONY BENNETT: What we thought was if Anthony -- Anthony, when he's got a guy in front of him, he can slide, and what we thought was -- if Mike and Anthony are on the floor, they have to contend with that. Niang is going to have to guard one of those two, or McKay

will have some potential good match-ups. So the fact we could hold our own defensively, and even when they scored, we knew had some things going on on the offensive end, so that's why that pairing together was significant, and then the size was big, too.

Q. In a game like this when pace not only is important but changes kind of constantly, what does London do to sort of dictate that pace and why is that so important in a game like that?

TONY BENNETT: He's just steady. He's got such good feel. He knows when to get the ball swung, when to look inside, and you need that. He just ties it all together, and I love Malcolm's response about his maturity and his shot selection, shot discernment at those times. He was getting dogged defensively. They did a good job on him defensively. And what even he acknowledged, yep, we did that and we needed that. We needed to wear them down, bang them with screens, try to take their legs away, and help us with our -- hurt their offense kind of with our offense.

Q. Tony, so three times you played the big guys together, Anthony and Mike a lot, at Hampton, against Butler and then tonight. What prompts you to put them together, and how do you manage the feel of how long you can ride it out?

TONY BENNETT: You look at match-ups, how we're doing. They both are -- is there a match-up defensively, Isaiah gave us stuff, you get on the glass, there's some positive things about that, and it's just a feel thing, you look at how fatigued they are, what's going on that way.

Q. What goes into getting your guys to be willing to make the extra pass to go from a good shot to a really good shot, and what type of court vision do they have to have to be able to see everybody?

TONY BENNETT: Yeah, it's that idea of one of our pillars is unity, and there's an African proverb that says, if you want to go fast, go alone, if you want to go far, go together. And we have some very individually talented guys, but they know when they're in concert with each other, that's their way to touch greatness, and it's validated because they've done it. When they share the ball, when they get good shots, they celebrate that. They're such a unified group that way, and there's not egos in there, and I think that experience of playing and being in tough settings has made a difference.

But can you move them, and we knew the significance of that against this team, and every game it's a new -- you've got to buy in and it's a new commitment, and they embraced that in this game offensively what they needed to do.

Q. Three years in a row, Sweet 16, round of 32,

Sweet 16. You've finally gotten over the hump to the Elite 8. What is the reaction from you to be in this position now to get to UVA's third potentially Final Four appearance?

TONY BENNETT: Yeah, thankful. It doesn't take away these guys -- to get to a Sweet 16 is no small thing to. To get into the NCAA Tournament, our program is still establishing itself. We're not where Carolina and Duke and some of these are. We're scratching and clawing and thankful for everything that comes our way, and you just show up and you keep knocking. I told these guys, we've got a door knocker that we hang and we take them, every road trip, every game and we just keep knocking and that's what I tell these guys. And I said it before you can handle the worst that would happen and you can handle the best because they know what matters and that's what we keep talking about, but very thankful and now we're prepared to go after it for the next one.

Q. I know the job is not done, but just to follow up on that question, the pride that you take in this team and how far they've been able to take it right now. I know you've still got a few more wins here.

TONY BENNETT: They mean a lot to a lot of people, how they conduct themselves, more than just basketball, and if you followed us when we're around then you'd understand that. Of course I'm proud of them and I want them to touch what they can touch. I said it in the press conference the other day, we were 2-3 in the ACC, and I said whatever that line is, I want them to get to it where they can reach their full potential, and where that takes us, it takes us. I'll hold it with open hands, but we've got to get to that line and maximize what we have, and that's what I love about them on the floor is they're touching it. They're getting close to it.

Q. You know this part of the country better than most of us. Did you anticipate the huge Iowa State contingent here today?

TONY BENNETT: They did have a -- I heard the roar, and Whitey asked that question. I didn't know. I think a lot of people were hopeful that there would be Big Ten teams in this, but Iowa State, Midwest, they have great support, great followers, and we had a great turnout, too. They were roaring, too. But we knew we had to -- we just knew we had to go get this one, and you couldn't -- one good story. My father, he came to the game. You asked that question. He came to the game, which I never know if he's going to come or not. That's his first game he's come to, and he told me -- we spent about 15 minutes in my hotel room before we had our pregame meal, and he said on Thursday was 20 years to the day that his father passed away, and I just sat and I thought, what would my dad, your grandfather, tell you going into this game? He was an

Italian, a steel worker, not real well educated. He said, you know what your grandfather would tell you? He'd tell you, don't tiptoe into this one, no tiptoeing and I shared that with our guys. I said, do not tiptoe in this game, and I shared that story, and that meant a lot, because you have to go into these games, you can't tiptoe. You've got to go get it in our way, and that was just really cool. It was a sweet time with my father for about 15 minutes, and he came to the game, and I don't know if he behaved himself or not, I didn't hear, but it meant a lot to me because he's had an -- you talk about a man who's poured into my life and it's overflowed into so many other coaches and so many other people and these biblical pillars that these guys talk about, humility, passion, unity, servanthood, about trying to be the best team, that's from him, and that's impacted a lot. I didn't mean to sound off with that, but I knew going into that game, that was going to be significant, and I just cherish that time, and I'll have that always.