

NCAA Men's Regional Semifinals and Finals: Chicago

Sunday, March 27, 2016

Chicago, Illinois



Tony Bennett

Mike Tobey

Anthony Gill

Malcolm Brogdon

Virginia

Syracuse - 68, Virginia - 62

TONY BENNETT: Well, it was in our grasp, but credit goes to Syracuse for some of the plays they made. I think some of our points off turnovers probably cost us. We didn't convert on some things, had some errors, but played well enough in stretches. They really bottled up Malcolm with that zone, and we got some good looks and just didn't convert, and that happens.

But I'll tell you guys in this opening statement, I usually don't, what I told them. I just told it to Louis Johnson for CBS. He asked me, what do you say to a group of guys like this for all they've done for your program, and what I told them, and I think it's right, I was reminded, I don't know if it's an old church song or not, but it says weepy may endure for the night, but joy comes in the morning. We will have some tough nights because you're so close you could taste it, but absolutely joy will come in the morning for what these guys have established for Virginia basketball. My gosh, I mean, where it was when they got here, all the guys that have helped get it to that, there will be joy, and I'm just so thankful to have coached them, and I know every coach says that at this time, but it is not lip service. It's real. Does it sting? Does it hurt? Absolutely. I will look back through stuff. I'll watch the film, and I'm sure there will be things I'll look at and all that stuff will come. But proud to have Anthony and Malcolm and Mike and Kevin and Caid, and all that stuff, and I know it doesn't feel that way, but I know it will be true.

Q. Obviously Syracuse had some success with its press the other night. Why did it give your team so much trouble?

TONY BENNETT: Yeah, you know, we got a couple easy buckets just like we did against Iowa State, and then a couple times we actually got to the hoop and either they called a travel, we didn't finish on a couple of those that I think were key, and they're really athletic.

They did that and bothered some people. They did it to Gonzaga, even at our place. They're long and athletic, and they're such good anticipators because of all the work they do in the zone. A couple of those turnovers at just the wrong time were enough. And then they, as I said, came down and converted. I think it was 15 to 2 points off turnovers. Either some of the plays at the rim got going a little fast and then made some tough contested shots, plays were made.

Q. Malcolm and Anthony, 15-point lead with nine and a half to go. What was the mindset then, and did you feel like you guys let up or was it just their charge?

MALCOLM BROGDON: You know, the mindset was to stay aggressive, but be sure with the ball. I think they had a charge. I think they made plays. I think we didn't get stops when we needed or rebounds when we needed, but at the same time, I don't think we looked for our shot in the zone as much on the outside.

I think they were able to sink in a little bit and not let us get the ball in the middle as much because I don't think we were being as aggressive outside of the zone as we should have been. But yeah, I mean, you've got to give credit to them; they made plays.

ANTHONY GILL: Yeah, I would second that. When they threw that press on us, we didn't really handle it in the best fashion. We got a couple turnovers that really wasn't what we do, and you know, credit to them because they hit shots and they made plays when they needed to, and we couldn't get stops. We couldn't keep them out of the lane, and it's just something that UVA basketball doesn't pride itself on, and that's what happened tonight, and that's how they were able to get back into the game.

Q. Malcolm and Anthony, you heard coach's opening statement as he shared what he told you guys in the locker room. Is it difficult at this moment to process what happened and that it was in your grasp, or are you able to realize just how much you brought to this program and all you accomplished?

MALCOLM BROGDON: You know, it is difficult, but at the same time, you start to reminisce. You start to remember all the good times you've had, and you start to realize how special these guys sitting next to you

and on the court with you, how much they mean to you, how much your coaches mean to you, how much you've learned from them, and just how much you've enjoyed your experience and your college career. Sometimes we get caught up so much and playing the game, trying to win every game, being so focused, I'm a very locked-in guy, rather than just smelling the roses, and now we can smell the roses. We can enjoy what we've established.

Q. Anthony, 4 for 4 from the field, but just four shots. Was it their zone that was collapsing on you? I know there were some foul issues in there, but the ball just didn't seem to get inside like it should have.

ANTHONY GILL: Yeah, that's just the way -- that's usually how it goes when we play Syracuse because I am playing in the back line. Both me and Mike Tobey are playing on the back line, and if the ball can't get into the middle, and they were really collapsing on the middle, we can't get the ball down there. That's just something that's just the way it goes. It wasn't anything special that they were doing, that's just the way the offenses set up today.

Q. Tony, they've got a bunch of good three-point shooters on the team and for a longest time Lydon was the only one who had made a three. Do you think it was inevitable that Richardson or Cooney or Gbinije would get going like they did late?

TONY BENNETT: Well, that's indicative of how they beat Gonzaga. They have some play makers. We did a good job early. I thought we made it hard. We got contested shots, and then a few breakdowns. And I think off those turnovers, they got momentum and hit a few contested shots. They're so good off the bounce and freezing you or getting some of those. They're a resilient team. They just kept battling. They did that in the tournament, and then all of a sudden, they separated. That zone is hard to score quick against too. So it was a matter of time, and we definitely got a great look at the end. We got some looks. You have to knock down some threes I think to loosen it, and all you can do is try to take the good ones. They made some plays. For a freshman to do that in that setting, both of them, and obviously they are experienced guys with Cooney and Gbinije was the difference.

Q. Mike and Anthony, you guys have been sort of poised under fire many times this year. When they started to make that run, was there any sense of this is slipping away, things don't look good for us, or did it just seem like another run in a game that you guys would withstand?

MIKE TOBEY: Well, when they started coming back, definitely we noticed it. We had a big lead, and then it was slipping away. But I don't know, I think -- I guess

we'd have to watch the game over to see if we really kind of lost our poise. But I think they made some really tough shots. I know Richardson especially was making some really contested shots. But I think it was like the defense before that when we weren't necessarily -- when he was starting to get going, by giving him open shots, it was giving him confidence to make some of those tough shots. So I think yeah.

Q. Tony, I don't know what the exact score was, but with about a minute to go, Syracuse missed a shot and got an offensive rebound, and rather than foul, you let them milk more clock. In hindsight --

TONY BENNETT: Yeah, we've been in that spot before. I thought -- the thought crossed my mind should we foul, try to extend it. We've done that in the past, and we got the stop, but we were having a hard time getting the looks. I thought, let's get one stop, come down, and we had a chance and maybe we needed more chances to tie the game, but I think Malcolm made a heck of a pass. He kicked it, so there was a chance to at least tie it, and then get that into overtime, but that's always a thought, do you foul extend it, or do you get a stop, and we chose to get a stop, and we actually did, but we couldn't get -- there was some crucial offensive rebounds that were costly, and some either hot or long misses, and they're very good obviously offensive rebounders because if you look at the 12 offensive rebounds, but absolutely it was a thought. Maybe I should have when I look at the tape.

Q. For all the players, I know you're disappointed, probably bitterly disappointed. Is shock a part of what you're feeling now, as well?

ANTHONY GILL: I would say just being so close to something that you wanted for so long, I would say that's the biggest shock. We had a big lead, and then we let it go. So I guess there is a lot of shock in that. But like Malcolm said, we've done so many great things here, and we're not going to hold our head over this one loss that we had. Of course, you want to go further because it's just right there, but we've done so much great for this University, and this University has done so many great things for us, as well.

Q. Tony, is it typically your strategy to try to attack the press and if you get a 2-on-1 opportunity to try to go to the rim instead of trying to run some clock or whatever, and have you guys ever struggled with a press like that before?

TONY BENNETT: We've had some trouble against presses, but we've had such success attacking it and getting points on the board. And there's maybe a couple we got going a little fast, we could have backed out perhaps. I've got to watch the tape and get a feel for it. But when you have 2 or 1s or 3 on 1s, I think you have to look to take it, and again, so I'm okay with what

I saw, but perhaps I'd change my mind, maybe there's one or two we could have backed up. I think it was more the turnovers, whether it was a ball that went out of bounds. And there was a little miscommunication when we were inbounding it, that hurt us. We scored a couple of those, but not enough.

Q. Malcolm, could you talk a little bit about the press? Obviously everybody has talked about it, but it seemed like you attacked it and you've had some success attacking it in the past.

MALCOLM BROGDON: Yeah, you know, they pressed us at the end. It was a good press. I think we had some success, we just couldn't finish on the other end, maybe a few miscommunications on some turnovers, but for the times that we did break the press, we just didn't finish the play at the end -- we just didn't finish at the end of the play.

Q. Anthony, you guys are all sort of showing a lot of poise in this situation. What was the locker room like, and did any of you kind of stand up to say anything or did you just let Coach kind of say what he wanted you to hear at that point?

ANTHONY GILL: It was a lot of emotion in there, of course. We've been together for so long, and for it to end like it did tonight when we were so close, of course, everybody's emotion is going to be really high. But Coach Bennett, he gave us a great talk and told us how much we really meant to him and what we meant to this University. The experience that we get from playing college basketball, especially with guys who have been together for so long is something that you just can't find anywhere. It's a special thing, and for it to end like that, you know, of course it's going to be a lot of emotion.

Q. London obviously was red-hot in that first half. What did they do differently defensively? Why wasn't he as much of a factor in the last 20 minutes?

TONY BENNETT: The start of the second half, we liked it because they were starting to come out, and we really got the ball into the high post. We got a quick high-low to start the second half, and it opened up the middle more. You have to touch the paint against that. London hit some long ones, but they were aware of him. Of course, they were. They shaded him, and that's where we tried to be a little more middle oriented or attack the high most and play out of that, which we did and got it in there, but it's a good zone. It's a good defense. Again, if Malcolm said, you've got to stick a few jumpers, you've got to look for them, but there was good stretches of it, but they made the plays, and then coupled with offensive rebounds, turnovers, those X-factor things, I think that's the difference.

Q. Malcolm, Richardson, what made him such a tough cover? It looked like he was able to kind of get to the rim and also hitting those threes and stuff.

MALCOLM BROGDON: He's an extremely talented freshman. He has a hesitation to his game that makes you freeze a little bit, and he can shoot it from range and he can get to the rim. I thought we struggled with him all game. He was able to get to the line, and I think that really hurt us.

But you know, with guys like that that you let them get their confidence. You have to make them uncomfortable, and didn't make them uncomfortable and get into him as much as we needed to.

Q. Malcolm, it's a very good zone. Early on, it seems like you guys were shooting from the perimeter more than going inside. Was that because you couldn't get it inside, or was the strategy to open up the zone?

TONY BENNETT: I'll answer that. I think we probably did get a little shot happy from the outside, and then we started denting it a little more aggressively and trying to get it in, but it's hard to get a pass in to Anthony. I don't know if we settled, but a couple quick ones, and then we regained our composure, and again, I think that was the difference.