

Virginia Postgame Quotes

Head coach Tony Bennett

On importance of Jay Huff's shot-blocking this season:

"Mamadi [Diakite] was such a good rim protector, along with Jay at times last year. Mamadi's quickness, where he could blow up a ball screen and hedge out and get back was noticeable so anytime you have rim protection, it's important. I thought Jay was really good today. They weren't elite at stretching and shooting today with their big so Jay could kind of, at times, really gap it up and zone and then come across and help and his length bothered them and then when he played one-on-one, he was good. And I thought the on-ball defense today was the best we've had. Obviously, we're missing some guys, really good on-ball defender in Casey Morsell, but the ability for I thought Reece [Beekman] really slid well. For first year to come in, he's got good instincts, and then Kihei [Clark] was locked in and Trey's length. Reece is long, Trey is long, I thought that was significant. And again, we made a few adjustments just with our personnel that helped us, but I liked it. Then Sam has continued, I think all those guys that are first years to our system Trey, Reece, Sam haven't played. I think they're, at least the last couple games they've gone in the right direction and it's helped our team defense."

On how defense has changed since Gonzaga game:

"Well, yeah, we haven't played an offensive team like Gonzaga, I mean they are as special as it gets this year. But I think, as we talked about Humble Pie doesn't taste good, but it is a reality check that 'hey look, we got to fight', and we got to figure out some adjustments to help our personnel and just know that without that it's going to be really difficult. I think we've made the right strides, I think our energy and our ball pressure has been better and just covering for each other more. We had some trouble on the offensive glass. If you look at it, when our defense was set, they scored a lot in that stretch off of some of our careless turnovers and then some of our, we didn't block out whether they shot a kind of an air ball and they got offensive rebound. And then maybe at the end of the shot clock they put in three or four hard shots but otherwise, we really, when we were setting down, they didn't get a lot of easy stuff. I thought that was our, slowly but surely, I felt like our mindset and our will, was we're going to be hard and hard to score against and tough-minded so I think that all that combined has made us better. And again, without Casey and Kadin [Shedrick] today and, Kody hasn't played for bit, but those guys who know our system, we were doing it with some newer guys."

On Kihei and Reece's play on offense:

"I thought they were really good against Wake Forest and again I thought they were really good today. Today offensively, Reece from a scoring standpoint, he didn't score except for the free throws, he had four free throws, but he still created. He had that beautiful pass to Jay in the second half, drove baseline and dropped it and he has those instinct. As his game continues to improve and his shot gets more consistent, it's good. But feel, guys that have feel, they can see stuff, they draw, they kick, they know how to play and put pressure by penetration are important. I think Reece and Kihei, they've done a good job. Kihei, six of eight and his ability to put pressure on the paint, sometimes score, sort of posting them up and some drives are good. We didn't shoot it particularly well from three but got some good luck so I'm hoping that'll come."

Redshirt Senior Forward Jay Huff

On defense these past three games:

“I think, and this is true of most of the teams that I've been a part of, it's been a growing process. We have, kind of the start of the year, where you know there's a few bumps. There's sometimes where we haven't quite figured out how to play, just the defense that we play together yet just because it's a rotating cast of characters. But, once we figure it out, it happens every year, once we figure it out and I think today was a really good step in that direction, we can really just get to what we know we can do and what has been done traditionally in this program.”

On getting off to a strong start in the game:

“I mean I felt good about the start. To be honest, I feel like I probably dropped my shooting percentage today just because I missed a few chippies, few easy ones or just some that I would like to make, but it still felt good to just have a good strong first half and then I wanted to make sure I led that into the second half. The blocks were, I didn't realize I had that many so that was good to hear as soon as I came out of the locker room after the game. But it certainly helps to get off to a good start.”

On reducing foul trouble:

“I've been trying to stay out of foul trouble, obviously I couldn't help myself toward the end. I think they were just trying to get me up to my average just to maintain the norm. But there were a couple that once I realized I didn't have any fouls I was able to play a little bit more free and try not to not pick up fouls, if that makes sense. There have been a couple games where I kind of stepped back and I just have to be cautious and then toward the end of the game, I kind of let that go and obviously that led to a few more fouls but I think that was all right and I think that some of them just those either that or possibly give a bucket so I was willing to sacrifice that.”

Junior Guard Kihei Clark

On game at BC last year giving more incentive:

“No. I think we kind of got our get back at home after that first one last year so I don't think there was any incentive, but we just try to come out and play the way we can every game. So just try to come in, we know they had a couple guys out, but we didn't want to let that affect us as they had guys out last year and so did we this time. So we just got to come out and just play the game you know how to play.”

On playing with two point guards:

“I think two point guards is, like my first year we had two point guards, me and Ty [Jerome] and this year me and Reece. It's just different. He could bring up the ball, I could bring up the ball. He could play in the mix in three games, so I think we just try to play off of each other, just try to learn each other's strengths and just what we'd like to do, but it's fun being on the court with him at the same time.”

On what has clicked since Gonzaga game:

“Defensively I don't think we played the way we could have against Gonzaga, but I think we're touching on it, on what we can do defensively. We're holding guys pretty good, I think they had two last second shots against the shot clock today. But I think we're doing a good job defensively and I think we can just ramp it up a little bit more and just get a little better.”