

Atlantic Coast Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Tuesday, March 7, 2023

Virginia Tech Hokies

Greensboro, North Carolina, USA

Coach Mike Young

Hunter Cattoor

Justyn Mutts

Postgame Press Conference



Virginia Tech 67, Notre Dame 64

MIKE YOUNG: First things first, tip of the cap to a great person, a great coach who's represented -- everywhere he's been, he's represented that school with unbelievable class. He's been great for college basketball. I hope -- I think he wants to continue to do it, and I wish him well.

I've had a lot of fun competing against him, his teams. His teams play the right way.

I'll start off with that. Go ahead.

Q. Mike, there were a lot of big defensive stops you had to get down the stretch. That defense Rodney had towards the end on that lay-up --

MIKE YOUNG: Yes, good point. You know, they put -- if you don't switch things with Notre Dame, they will light you up, as they did up there when they made 13 threes. So we're trying to keep a body on a body. They made eight today. Trying to keep a body on a body, and we put Basile in a tough spot. He's got to guard Hammond, who played very, very well, obviously.

That touched us up through the early portions -- late first half, second half, but when it mattered most, I thought our guys stiffened up and really played really well on that end.

We're down four, there's a media time-out with 3:30 to play, and we're down four. Proud of our team.

Q. Grant Basile with 20 points, he was doing it all defensively and offensively. What's it like to have a guy that versatile and that clutch?

MIKE YOUNG: Well, I hope he didn't give up 20. Grant Basile is one heck of a basketball player. He is a really talented man, and I take nothing away from Grant. To have a wing man or a partner with Justyn Mutts, who is just an elite passer, is quite the duo, and those two guys have been doing great work together for quite some time now. Proud of Grant, proud of Justyn, proud of my team.

Q. There was a sequence where Pedulla lost the ball and got it back and threw it down to Justyn for a pretty big basket. What goes through your mind on a play like that?

MIKE YOUNG: Well, I've gotten used to it because I see it quite often, a boneheaded play. But he's going to fight like heck to make it right. Cormac, I think it was Cormac was going full tilt to the other end. Kid just made a heck of a play to get to it and strip that thing out of there. That was a wild sequence but a great play from Sean.

Q. Coach, defensively again Laszewski had 29 less points than he won against you guys. What was different tonight?

MIKE YOUNG: He had such a good look about him. It was a big emphasis to get to him early. He made -- I think he missed his first in South Bend, made his second. It was like the world opened up for him, and he's throwing things in from everywhere.

Our team played better defensively, a lack of something sophisticated. That's it. We got to him. We made him put it on the floor. That's a big part of it. You let him catch it and shoot it, and he'll rip your heart out.

Q. Justyn, you guys had your backs against the wall there. What was it like, and just the team unity, what was said in that media time-out and the way you guys executed down the stretch? What did you like? That back screen Hunter set for you, what was going through your head there?

JUSTYN MUTTS: Man, it's such a blessing. I think this is what you play for, moments like that. We've been working



hard the whole season, we've been through a lot of highs, a lot of lows, but just small moments like that. Those media time-outs like that where you can look at your teammates and tell them we're not going out like this makes all the difference. That play from Hunter was just him being a great player and just knowing how to affect the game and made great plays even without the ball in his hands, so all props to him for that one.

Q. Basile gets four fouls there, you decide to go small, put in Rodney Rice, he makes some big plays for you down the stretch with the three and the big block near the end. What can you say about what he's provided you off the bench?

MIKE YOUNG: Well, that gave me great pause having two rookies on the floor, and that was Rodney's sixth game. That was a defensive switch as much as anything, and Coach Brey had gone smaller. He was Laszewski at the 5 and Goodwin at the, so we're trying to counter that. Again, it's a quicker, it's a fast-e lineup for us, so we can switch ball screens, switch some of that stuff.

This one here is one heck of a defender as well as Justyn Mutts. Very, very -- just great defenders. So that was the purpose.

Q. Hunter, you guys' defensive effort down the stretch, I know it wasn't pretty the entire time, but what did you like towards the end where you locked in and Justyn had a block at the very, very end, Rodney comes in and makes a defensive play. What was going through your mind?

HUNTER CATTOOR: That's something we do in practice every day, it's winning plays, staying connected no matter what's happened. 38 minutes before that, staying locked in, coming together, staying as a fist and making plays down the stretch to win a game. Justyn had a good block, Rodney had a good block, and those plays saved the game for us. If they score those, then we're down. So just making winning plays, and they're players that win games for you.

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