

February 18, 2013



An Interview With:

**JEFF BZDELIK
WAKE FOREST**

JEFF BZDELIK: Well, obviously very tough week for us. We've got a few just closing seconds losses, one on the road and one at home. This will test the mettle of our young basketball team, but I'm sure they'll respond in a great way. They are great character young men that are excited about our future and excited about getting better and getting back on the winning track.

Q. I was wondering, you've had some recent games that have been a little bit more low scoring than earlier in the season. Is that reflective of your defense and an improvement there?

JEFF BZDELIK: Yes. We've gotten much better defensively. We've gotten much better rebounding the ball, especially from the defensive end. That's helped us out a lot. We're also trying to do a better job of shot selection. I think also, too, as time goes on, teams, both us and our opponents, lock in. Everybody knows what everybody else is doing. So all these factors play into it.

And also, we're trying to score. We've had some great looks, we've had some opportunities, but in the end we just haven't converted, and that's going to happen. But we're getting better at the defensive end, no question about it, better on the boards.

Q. Is there an example of a player or two, some of your younger guys who have really caught on to the defensive stuff you guys have been using?

JEFF BZDELIK: Well, I just think that, again, a year ago seven of these young men were in high school. Defensive transition, defending

situations, catch-and-shoots, people coming off screens, ball screen defense, all five players are involved defensively on every play. And in the post, post defense is all five players. You're digging, rotating, doubling down, all those kinds of things that everybody talks about the chemistry from an offensive standpoint, but it's also the chemistry from a defensive standpoint and the transition aspect of it and defending situational kind of possessions in terms of like I just mentioned, ball screens, screen catch-and-shoots, posting up, all those kinds of things. It's a work in progress, yes.

Q. You guys have a full week to prepare for the game against Miami. Can you talk about any particular emphasis that you guys will stress this week looking ahead to the Miami game?

JEFF BZDELIK: Well, I think, number one, first of all, it's -- we need to mainly worry about us and what we're doing and what we can do a better job of. We've been very competitive in games, and I think we've lost six games this year by five points or less.

Last week we're one rebound, one lay-up, one defensive stop away from having a three-game winning streak. We just need to get better at what we do, offensively, defensively and in transition both ways.

I don't want to worry so much about our opponent as I do just doing what we do and getting better at what we do. To be quite frank, we won't worry about Miami until like Thursday, and we just want to spend the beginning part of this week just getting better at what we want to do. That's going to be our focus.

Q. I wanted to ask you about Miami, too. This is a team that's not a young team, but they've never been very successful, they've never played in the NCAA Tournament, and all of a sudden they're a national phenomenon, probably going to be second in the poll. When you look at them, what do you see that's



visit our archives at asapsports.com

**ACC Coaches first hour - 2 18
13.doc**

transformed them from a middle-of-the-road NIT type team last year to a national contender this year?

JEFF BZDELIK: I think they're confident. I really think their swagger. And it was born out of the fact that they just started just winning and finding ways to win. I mean, I don't know what their statistics are, but how many close games have they won? I mean, not even close games in the last second. I just think that they have a great confidence, great swagger, coupled with their experience and coupled with their talent. And Coach Larranaga has done a great job, and they're just a very, very confident group. I believe so much of this game is played from the neck up with one's confidence. They have a great team swagger, great team confidence. It just kind of developed by winning all these close games.

You know, they're fearless now with their swagger. I just think that's where they're at right now.

Q. You mentioned that you guys are like three plays away from having a three-game winning streak. I was looking at your record with just a couple plays in close games, y'all could have seven conference wins. They're the exact opposite in that they've won two one-point games. They won a two-point game Sunday. Is there a cumulative effect when you -- you just were talking about the swagger and the confidence, but in close-game situations, is it cumulative either way when you lose maybe you start wondering what's going to happen and lose again, and when you win you always expect to win? Is there anything to that?

JEFF BZDELIK: Oh, yeah. I think you're right on, I really do. It goes back to their confidence, that swagger, that feeling of -- that here we go again, or oh, no, here we go again. Yeah, it kind of manifests itself, it really does. It takes a life of its own.

You can practice late-game every day in practice, which we do. I mean, we know what to do, and we just have to see the end result to it. And we've won a couple close games, too, so it's not like we haven't. It all adds up. Miami is a little bit bigger and stronger than most teams, not just our team but most teams because of their experience and their age, their physicality. It can change, one shot can change everything real quick. Everybody's state of mind is for the most part fragile in that regard. We can hit a big shot,

and all of a sudden we feel that, and they can miss a big shot or a timely stop, and all of a sudden they start feeling that, as well, one way or the other.

The competitive spirit is tested in each one of us. It's what makes you win games or lose games.

JAMES JOHNSON VIRGINIA TECH

JAMES JOHNSON: Coming off a tough heart-breaking loss down at NC State, where we went into overtime with a very good basketball team on the road. Saw some bright spots out of it, but again, was not able to finish the game off. Got the Blue Devils coming in here coming off a tough loss at Maryland.

As far as the team is concerned, we took a day off and we've got to get back to work, get ready for Duke.

Q. I wanted to ask you a little bit more about Jarell. He didn't start the last game, didn't play a whole lot of minutes until later on. What was the plan with him and what made you go with him and go to him when you did?

JAMES JOHNSON: The plan was that Will Johnson has been more productive than him. He just hasn't been playing up to my expectations for him, and Will has come in and is playing by my standards a little better than Eddie. I've got to play the guy who I think is giving us the productivity we need at that certain time. Needed another guy that could possibly make a shot on the floor and put him in the game. He did a great job of being over on the sidelines and keeping his head in the game and being ready to play, which we talk about all the time with all those kids when you're sitting over there, be ready to go when your name is called, and he answered the bell.

Q. Obviously you hope this, but do you think that the way he played is going to kind of give him a little momentum to maybe get back to what he was in those first seven or eight games?

JAMES JOHNSON: Well, you hope that's going to happen. You hope that's going to happen, but you never know. Hopefully that gave him a

little bit of confidence and will boost his morale a little bit. He can see the basketball go in and see a big basket. Hopefully that will get his confidence going. But I'm not sure. He's had a couple games where he's done that and then has come out and not played particularly great after that. So I'm not sure.

Hopefully he can do that, and that's part of the reason that I need him to be a little bit more consistent. He's a junior, and he shouldn't have to have a game here, game there, should be a little bit more consistent, and that's what I'm looking for out of him, consistency.

Q. How is your relationship with him? Did it put any kind of a strain that you sat him down?

JAMES JOHNSON: No, this is coaching basketball, and he's a player, he understands the deal. If it would have put a strain on it, he wouldn't have responded the way he responded. He knows he's got to play better for the team, and that's just the bottom line. That's how it is.

Q. You mentioned bright spots. In Raleigh, Marshall was clearly one of them if not the brightest. Did you see a performance like that coming?

JAMES JOHNSON: Didn't see a performance like that coming, but did see him performing well. He has been having some really good practices and showing signs in the games here and there, but Marshall is getting his -- we've been doing extra work with him after practice and just working on getting his wind back, getting his legs back and just getting some extra shots because he had out so long.

Then when he came back, we were not able to practice a whole lot anyway, and then he gets in the game and plays seven, eight minutes, so we've been doing some extra stuff with him.

He's getting his legs back now, his confidence is coming, and he's playing with a lot of confidence and playing very energetic, getting on the glass for us. We missed him those six weeks he was out, because I think had he not got hurt, we would have seen this early in the season.

Q. You mentioned getting on the glass. That was the most striking number, at least to those of us who weren't there. 16 rebounds, I'm guessing that's probably a high for a freshman in the league this year.

JAMES JOHNSON: I got to think so, yeah.

Q. Does he have a knack for that, because he's not a real strong-looking young man.

JAMES JOHNSON: Yeah, he's got a knack for being around the ball. He wants to rebound. It's an effort thing, just going and get it sometimes is just going to get it, and he likes to rebound, got a knack for it, got a nose for it, got good hands, and he's a fairly good athlete, too.

Q. Looking ahead to the Duke game here on Thursday, what do you see as kind of the keys to hanging with Duke, and do you look at that Maryland game and say let's copy this and this, or is that not relevant?

JAMES JOHNSON: Yeah, we can't go to the blueprint of what those guys did. We've got to try to play to what we have and the guys that we have, so we've got to come up with our game plan here. I think the key is going to be sharp and execute and try to get certain guys the ball in the right area. They're a very good defensive team, they're going to try to pressure us and take us out of our offense, so we've got to do a good job of controlling our offense, and we've got to control Plumlee and control the three-point shooting.

Q. Do you think about guarding Eddie, starting Marshall Wood maybe, or is the match-up for Duke staking with CJ or sticking with Will?

JAMES JOHNSON: Well, I think that the match-ups, because we need guys that can handle the ball out there on the floor, so there's definitely going to be a lineup change, and it may not be because of performance, it just may be because of what we need in this particular game.

Q. There are some players in this league that have gotten a lot of attention. Joe Harris seems to be flying under the radar. What is it about him that makes him so effective and makes him the guy that should be considered the first team all-conference?

JAMES JOHNSON: Well, he does a lot of different things. He can score in multiple ways, he's mentally and physically tough, he can shoot the three, he can handle the ball, he posts up, he offensive rebounds. All he does is play the game.

He's not a guy out there talking and getting caught up in other distractions or other things, he just plays basketball. And I'm not sure why he's not being talked about, but that young man is certainly -- is an all-league type caliber player.

Q. On Erick Green, your guy, I thought with Carolina, the way he tried to get his teammates involved in that game was the kind of game that the scouts at the next level would really like to see. Because a lot of players that had his reputation going into the game were leading the nation in scoring, you would think would try to go into that stage and try to light it up, but he didn't.

JAMES JOHNSON: He's a point guard, he's a true point guard. He plays with point guard instincts. He's not trying to be the leading scorer in the nation, he's not trying to be the leading scorer. He wants to win, and he makes the right basketball play out there. If he drives to the hole and a couple guys come, he can dump it down or kick it out, and he's just making the right basketball play because he's a basketball player and a point guard, not necessarily because he's trying to show anybody anything. But that's just the type of player he is and the type of person he is.

Q. Is that what makes what he's achieved so far this season so amazing?

JAMES JOHNSON: No, no doubt about it, it makes it amazing. You look at his percentages, he's shooting 45 percent in ACC play, 45 percent from the floor, 43, 44 percent from the three-point line along with four rebounds and just about four assists a game. If our guys -- like Saturday he had eight assists, and if guys are hitting shots, he's still averaging the points he's averaging, and his assists are probably around eight a game. That's pretty doggone good, and I think his assist numbers would have been there had the guys been shooting the ball a little better throughout the season around him.

Q. In that same vein about Erick, what do you think it would mean for the program if he were to finish this year as the nation's leading scorer? Have you already started using it on the recruiting trail at all?

JAMES JOHNSON: No, no, that's not something that we want to -- I mean, it's a good accolade for the young man, but we've got to go -- we want to win. We want to win. Our goal is to be the best in the conference, and we need a lot of

guys to be able to put the ball in the hole like Erick, maybe not at that number, but we need a lot of guys. And as the program goes forward, guys are going to have opportunities the way we want to play and get up and down the floor, and guys are going to have opportunities to play and play freed up on the offensive end.

But that's not something that we went into the season thinking. That's not something that we're going to hang our hat on. It's something that happened, that's happening positive for this young man and just this particular incident.

TONY BENNETT VIRGINIA

TONY BENNETT: Just getting ready obviously to play kind of the measuring stick of the league right now in Miami. Just watching them play, they've found ways when they haven't played great to be successful, so we're hopefully ready for the challenge, know we'll have to play at a very high level, and looking forward to it.

Q. Of all the things that Joe Harris does well, what is something that you love about his game that may go unnoticed or barely noticed by the average fan?

TONY BENNETT: He's a great encourager. I watched him when our young guys came into the program, him being in his third year, and then when the freshmen came in, watch him take them under his wing, drive them around, make sure they're comfortable. And he's really an encourager. People might not see that. I was going to say he's really tough, real tenacious, but I think you can see that in the way he plays. But an unknown thing is how encouraging he is. He's always patting you on the back, always touching you. He just has a good -- he's been raised well that way, and he wants to make people feel comfortable and encourage them. And I think that certainly helps the young players, and it's a nice attribute of Joe's.

Q. When he was injured last year, what has he learned from that experience that has made him a good player?

TONY BENNETT: Well, Joe, whatever

we've asked of him or whatever is required or needed, he'll do it, if it's trying to play the 4 spot and bang inside and rebound. We'll tell him, don't even look at the rim, just move the ball. He'll do that. He'll do anything you ask. And I think he learned while he was probably not full strength, you learn how important it is to impact a game in more ways than just scoring, and I think he's improved with his defensive abilities, those things. There's been a natural progression.

But our game against Florida in the tournament, Bradley Beal, he's gone against some good players, but I think he realized that there's another level he's got to get to, and I think he's worked harder to become better in areas that maybe he was a little deficient in.

Q. Question about when a team, I guess, falls off the track like you guys did a little bit on Saturday. In terms of defense, what do you do to get a team back on track and focused defensively? What are your practices like after a game like Saturday and going into Tuesday?

TONY BENNETT: Yeah, while it was happening, we certainly weren't able to do it against Carolina. Once they got rolling, we couldn't stop them. You're never that far away from being where you want to be and sometimes you're not as close as you think. I think the first thing starts with that your players, your team understands where they felt maybe it slid a little bit or what could we have done differently if you could have. Sometimes you go against a team that's so hot, but what could we have done maybe to help us stay in that game a little longer, and I think you talk about that. You have to have a knowledge of that, and then you go to work on it in practice.

With games pretty close together at this time of the year, it's not like you have a week to prepare, but you've got to use film and then you've got to be very sharp on the practice floor and make sure that the areas that maybe, as you said, you went a little astray on that you get back and you address those and you'll have a chance very soon to test it against a high-level opponent, and that we will.

Q. When you went back and watched the film of that UNC game, what surprised you about your defensive effort?

TONY BENNETT: Well, we had a hard time keeping them in front of us. When we turned it over, they got some quick buckets out of that.

Not that we took bad shots, but there's a stretch sometimes when you feel like the game is getting out of hand, sometimes you need to pass up a good shot to try to get a great one and try to be a little more patient at times. Not always, but I think those are the areas where it's real subtle and it's not -- it's just a little thing here, what we call little incisions that maybe early in the game you got a few easy ones, but there's times when you sense that you've got to possibly let your offense work for your defense and just be sounder and as tough as you can. It's a battle every time you're out there to be in position to make guys earn shots, and we were just a little slow with our reflexes, our reactions. We were there, but we weren't necessarily bothering some of those shots Hairston hit or some of the other guys. Again, due to their spacing and their offensive talent, but you've got to fight to make it a little harder and I thought it was a little too easy in stretches in the second half for them to get their rhythm.

Q. We talked a lot about the defense, but the offense has really been clicking the last few games. What's been going well for the younger guys, and what do you attribute that increase in scoring to?

TONY BENNETT: Well, I think obviously we've shot the ball pretty well. The spacing has been good. When we played Carolina and I saw they were going with four perimeter players, there's some things match-up wise that present some challenges, so I think that's helped us at times on the offensive end with a little better spacing, and again, when guys have either some room to operate off the dribble or just getting their feet set and getting some rhythm shots, and of course you've got to make them, but I think all those things together, Joe has been playing particularly well, all that stuff is added, and giving some guys some opportunities to get in rhythm and get some nice -- have some nice offensive possessions.

Q. One match-up that really stands out on Tuesday's game is Jontel taking on Shane Larkin. Can you talk about that match-up?

TONY BENNETT: I think our team defense has to be at its best. If it's not, it'll be very difficult for us because of their size, their ability. But yeah, Larkin is probably -- I think he's starting to get the attention as probably one of the best point guards in America. What he's done with his

team, his quickness, his completeness is impressive, and if he can get going, you've seen what he does. But they have other guys. We've gone against Durand Scott for all these years and his ability to probe and score, and then their size inside, their ability to stretch it. There's a lot of match-ups that will challenge you. I think they're very complete and they have a very good system offensively for them.

So obviously it always starts with trying to do a good job at the point of attack with Larkin. My hope is Jontel will really be ready, but it's not any one guy versus their guy. It's got to be our team defense and that will be our chance. But again, I hope Larkin is getting the attention he deserves because he's having a heck of a year.

Q. Speaking of that, you've seen Green in person and I'm sure you've seen tape of Larkin and Plumlee. Who's your ACC Player of the Year?

TONY BENNETT: When the ACC is finished, I think that will help me determine. All those guys are certainly worthy candidates to get it. I don't know if you can say one. I think you wait until you get to the end of the year. It depends on what you weight it on more. You can make a case for all of them in different ways. But depending upon who wins, and all that stuff, I think comes into play. Those are three very good players and right now I wouldn't be able to say which one I'd vote for my Player of the Year.

Q. I was thinking you might have voted for your own player for Player of the Year, but that wasn't my question.

TONY BENNETT: Can you do that or not? (Laughing).

Q. If I am doing the math correctly, you've averaged close to 80 points for the last four games. Are you okay with the pace at which your team is playing, or do you think you got speeded up to the point where it kind of hurt you on Saturday?

TONY BENNETT: I think that before that we were at a decent pace, taking good shots and playing better defense. I remember against Maryland I thought probably our offense bailed us out a little more. Without the depth and where we're at defensively, we really need to tighten the screws. We probably need to come up with a special performance defensively, and we're a little out of position that way.

I think I mentioned some of our inexperienced guys or our freshmen probably in that setting at Carolina struggled a little bit on the defensive end, so we need to be so diligent in that regard.

So as far as the pace of play, yeah, when we couldn't stop them offensively, Carolina in that stretch, I think that's probably where you've got to slow it down a little bit and get better shots at times without passing up good shots. That's, again, who we are, that's why we've played some good basketball, but that's a fine line. It's a hard one as a coach. You ask any coach, the balance between not slowing it down too much where guys are restricted or feel hesitant, but having some patience and poise and then still having the assertiveness. I think it's a feel for where the game is going and how you're able to guard them, and I think you sometimes have to use your offense a little bit as your defense if you feel like it's getting out of hand.

MARK GOTTFRIED NC STATE

MARK GOTTFRIED: Well, obviously when you win -- we've won two games in a row, we feel a little better than we did when we lost three in a row. I think mentally we're in a good place, we're playing a really good basketball game in Florida State. I think Florida State is a team that has played a very difficult schedule, and you know, obviously they're very good. So we've got a great challenge. I think our guys are really in a good place, so we're excited about playing.

Q. I just wanted to go back for one second. You said after the game you wanted to wait until you reviewed the tape on if you guys did anything wrong or anything you'd want to change on that free throw tip-in. When you reviewed it, what did you see?

MARK GOTTFRIED: Well, the guy that got the rebound started at the top of the key, and the rule is that player, if you're not on the lane, you cannot leave and cross that plane at the top of the key until the ball hits the rim. They obviously did, and in my opinion that basket should have been waved off. Unfortunately it wasn't, got to play on,

and we were able to get regrouped and play well enough in overtime to win.

Q. Do you turn that into the league office or anything or just let it go at this point?

MARK GOTTFRIED: I think the league office is aware of that, and then at that point it's out of my hands. I think the rule is in place for the very reason that if a player starts at the top of the key, you really don't have any opportunity to block him out, and there is no -- the best you can be is standing beside him. So I think that's why the rule is what it is. Again, it happened. You move on and roll on with it.

Q. You talked a lot about Richard Howell and his rebounding. What about the other parts of his game, scoring, passing, defense? How do you rate those and where he's at in those areas right now?

MARK GOTTFRIED: Well, I think with Richard, his rebounding jumps off the page at everyone because he does such a good job rebounding the ball. But I think with Richard, for our team, the most impressive thing is his consistent, competitive nature and that garners a lot of respect from his teammates, from opponents, from coaches, from everybody. And I think that's one thing he's given our team is that stability, knowing that he competes every night. And I like that about him.

Q. With a lot of players in your lineup, with the ability to score, he's not an initial option most of the time it looks like, but he seems to wind up hitting double figures anyway. He can take it out, it looks like, to 12, 15 feet every once in a while and pop it in, too.

MARK GOTTFRIED: Yeah, he's improved his shooting, which he's done a nice job there with that mid-range jump shot. He's also improved as a foul shooter, where now when he goes to the line he's taking advantage of those opportunities and getting points, as well.

And then he just gets rebounds and scores the ball. He just goes and gets it, which is usually just a phenomenal effort on his part.

Q. How healthy is Lorenzo right now?

MARK GOTTFRIED: I think Lorenzo is close to, maybe 90 percent. I don't think he's 100 percent. I still see at times where he favors the ankle, but I think he's improving. That's about the best guess I've got.

Q. Aside from the addition of Tyler to the rotation, when Lorenzo is healthy and you start to find the groove that you had in January, how much better is the team going to be having gone through the Lorenzo injury?

MARK GOTTFRIED: Well, I think this, and I could be wrong, but I think every team that finds that groove or really begins to play great basketball at the end usually has gone through some adversity somewhere during the year. And I think the adversity forces you to evaluate your team a little differently, the players to evaluate roles more specifically, and usually that adversity can help you if it's handled right.

We had the injury to Lorenzo, lost the three games that he didn't play. You know the hope is that when you come out of it, you somehow are better. I don't think going through adversity like that necessarily is a bad thing. You've just got to use it in the right way.

Q. I believe you've played against Green and Larkin and Plumlee this year. Who are you kind of leaning toward for ACC Player of the Year?

MARK GOTTFRIED: I don't know just yet. That's a tough one for me because you start thinking about guys that have elevated their team to win at the top of the standings, and you may mention a Larkin or a Plumlee, but Erick Green to me, and I'll tell you what I like about Virginia Tech, is they're not getting beat bad, and I know their record isn't very glamorous at all, but he's not putting up those points in 20- and 30-point losses. It's every night against really good teams in really close games.

So I don't want to be the guy that penalizes him for the fact that their team just hasn't won very many games, so he's certainly, I think, in the equation.

ROY WILLIAMS NORTH CAROLINA

ROY WILLIAMS: Well, we feel like we're going through an obstacle course, play at Miami, at Duke, have Virginia here, go to Georgia Tech, but that's what the ACC is. Some people that have

negative things to say don't coach in this league and don't realize how difficult it is.

But we had one very difficult game that we played pretty well at times over at Duke and then didn't come out on top and then against Virginia, who I think is just a big-time team. Tony has done a great job with his team, and we've made a bunch of shots and came out on top.

Regardless of all that, now we have to go play at Georgia Tech, and they won a close one themselves this weekend. And we need to start getting more consistent on the defensive end of the floor and hopefully still make some shots like we did Saturday and then things get to be a heck of a lot better if we can do both of those.

Q. If I've done my math right, it looks like the last eight years you've lost 11 underclassmen to the NBA. Can you talk about how tough it is these days compared to 10, 15 years ago to build a consistent year-by-year program that's a top 20 or top 10 program when these kind of things happen?

ROY WILLIAMS: Well, it is difficult to say the least, and this is my 35th year in college coaches, 40th year completely, and it's changed so drastically since we started.

I used to think you could lose a guy maybe at the end of his junior year and then you went through a time period that you didn't even know if you were going to get them and now you know you're going to get them for one year. But that lure of the NBA is the strongest thing out there for kids that play at the ACC level, and it's something that you cannot plan for. It's something that we worry every year about numbers. Well, if so and so goes to the NBA or so and so doesn't, should we offer another scholarship because in the fall the players are still there whereas in the spring there's not very many of them still left that you have an opportunity to recruit.

You can't plan like you used to in the old days when you thought you were going to have a kid for at least three years and maybe even four. It was a lot simpler at that time. Now it's extremely difficult. We have lost 11 kids in the last eight years. There's some other schools that have lost a lot of kids, also, and it's not easy for any of us. Yet it's going to happen.

I don't mind losing youngsters to help them fulfill their dream. That means they've played very well for you and you've won a lot of games. But I do think that it's sort of pushed college basketball aside, and I hate that part of it because I think that

we have a great game. Every single night you can watch great games in great atmospheres with a lot of people truly caring and having passion about the game. But it's almost like we are a bus stop, and I don't enjoy that part of it. But it's really hard to try to plan, that's for sure.

Q. Does it change how you recruit, or do you still have to go after the very best players and not really concern yourself with --

ROY WILLIAMS: No, I think it does change the way you recruit. You have to be aware that you could possibly lose some youngsters. I've always said I want to recruit the best players, but I do want to recruit some guys that I think are going to be around more than one year, also.

Q. What is PJ doing differently now to justify 30-plus points a game that maybe he wasn't previously?

ROY WILLIAMS: A lot of it is too complicated to talk about. PJ was getting good minutes, and the last two games, and it just happened to coincide with games that he started. We decided to shorten our lineup a little bit, shorten the substitutions. We may go back and start playing 10, 11 guys in the first half like we did for a long time there if the match-ups are different. But the last two games we've thought it's been good match-ups to stay small for a really, really long period of time. But PJ was doing some good things, and he was not as consistent as he is now, but he was still pretty doggone consistent. You know, I think it was Maryland he was like one for eight or something like that. But he's played well for us off the bench all year long, and then match-ups, and as I said, five or six games ago now I thought about making that change at that point, and it just didn't seem like the right thing to do at that time.

But a lot of it depends on match-ups and what the other team does and a lot of that kind of stuff that would determine if we keep our lineup shortened, if you'll let me use that terminology.

Q. Saturday you went up against Joe Harris. When you have to stop a guy like him, what is the biggest challenge about taking on someone like him?

ROY WILLIAMS: Well, I can't answer that because we didn't do a very good job of stopping him so what we thought about wasn't very good.

Erick Green, Joe Harris, Seth Curry, Mason Plumlee, there's some guys in this league that everybody has got some guys that really can go off on you, and Joe did, and we were trying to do a very good job of cutting his percentage down, and we weren't very successful.

Q. Just wanted to check if there was an update on Joel, if he was close at all to being cleared?

ROY WILLIAMS: Joel will not be able to play tomorrow night.

Q. Is he progressing?

ROY WILLIAMS: Yeah, we think he's getting better, he thinks he's getting better, but he's not there yet.

Q. You mentioned match-ups may dictate whether you play 10 or 11 guys in the first half. Does it also dictate how well or how often you can use the one big man, four-perimeter lineup that's been fairly successful for you the last week or so?

ROY WILLIAMS: You know, you're always concerned about match-ups, but you're always concerned about how you play, too. And I think that we've done some things these last two games that have helped us, so we're not going to go back to exactly like we were before because I think during the course of the entire season you always see some things change with your team that will drive you in different directions.

So we're constantly looking at different combinations, different lineups. We change lineups in practice every three plays, sometimes every two plays in practice. So the combinations that we put out there, we do that a lot.

But as you go along during the course of the season, your team tells you some things, and your team shows you some things that are working better than some other things were. So I think it's an evolution of throughout the course of the whole season, evolution of your team to try to find the best players and the best combinations.

But I think you also have to have some youngsters who are ready, and you get ready by playing a few moments. I've always thought I'd be scared to death if I was a fast break coach that had only played one quarterback, because how would you -- what would you do if something happened to him and he had to put a guy in there who had never been in there? That's part of it right there.

And then I think what it does, it changes constantly from day-to-day. One week a guy will look great in practice and the next week somebody else will look better and that one player will move backwards. We like where we are right now with the small lineup, but we know we can't do that all the time because we've got to do a better job on the backboards.

Q. The reason I bring it up is obviously Virginia and Duke that you used it against so successfully both sometimes go small themselves. Georgia Tech is almost always playing two big guys with Carter and Holsey and Miller. Does that make it more difficult, or do you like the match-up with a Carter trying to guard a PJ Hairston?

ROY WILLIAMS: I think you answered it your answer. It causes us problems, but hopefully it causes them problems, as well. And I think you've got to go with what you feel more comfortable with at that time. But I think over 40 minutes it's hard for PJ to guard a 6'8", 6'9" guy for 40 minutes. We understand that part. But also it might be hard for them to guard him.

JIM LARRANAGA MIAMI

JIM LARRANAGA: Well, we had a wild week last week, two road games at Florida State on Wednesday night, and it was a tremendous game. We were fortunate enough to play well down the stretch and win a close one. And then last night, we were in a tremendous defensive battle and played very smart and well in about a two-minute period, ended up with a two-point victory. Very, very fortunate this week.

Q. I was wondering if you could start out and just talk a little bit about your history at Virginia and your experiences there, if you could reminisce a little bit and how that was one of the inspirations for trying to get back to coaching a team in the ACC.

JIM LARRANAGA: Well, I arrived at Virginia in April of 1979, and one of the major attractions was being able to go back and work for Coach Holland, who I had worked for at Davidson

College for three years. He was the one who gave me my first chance to get into college coaching. And his comments to me were, you need to come into this league and you'll love it. The ACC is the best.

And when I took the job, the first thing was to try to help recruit Ralph Sampson, who the University of Virginia had been recruiting already for four years. He was a senior, hadn't made his decision yet and wouldn't make his decision until June 1. And I was like answering the phone one day when someone called and said that Ralph had committed to somebody else. And I felt so bad, I was going to be the one to deliver the message to Coach Holland and Coach Littlepage. And when they came back from lunch and I told them that Ralph had committed to someplace else, they laughed. They said, it wasn't true, that that happens two or three times a week. And sure enough, it wasn't true, that it was more than six weeks before Ralph would make his decision, and of course he chose the University of Virginia, and we immediately were projected into the top 25 teams in the country. And of course I had four great years with Ralph and then three additional years.

I'm talking too long about this. We have probably other questions to talk to about. If you want to call me afterwards, I'll be glad to tell you in greater detail.

Q. Shane Larkin being a sophomore and the rest of those guys being a couple years older, what has been the most impressive thing about him, assimilating himself not only on the court but also off the court that carries back onto the court?

JIM LARRANAGA: Yeah, it was really true. It started last year. Shane is very much about winning, and last year he really deferred to the upperclassmen. He didn't try to come in and just take over someone's job. He just kind of come in to learn and help. And he developed very good relationships with the players off the court. They were all very impressed with them on the court. And in fact it was our upperclassmen that encouraged him to try to do more, and that continues today.

There are a lot of games where Durant Scott or Reggie Johnson or Julian Gamble encourage him to just be more aggressive and look for his own, and at the same time Shane is very willing to give the ball to those guys and let them shine.

Q. When you look at a game like last night a lot of people are going to point to, look at Miami, they only scored 45 points. They're going to point out things that you didn't do as well as you have been doing. Do you look at it as a team that didn't play its best, that had one of those nights where it was going to stumble but still managed to win against a very well-coached team? Is that a positive for your team to pull it out in those circumstances?

JIM LARRANAGA: Well, I tell my team almost daily that every game is different, every opponent is different, the style of play will be different.

You go from one opponent to another. The way they might play the game, Brad Brownell does a great job with his team defensively. He did it when he was at Wilmington. We coached against each other there and a lot of our games at that time were very much the same. We beat Wilmington one time 35-33 in the CAA championship game. And then in the NCAA Tournament, we scored over 80 against Maryland in the first round of the NCAA Tournament the year they went to the Final Four. So it's just the style of play, the defense, some nights guys shoot well, some nights they don't.

One week -- two weeks ago we played NC State and we shot 3 for 21 from three and then the next week against Carolina we were 3 for 26. So I don't put much stock in that.

Q. Coming off Sunday night's game and having a Tuesday game you have a quick turnaround. Is there anything you guys are going to do special to try and get the team reenergized with such a quick turnaround?

JIM LARRANAGA: The biggest thing right now is we need to get a little bit of rest between the games. Normally a day like today would be a day off, but we can't. This is our only one day of preparation for Virginia, but we've got to be very careful not to tax the players, because the most important thing is to play well tomorrow night at 9:00.

Q. I was going to ask you about the undefeated record in ACC play. Do you sense that as we get further and further into conference play that there's added pressure or added attention, and how do you counteract

that?

JIM LARRANAGA: Well, the first thing is our players have done a great job all year long of preparing for each practice and preparing for each game, one day at a time. And that's been our focus and will continue to be our focus.

Q. How similar is this, or is it similar at all, to your Final Four team at George Mason, or your Final Four season?

JIM LARRANAGA: Well, one similarity is great senior leadership, and then the George Mason team had two sophomores in the starting lineup. Both were great. And we have one.

But the attention that we got in those six started March 17th. The attention this team is getting really started, I'd say, January 23rd. So it's given this team an opportunity with the exposure it's gotten to kind of move up into the top 25 and then top 15 and then top five. And the team has handled it well, just like the Final Four team handled that exposure very well.

But it's very hard to compare teams. The teams we're playing right now during the regular season are NCAA Tournament teams. All these teams have very high-level players, many of whom will play in the NBA.

Q. Kind of a two-prong question: I'm curious what have been the most surreal moments since January 23rd when all this exposure has really started. And then I'm curious, as a coach how do you get your guys from buying in too much to that sort of stuff?

JIM LARRANAGA: Well, last night was one of the most surreal moments coming from down four in the last minute of the game and being able to pull that one out. But my feeling is that every game is special. It's great to be able to coach. It's great to be able to work with your kids every day, and there's something new that pops up every single day, either on the court or off the court. And so I think I'm just lucky to be in college coaching and to be able to do something I love for as long as I've done it.

Q. Is there anything that you have to teach your guys as far as, hey, look, we're ranked No. 3 but let's not pay attention to that much? Is that something you even talk about much?

JIM LARRANAGA: Well, we teach some things every day, and we talk about media exposure, but what we tell our team is that the

media has a job to do, and we have a job to do. And the two should not interfere with each other or be a distraction. Let's do what we want to do, let them do what they need to do. If it becomes a distraction to an individual or to the group, we'll reduce it. But so far the guys have handled it well and feel good.

The kind of attention we're getting now is the kind of attention like Duke and Carolina get every year. Every game. I mean, they're always under the microscope. And our players over the years would look at that and say, man, I wish we had that opportunity to get that kind of exposure. And now when you get it, you can't shy away from it. You have to look forward to it and enjoy it.

Q. How do you size up the vote for the ACC Player of the Year this year?

JIM LARRANAGA: Well, I just feel like there's so many good deserving players. Whoever wins it will deserve it. The voters have their own opinions on what their criteria is for voting, and each individual -- there's no criteria you're sent and say, this is how you have to judge. So you can vote for a lot of different guys in this league. They're all deserving.

Q. I wanted to ask you another historical question. Can you compare the ACC, maybe the style of play, the kind of players back when it was Ralph and Worthy, Jordan and today's ACC, what differences, if any, do you see?

JIM LARRANAGA: Well, I'd say the first thing that's very, very similar is the fierce competitiveness of the athletes. I just think everybody plays so darned hard and is so competitive and the coaches do a great job of preparing their teams to play as well as they possibly can. Playing on the road is a real battle, and it was way back then.

I'd say back then, though, there were more players who were older and experienced that were NBA caliber players. It seems now that the best NBA talent leaves after their freshman or sophomore year, which makes our league much younger than it was back then. And that's to me disappointing, because I think a lot of those kids, they leave early, and they miss out on a great part of their life they're never going to get back.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports



visit our archives at asapsports.com

**ACC Coaches first hour - 2 18
13.doc**

February 18, 2013



COACH MARK TURGEON MARYLAND

COACH TURGEON: Happy about the weekend, kids really competed and hopefully it will give us confidence moving forward. And we know Boston College is a much improved team like us from last year, playing a lot of young guys, and good at home. Lost to Miami by one and Duke by one at home and we know we have a heck of a challenge on our hands tomorrow night.

Q. Did you happen to read or hear what Coach Chaney said about the rivalry, that it must not be as big of a deal for Maryland --

COACH TURGEON: Yeah, I heard about it.

Q. What are your thoughts? Do you have any comments about what he said?

COACH TURGEON: Not really. It's his opinion. He's won a lot of games. He's our Olympic coach, he's won two Gold Medals; his opinion. Some people are going to like it, some people aren't. I'm really don't have a comment on it.

Q. Moving on, going on the road, after winning a game like that, celebrated in the manner that it was, how difficult is it to guard against the letdown, especially going against a team that's played very well at home and very competitive with some big teams at home.

COACH TURGEON: Yeah, they have been more competitive on the road, too. They have been a much better team.

So, we'll see. We talked about it. We met last night and did some things. We'll see. With this young team, we are playing a lot of young kids like Boston College. You don't know how they are going to respond.

We had great week of practice last week preparing, and not only prepared us for the Duke

game but hopefully it's preparing us for the Boston College game. We've become a better road team the last few times on the road. So we know it's going to be tough. Duke won by one there and Miami won by one there and they are both top five teams in the country.

We know it's not going to be easy but hopefully we'll respond better than we did after we beat a top team here at home last night, North Carolina State. Hopefully we'll play a little better on the road this time.

Q. Last year Alex Len was young, a little bit on the raw side and developed as his season went on; how have you seen his skills in particular improve from last year to this year?

COACH TURGEON: Well, he's always been skilled. He's just gotten stronger. He's gotten more confident and he's more comfortable.

Of course, he was off the charts the other night. That's the best he's played in a long time, and both offensively and defensively and just being mentally into the game. He was as good as he's been in a long time. So we need him to play that way over the next month or so for us to finish strong.

Same old stuff and he continues to work and we've really worked hard on his low post game. Because you know, that's the one thing that he really needed to work on, he's gotten better at it and more confident and stronger.

I was proud of his defense, his rebounding and shot blocking and just his presence was great on Saturday.

Q. Where is his ceiling? How good can he be?

COACH TURGEON: Oh, we'll see. He loves it. He loves to work at it. He's 19, so he's got a huge upside. I think consistency is still a big thing with him. Mentally, you know, mental toughness is where we are working, listening skills, and then his physical toughness every day is where we need to go.

ASAPsports

...when all is said, we're done.®

visit our archives at asapsports.com

ACC - Second Hour 2 18 13.doc

He is 19; doesn't turn 20 until late June. He has a tremendous upside. It's been fun watching him improve and get better. I'm just proud of him for the other night, I've been on him pretty hard, he has not been producing the last few games the way he needs to produce, really the last month, and he was quite a presence out there on Saturday.

Q. Do you have an update on Pe'Shon Howard?

COACH TURGEON: He was put back on the team last night and he'll go with us to Boston College.

Q. James (Padgett) said after the game that he took the fact that he had been stripped of the captaincy asking that he wanted everyone to be a leader. He did not take it personally. Was that the message to the team and have you ever done that before?

COACH TURGEON: No, I haven't. Never done it before. Yeah, I wanted everybody to be a better leader. I just didn't think that we were doing a good job with it.

Now with, that said, I've stripped it but James is still trying to be a leader, Dez (Wells) is still trying to be a leader and I'm just trying to help out a lot more. James is a mature kid. He's handled it the right way. Responded great. Obviously played well in the game. He knows he still has a responsibility in the locker room when I'm not around, the dorm rooms, to make sure these guys are doing what's wrong.

Q. Following up on Pe'Shon, regardless of what happened Saturday night, the fact that you won, do you think that gets the message to a guy, missing out on something like that?

COACH TURGEON: Yeah, probably does. You'd think it would. So you know, he's been punished and we welcome him back with open arms, and hopefully he's learned from his mistakes and hopefully our players have learned, other players have learned from his mistakes. And we talked about that last night as a team. And you know, would need Pe'Shon. We need a mature, confident, Pe'Shon moving forward for us to finish strong here.

Q. Quick question about Jake Layman. One of the things -- management expectations with him, and sort of changing your coaching

philosophy about how you sort of approach -- talk about the methods you use?

COACH TURGEON: Obviously Jake played on the Under 18 team this summer and that put even bigger expectations on him coming in. I don't think he was the highest-rated kid we saw but there was a lot of expectations because of that. He missed a month in the summer, and we worked hard in the summer, having a young team, so he was behind, missed a month in the weight room, so he was behind.

It took time, and then I realized that you can't scream and yell at Jake a lot. You need to be a positive influence on him. And we've hit that approach. I'm sure he still thinks they yell at him, which I'm sure I do at times. Just try to handle him a little bit better, giving him confidence.

The thing about Jake is Jake brings it every day. It's not like Jake wasn't trying hard or took a day off or had a bad attitude. He's a very humble kid and just continued to work hard. Those guys are fun to work with, and you know, his upside is huge.

He's really come a long ways and he's helped us play a tremendous amount of minutes the other night against Duke and will play a lot of minutes as we move forward. I think he gets just a little bit better every day that we are able to coach him.

Q. You've seen (Mason) Plumlee and (Erick) Green and (Shane) Larkin this year, who is going to get your ACC vote and what criteria are you going to use?

COACH TURGEON: I don't know yet, six games left, all having great years; no, I think winning is the most important criteria. So Larkin and Plumlee are right there. But Green is pretty special, having a tremendous year obviously.

I didn't even think about that, I'm sorry, but when it comes time to vote, it will probably come down to one of those three guys and we'll see how the next five or six games goes.

COACH BRIAN GREGORY GEORGIA TECH

COACH GREGORY: Pleased with our effort on Saturday at Wake Forest. They have shown a lot of toughness in being able to bounce back from a disappointing game in that loss

ASAP sports
...when all is said, we're done.®

visit our archives at asapsports.com

ACC - Second Hour 2 18 13.doc

against Clemson. There's a lot of freshmen out there playing that game on Saturday, and we just made some plays down the stretch. In this league, with all the close games that you're going to have, being able to execute, it's a defensive stop and we'll get some wins.

That was a big road win for us, our guys were really excited about that; the effort that they gave and the quick turnaround for that game and hopefully we'll continue to work and continue to get better.

Q. Over the last month, you guys have alternated wins and losses. Has the performance been more consistent than the record?

COACH GREGORY: Well, the performance, at times we have not played as well as I would like, but if you look at some of the scores of those games, the last possession against Clemson, last possession against Florida State, last possession against Clemson; those are our three losses in the last seven games.

So we are playing better, there's no question about it. We are playing a little more consistent in terms of some execution. In those seven games, we won two close ones, Virginia and then obviously Wake Forest. And we lost three close ones in the two Clemson games and then the Florida State game.

So you know, I don't think a lot separates, maybe the teams four through 12 or whatever the case might be. And so now you need to be able to, as I said earlier, get some key defensive stops, which we did in those wins, and then execute in crucial times, which again we did in those wins and didn't do it as well in some of the losses.

So we were definitely a better team and we're playing better. The freshmen have done a good job of growing up on the court just as players and understanding the urgency that you have to play with every possession in this league. And we are still at our best when our upper classmen play well for us.

So kind of a combination. We need freshmen to keep growing up and we need our upper classmen to stay consistent in their roles and what they do, and when we do that, we can be a pretty good team.

Q. And with the matchup in North Carolina, they have been very successful lately with a smaller lineup that maybe has P.J. Hairston, quote, the power forward, unquote.

You guys play a big lineup and you always have two big guys in there. How do you see that matchup? Is it something that you can exploit or is it going to be difficult for you to matchup with a smaller team when it goes that way?

COACH GREGORY: They have played extremely well the last few games that they have gone to that smaller lineup. Yeah, it's a difficult matchup, and it is for just about anybody. No. 1, even if you put a guard on P.J. or (Reggie) Bullock. Those are two of the best offensive rebounders around, so they can just bully guys off.

We have to play Georgia Tech basketball. We have to do what we do and we have to challenge our guys to be able to start on the perimeter. And if you can do that, then you hope on the other end that you can take advantage of it.

But we are still talking about Reggie Bullock, P.J. Hairston and Leslie McDonald; it's not like those guys are 6-2, 180 pounds. Those are big, strong, North Carolina-type wings and have always had great size and strength.

So you have to be able to defend on the perimeter, and that means you're going to have to have your big guys stay active and make sure that they don't -- big guys have a tendency to keep getting stuck towards the rim when they are off the ball and if you do that, you're going to give a wide open shot.

Q. The trouble the other day -- what was happening there and how much of that was Wake Forest defense?

COACH GREGORY: In the second half when we went through that drought a little bit, is that what you're talking about?

Q. Yeah.

COACH GREGORY: Unfortunately it's part of our portfolio offensively. We usually have a stretch in the game where we don't really score a little bit.

And give Wake Forest credit, I think they are an improving defensive team. I think with (Travis) McKie and (C.J.) Harris, they have veterans that understand how you have defensively in this league. But (Devon) Thomas is emerging as a very good low-post defender, a guy who can block shots. (Cody) Miller-McIntyre has great size and he is going to be a tremendous defender in this league, as well.

So we got out of rhythm a little bit and missed some shots around the basket that we just have to make. You know, we are at a point right now in the process in rebuilding where we execute something well, you know, we really need to -- a high finish rate and we didn't have that during that stretch. Now all of a sudden, without changing anything that we do, I think we scored on eight of our last ten possessions. I think our freshmen scored our last 13 points.

So what we have to do is continue to defend extremely well, and that puts a lot of pressure on our defense during those stretches. But in the games that we have been successful on our defense has been able to hang in there and keep us in the games; and then if our offense does start clicking, we have been to overcome a four- or five- or six-point lead, as opposed to if our defense wasn't good enough, now it would be ten or 12 or 14 points.

We have been able to do that in a few games and what we need to do is offensively have those lapses, those scoring droughts, be three or four possessions, as opposed to six, seven or eight, which it was on Saturday.

Q. In that stretch and tell me I'm saying it wrong watching the game, it looked like y'all were consciously going to (Marcus) Georges-Hunt. Was that true? And can you talk about him? It seems like after maybe struggling for a few games, he's coming back strong again. Am I saying that right?

COACH GREGORY: And maybe it's the six-minute mark or five-minute mark, we made the decision, let's try to get the ball to Robert (Carter) and Marcus, and I think Robert hit two post shots and we went Marcus on some actions, as well.

You know, I thought Mfon (Udofia) ran the team extremely well, but we went to Marcus on a couple of those plays and he made some big plays for us and finished. I think it's one thing he's pretty good at around the basket and so forth is finishing.

I thought maybe the play of the game, and it goes in as an assist, but only an assist, was we got an offensive rebound, kick the ball out to Brandon Reed, and he had a pretty good look at the 3 and he made the extra pass to Marcus who hit the 3. We have been preaching that, especially kind of reference the last question.

Our guys are good guys and they want to be successful but sometimes when we go on those scoring droughts, the mentality is, I'm going to get us out of this drought. So sometimes we've got to

do it maybe one-on-one, as opposed to maybe trying to find a way to give someone else a shot. And that was a big step.

We showed our guys that clip yesterday before practice with Brandon throwing the extra pass and getting Marcus a wide open three. A couple free throws and we just figured down the stretch, we put the ball in his hands and he made good decisions.

COACH HAMILTON

COACH HAMILTON: We played two games last week, one against a very good Miami team. I thought we played pretty well against them. Probably was tired in the latter stages of the game. But like all great teams do, they found a way to pull it out there toward the end. (Shane) Larkin made some great plays. They are a very good basketball team and we just didn't team to have an answer for Larkin down the stretch.

We played an improving Boston College team who is in my opinion, I thought they might have been one of the best executing teams we played all year. I thought we executed well and we used patience with patience and we had the ball at the end of the game, we played both games.

Many ACC games come down to the final periods of the game and we were very fortunate to come away with a victory against a very improved Boston College team.

Q. I wanted to ask you about Shane Larkin, he's a guy you recruited. Miami has so many seniors and great upper classmen, but the difference you think he's made for them?

COACH HAMILTON: Well, we are very familiar with Shane. I think he is probably one of the top one or two point guards in the ACC, if not the No. 1 point guard, he's awfully close. But I also think he's one of the top five point guards in the country. He's a coach on the floor. He very seldom ever makes a bad decision. The ball is always safe in his hands.

I think he is the Most Valuable Player on the Miami team; regardless if they have guys who have got more recognition. He is the guy that I think drives that team. He makes tremendous decisions, he hits free throws and he knocks down

open jumpers. Even though he's small in stature, he's a tremendous athlete and he has the quickness and speed to get to the basket if you give him the right angle.

I thought we defended him as well as we had in the last five or six minutes of the game and he scored 12 points. Had he not been able to score those points down the stretch, that game probably comes out differently.

I can't say enough about how he's improved and he is the one reason why they are probably one of the top two or three teams in the nation.

Q. I just was looking at the oddity of the schedule, you play N.C. State but you actually play them twice in like 15 days. It's almost like an NBA thing. Can you talk about N.C. State and the problems they present, not having seen them all year, but you know a lot of their players from last year?

COACH HAMILTON: I'm very familiar with N.C. State and I think they are one of the more potent offensive teams in America. You don't have any relief at any position. (Scott) Wood will knock down every jumpshot that he gets. (Lorenzo) Brown, one of the top five point guards in America, and he scores in transition if you don't get back in defense.

And you have to get back and then you have to worry about Wood attacking the basket, because literally he is a handful. He is tremendously athletic. He scores an abundance of ways, he's a handful. And you have (Richard) Howell who is having probably one of the top years of the conference, come off the bench with C.J. (Leslie) in double figures coming off the bench. And (Tyler) Lewis is -- will be the starting -- one of the best in the country. You don't have relief and they challenge you at every spot. They execute their offense to perfection.

This is a very dangerous team, and we know we have our hands full coming in there with them on Tuesday night.

Q. Up here we don't get a lot of updates; is there any news on Terrance Shannon? Is there a chance he plays this season, or does that look bad?

COACH HAMILTON: Terrance, today he's in Los Angeles with one of the top spine specialists in the country getting evaluated. We will know more after the evaluation comes back.

Obviously we'll proceed with caution and he's being evaluated by doctors and they are positive he will have a complete recovery, but whether or not he's going to be able to play this year, a lot depends on just us wanting to get a second opinion and make sure that we are as safe as possible as it relates to making good decisions whether he's going to play or not this year. We will know more probably by the middle of the week as to what to expect from him for the remainder of the season.

Q. A guy clearly still developing is Michael Ojo. Can you talk about what specific things he needs to work on in the off-season to become the force that he clearly could be down the line?

COACH HAMILTON: Well, there's no doubt that Michael Ojo has made tremendous progress, and it's unfortunate that he has not been able to transfer how well he has practiced into the game. This is his first experience at playing, he's only played in ten or 12 games prior to this year. Has limited experience.

But he's a very bright youngster. He's smart. He understands. The game just moves a little fast for him. He understands our options. He's a pretty good low post defender. He's just learning. We've been starting the last couple of games, just because he plays with so much energy, we think the future is very bright for him as well as Boris Bojanovsky.

Both of those guys have different potential and one needs a lot more strength and physicality, and one has the body and needs to improve his skills. We are kind of a team in transition right now but we feel that Ojo has potential to be a major contributor in the ACC.

Q. Scott Wood for N.C. State has done some damage against you in the past and had a big shot against Clemson and had a good night the other night. How does he keep getting those shots?

COACH HAMILTON: Well, in the first place, they do a great job of executing their -- they use what they call the UCLA offense, and obviously Coach was there at UCLA and Eric is on the staff. So they have that thing down to a science. They have guys who push the ball well and can penetrate and it's very difficult to keep up when they are comfortable attacking the basket as

often as possible.

So they execute their offense and give Wood wide open looks, and we all know from past experience, if you give him a wide open look, a high percentage of those shots will go in. He is representative of their team. They are a great basketball team. He is a guy who for a defense makes it very difficult to key on the interior because on one side of the floor, you can't leave him open, there's no doubt about that.

COACH MIKE KRZYZEWSKI DUKE

Q. Just wanted to get your thoughts on the matchup with Erick Green and what kind of challenges he presents.

COACH KRZYZEWSKI: Well, he's a terrific player and young man. I mean, he's a scoring machine. As a result of his ability to score, he creates opportunities for his teammates to score because he draws so much attention.

And to draw that attention and still score the way he does is remarkable. He can break you down, hit open -- he can knock down the 3, but he can also get to the foul line. He's just a terrific player. He's one of the best players in the country.

Q. Have you seen anything effective against him?

COACH KRZYZEWSKI: I think he's pretty much scored against everybody, you know. So I don't think -- you've got to just hope that you don't let him score on in all three of those ways. If you can take one of those things away, either keep him off the foul line or not let him get as many 3s and hold him down a little bit; but he's going to score the ball.

And they do a great job of putting him in a position where he has the ball and can score. He doesn't have the ball and they do things so that when he gets it, he can score. They position him in different parts of the court, very well conceived.

Q. I know we in the media tend to hyperventilate a little bit over one loss, but is there anything especially concerning you after the Maryland loss after two kind of pretty close wins?

COACH KRZYZEWSKI: Well, I hope, there's probably something you can take for that hyperventilation. I think probably a dose of realization. And that is for the last 41 days, we've been playing without Ryan Kelly. So it not about what we have lost; it's about what we've won.

The story for my team is the fact that we are competing and we are doing a good job, in fact, a terrific job, and we have continued to win at a very high level without Ryan. The story isn't that we lost. The story is how much we've won. My guys have done a terrific job in doing that.

Q. After the game, you talked about Alex (Murphy's) play at the five -- you still have the practice opportunities to take a look at some of those things. Are you going to --

COACH KRZYZEWSKI: When I say we don't have practice opportunities, first of all, from the State game until Maryland, we played four games in about ten days. Just physically, you're not capable of having practices. Like Maryland we had a whole week of practice in preparation for us. We had a day.

So much of our is practice stuff is dependent on Seth's condition, and obviously Ryan. We have a numbers problem in how many guys you have to practice. It's impossible to practice all those combinations if you want to be good at your main combination. Like if you're constantly practicing for contingency plans, then you're going to be in a lot more contingency situations. You've got to practice with the guys who are going to play the most minutes.

And the reason we were in that position on Saturday is it's the one game Mason didn't play well in. He's had a remarkable year and we think that he'll still be remarkable. We have to go with our main group for as much practice as we can have.

Q. What about on the lighter side, what do you think of the uniform on Saturday and what do you think of the fact that every year, a handful of teams are wearing these alternative uniforms?

COACH KRZYZEWSKI: Well, I think the uniforms look good. I wish we won in them. I don't think uniforms win a game. I do think that kids like different looks. They are always different materials. The way people put out apparel and shoes nowadays, you want to keep up with the

very best things. Those uniforms are very lightweight and good-looking and maybe something that we'll use in the future.

Q. I was just wondering, when you think of Phil Henderson, what comes to mind?

COACH KRZYZEWSKI: Well, as a real gentle person, Phil, we're so sad about his passing. He passed away in the Philippines over the weekend. Talked to his mom this morning. He's a good guy, very talented player. But a gentle person, real gentle person and had a lot of talent.

Everyone in our basketball family certainly is mourning his passing. A lot of teammates out there that are expressing that, I know on Twitter, have already expressed things to our office.

Q. On the Phil Henderson situation, do you have any more details on what happened?

COACH KRZYZEWSKI: No, we don't. His mom couldn't even say. She's actually making arrangements to fly out to the Philippines. A little bit sketchy right now. Maybe my sports information people know more. We don't know the cause.

Q. And on a totally different subject, with Ryan making progress here, are we getting to a point now where he'll be able to come back?

COACH KRZYZEWSKI: We believe he'll come back at some time. That some time -- we are a month away from Selection Sunday, yesterday -- It's got to move. It's got to keep moving. At some time we have to be able to try things out. I think you need to do that before the NCAA Tournament for his good and for our team's good.

So yeah, it's been 41 days now since the injury and my team has done I think just an amazing job since then. And Ryan's done an amazing job in trying to get back and hopefully we can try to see if something will work here in the not too distant future. But no timetable. I can't give you a timetable.

Q. If you don't mind me asking another question about Phil, before he got there, reaching the final and winning it all in '91. Can you talk about his role in helping that program to sustain that excellence with three Final Fours during that period, and the dunk over Mourning that people remember.

COACH KRZYZEWSKI: Well, he's a very talented player and could really score the ball, deceptively -- like you didn't think of him being the athlete that he was because he kind of had a frail body; he's thin, but he could shoot and really a streak shooter. In other words, he could put up points real quick.

You know, there's no question he was an integral part of our success during that time period and keeping us as one of the elite programs going to Final Fours during that time.

Q. Saturday's game notwithstanding, (Mason) Plumlee has had a great year for you, what has impressed you most about his play this year?

COACH KRZYZEWSKI: Well, he's been a great leader for us, and the fact that he can play so many minutes. A lot of times, big guys get worn out and they don't have the conditioning. Mason has made a commitment to being in the ballgame for every play. He's played heavy minutes.

I do think that you get worn down a little bit. Especially since Ryan's been out, because there's even been more pressure on him to keep the ship afloat so to speak. He's just had a great year, and sometimes those things happen, like Saturday.

Maryland had something to do with it, they played really well, and you could tell, Mason just wasn't at his best. The combination of that, you know, proved to be something that we could not overcome and get a victory.

COACH BRAD BROWNELL CLEMSON

COACH BROWNELL: Well, come off of a disappointing loss last night in a very competitive game with Miami. Proud of how hard our guys competed and the way they executed the defensive game plan.

Certainly proud of Jordan Roper's play. I thought he had a very good day. To be honest, I haven't thought at all about Maryland yet. I'm going to do that this afternoon.

Q. Jordan Roper, looks to me when I watch him play, that his confidence is just not relying on the jumpshot like he was earlier. His overall game seems to be getting better even

when the ball is not going through the hoop; is that what you're seeing and when did this process again?

COACH BROWNELL: Well, he's a confident guy, but I do agree with you, I think he's always believed that he can make shots and he's certainly done that in a lot of games. The rest of his game is just kind of rounding into some form here.

Defensively, being a little bit better, just a better understanding of team concept of defense. I think that's helped him tremendously get more consistent playing time.

And then just being a little bit better at being a facilitator and drawing other people and finding ways to get Devin Booker the ball and using screens and being able to see people behind him, just different things within passing to help him become a more complete player and he's still a long way from being that. He's a kid with confidence. He's a kid that can score the ball and I think it's probably happened at a faster rate here maybe in the last, you know, three to four weeks.

Q. Is consistency the next step for him?

COACH BROWNELL: It is. He's got to get stronger. He's got to get a little bit more clever in certain situations. He's got to defend a little bit better. And that will all come with time.

We are proud of his development so far this year. He's improved a lot through the course of the season, and he just has to be different when you start having some good games like he's had.

His name will be a little bit higher on scouting reports and he's going to have to be able to consistently perform at a solid level, which is what you want from guys as they get older and move through the program.

Q. Can you just talk about the challenges of keeping the mental side of such a young team up with a bunch of close losses, maybe could have gone the other way, and what are the challenges to not have a 'woe is me' attitude.

COACH BROWNELL: Well, we've had to deal with it a lot throughout the year. Unfortunately we've had a bunch of these kind of games.

Florida State on the road is one that really sticks out as a game that we led for most of the game and felt like we really had a chance to win it. N.C. State, another game on the road that really

went to the last possession with us right there to win.

So we've been through it a little bit. But it's very difficult. Obviously N.C. State at home, and now Miami at home, these last two, those are the two that are excruciating. Those are ones that we had every opportunity to win and then the Miami game, we obviously didn't make free throws and N.C. State made a great shot at the end to beat us.

We just talk to our guys about staying the course; that we are playing good basketball and when we play good basketball, follow the game plan and are prepared, that we are a tough team to beat and we've had one or two nights this year where we have not maybe been prepared and haven't been physically and emotionally ready and have gotten hammered. Don't like that feeling.

So we just have got to hang in there, keep doing what we can. I think our guys have done that pretty well throughout the course of the year. We have a week before our next game and so we'll take a couple days here and try to lick our wounds a little bit, do some individual stuff, and then get back together as a team in a day or two.

Q. Do you have to have a break now? Does it make things easier, or after a bad loss, or excruciating loss that you called it, would you rather get out there sooner or is it good to have five days?

COACH BROWNELL: You know, I don't really know to be honest with you. Probably this year right now, this might be a good time to have a week. We've had a bunch of these emotional-type games back-to-back, great win at Georgia Tech that came down to the last possession, squeezed in there with the two losses to N.C. State and Miami.

So we have been emotionally up and down a lot here in the last two weeks and it's probably better that we maybe get a couple extra days with this one. But we'll have to wait and see how we play Saturday.

Q. You've just seen Larkin and Green and Plumlee, who is going to get your ACC Player of the Year vote this year and what kind of cite I can't remember you going to use?

COACH BROWNELL: You know, I don't really know. I haven't thought at all about it and I won't until I guess they put a ballot in front of me and tell me, you've got to make a decision.

Obviously all three guys have had terrific years. Erick is a phenomenal scorer and the guy who has really put them on his back and carried them in a lot of games.

You know, the other two guys are playing for successful teams, which I think is important, too. It's not as easy to do that with winning teams. They are vital people to their team's success and sometimes I think that's important that your team does have some success.

I don't know, because Erick, what he's been able to do to keep them in games and to make plays at the end of games and those kind of things are phenomenal. He's just had an All-American type season.

COACH STEVE DONAHUE BOSTON COLLEGE

COACH DONAHUE: Three games this week. Sunday when I spoke to you with Duke; win a close one against Wake Forest when we were down seven with a little over two; and then another one-possession game at Florida State.

I'm real pleased with my guys and how we have continued to improve and play really solid basketball and just not enough to win a lot of these games, but really pleased with everything that they are doing except somehow not coming out on the winning end. Really pleased with their development. We have to get better, there's no question, especially on the defensive end, and we'll continue to work at it.

Q. What are the matchup problems that Alex Len presents for you?

COACH DONAHUE: Well, I think everybody in the league has to worry about Alex and he just did a terrific job against Mason Plumlee who is one of the better physical centers in the league.

I think his ability to be a basketball player, and what I mean by that is not -- you can throw a double-team at him, but it better be a good one because he can pass; and if you don't, his physicality and his length, getting deep into the lane, makes it very hard to stop him one-on-one.

I think he just continues to develop. You just can't let him get off and make easy shot after easy shot. He's got 16 against us now and mostly

hurt us on the offensive glass and took 14 shots to get it. We are going to have to work extremely hard to keep him off the glass and make him shoot difficult shots, extend some double-team and things like that; and just really do as good a job as you can before he catches it so he's not catching it close to the rim.

Q. Where do you see the biggest areas of improvement from him over last year?

COACH DONAHUE: Well, just his physical stature. He's a different body. It's amazing. And you saw the skill there last year; put on that kind of weight and strength, and now he plays on that, and that's a credit to him and credit to the coaches to get him to play physical.

A lot of kids who gain weight still kind of play like they are not strong. He plays like he's a strong kid, really competes physically, which at that size, is a handful. Got an incredible future ahead of him.

Q. I wanted to follow up, not so much on Len, but the fact that you guys play a fairly small rotation, you play a lot of four guards around a forward. Maryland is a huge team, not just Len, but when they put (Charles) Mitchell or (Shaquille) Cleare, or they have been playing three big guys with (James) Padgett at small forward and (Nick) Faust and (Dez) Wells at guard. Can you talk about that and how big a problem it is just the whole size at every position?

COACH DONAHUE: Yeah, I think the big thing with us is we did not have (Dennis) Clifford. We thought a 7-0, 260-pound kid, throw him in with Ryan Anderson, I think we felt we would be very good about where we are physically inside. But you're right, Maryland has not only length, but Cleare and Mitchell and Padgett, bigger, thicker kids and then big size at the guards.

You know, I think that's all part of our challenge, especially as we are young here, growing into being physical players. We basically played seven scholarship players, and they are all freshmen and sophomores and I think they are not there physically yet.

But with this team, I think you've got to match it and be grittier and tougher and I think we have done that for most of the year on the boards. It's obviously, as I said with Clifford, it's a handful. Now, Dennis is starting to get more healthy. When

he plays, I think we are a different team defensively. And I think he's added that part and hopefully we can get some minutes out of him on Tuesday night.

Q. Is that the long-term answer to this, getting Dennis back to where he can play his 25, 30 minutes a game, or do you need to go out and recruit some more size?

COACH DONAHUE: Yeah, I think you're always looking to get bigger around each position for us. And we are going to be slightly different than everybody else. And we look at skill and IQ and all these other things, as well. It's just not a lot of big guys out there that are that skilled that you can play.

Dennis is obviously a big part of our future and we are going to continue to add length and athleticism up front if we can, as well as size everywhere else. I also think guys like Ojo, came in at 195, he's a now 220; I think he's going to be a 235 kid who is going to be a really good junior, senior physical basketball player at the four spot for us.

Like I said, Ryan Anderson, he's not where he needs to be or where he will be or can be next year or the year after that and Clifford has some physicality, as well. As I said, you've got to continue to recruit kids that are going to be able to physically compete at this level.

Q. Is there anything that you can do to help your team cope with some of these losses you've gone through recently, because you're one of several teams in the league that has fallen into the same category.

COACH DONAHUE: Yeah, I don't know if there's anything specific you can do. I'm always talking about, whether you're winning or losing, it's about how you're playing and what you're doing to put yourself in those positions. I don't want to just accept losses, but I also don't want to lose sight of where we are at in our development.

As I said, we play seven scholarship players on our freshmen and sophomore side, and most of them were not the type when they got here. They got here late and they were not the type that were ready to play necessarily in their freshmen and sophomore years and hope you win games.

But I do think it's an opportunity where if you develop these kids, they are going to be really helpful down the road, and I don't want to lose

sight of that. I told them, I'm proud of how we are playing.

I'm disappointed in losses but I'm not discouraged of where we are headed and I'm not going to lose sight of that just because -- really, I think we've had a ton of games that we could have went either way in our league and for the most part we have not played bad basketball. We have played really good basketball for stretches but we had some holes that we have got to figure out how to get better in the short run and certainly in the long run.

Q. Is it easier or more difficult to express to your team, when it does come down to one or two possessions every game?

COACH DONAHUE: Yeah, you know what, I feel pretty good that we competed. We don't play really well for stretches, like in the Florida State game, where we just were not scoring and we were not moving the ball, and then we got gritty and we hung around, and then we figured out a way.

So, yeah, I think kind of your team competes -- and we competed on the road. That's a three-point loss at Florida State; that's a three point loss -- in basically one-possession games at Wake Forest. We win at Virginia Tech.

For a young team, I think we are playing well on the road and we played solid at home, as well. I don't have a whole lot of issues with those type of things that would drive a coach crazy not being emotional, physically ready to play. I think we have done that.

We just at times have not played consistent defensively for 40 minutes. And it's obviously our Achilles' heel and something we address every single day and we are probably sick of it, but we are doing it, we are playing hard. In practice we are trying to get better at it. I'm really pleased with all those things.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports