Tennessee 72 Florida A&M 43
Thompson-Boling Arena – Dec. 4, 2019

Tennessee Head Coach Rick Barnes

On Davonte initiating the offense:
“He can. Throughout high school and his AAU season, he played the points up, and he’s got good ball skills. It’s all new, but he’s a guy that we’re confident in the fact that he’s going to work hard trying to do the right thing. He’s going to err on trying to do the right thing. He’s not going to be perfect, but he’s going to try to do the right thing, and he’s not afraid to bring the ball down the floor. He’s not afraid to handle the basketball.”

On Olivier and if that’s what he’s been asking to see from him:
“Yeah, he can do that, and I’ll still tell you guys, you haven’t seen what we know he can do. I don’t think he knows what he can do yet, and I keep saying that to him. I said ‘you don’t have a clue yet, the ability that you have and how you don’t use it’. He goes back, he doesn’t always get himself ready, and he doesn’t always know where he is on the court. If he would really learn the offense where he doesn’t have to think about where he’s going and what he’s doing, he’ll be a much better player. When he misses a shot, he beats himself up too much as opposed to getting on to the next play. These are the things where he’s got to grow up quickly, because we need him, and he alone can change our team with the ability that he has if he will buy into it.”

On if he likes the physicality from Olivier and John tonight:
“Yeah, you know what, I do. Fulky is a guy that, defensively—many times, especially when teams were heavy on ball screens—can really attack teams’ offenses, and sometimes he gets himself in trouble. When he gets tired he starts reaching, but when he’s active and moving his feet, he’s going to battle, he’s going to compete, and he is giving away weight most nights, but he can do it with quickness and those type things, we think he can score on people. He’s got to learn to do his work early, get his feet set, and get his feet under him, because he can play above the rim, and he’s got to do that. All his little layups he misses, he’s always trying to shoot them underhanded, as opposed to trying to get up over top of people. He’s got to accept the fact that we need him to score these points, and he needs a few more rebounds. 7 baskets on 12 attempts is a pretty good night for him and we need him, in a lot of different ways.”

On freshman output
“I thought it was good that they really got some quality minutes in. We haven’t had a chance to really put them out there where they could play through fatigue and mistakes. We haven’t been able to do what we wanted to try and get the ball inside to Olivier and Fulky and Yves a little bit more. We wanted to see if they could do something with it, but the fact that we got the freshman out there as much as we did; we needed to do that. They’ll learn some things from it, we still have to do a better job on offense, taking care of the ball, and giving ourselves a chance to do some of the things that we practiced. Tonight, I think the Freshman had 28 points and 23 rebounds, so that’s a good night for them.”
**On frustration from turnovers**

“Where the frustration comes is seven of those fifteen came from the point guard position, and that means you’re not getting your offense started. I don’t care what else happens, if you don’t get it started, or you think you’re going to make one action and score, it’s not good. There’s a problem when you don’t get a chance to get into your offense, and like I said seven of those fifteen turnovers came from Josiah and LaMonte and those guys have to get the offense going, to do what we need to do.”

**On John Fulkerson leading the team in shot attempts**

“It’s a good sign. Again, I’ve told our guys that those guys deserve a chance to miss some shots too, but they’ve got to get it more. You can’t expect them to score every time they get it, but they’ve got to have the ball more. We’ve worked on it the last couple days, just saying we’re going to put it in there and let them get more of a feel for not having a lot of room to score there at times. It might be the only time all year where a post guy has led in shots attempted.”

**On the defensive play**

“They’re a team that likes to drive the ball, and I do think Robert does a really good job. Their schedule is brutal, what they do is brutal, having to play at Kansas State then come here. I know they had a problem with their flight and then having to play. I respect the things they were trying to do out there. We knew we would have to really try and close down the lane. Defensively we can get better but I do think this, if our offense gets better our defense will get better, because I think we put so much pressure on our defense at times because of silly turnovers, and trying to make great passes as opposed to just playing good basketball.”

**On playing with new faces**

“We work a lot on it, and we think that we’ve got some guys that can really guard. When you really think about it, when LaMonte is locked in defensively on the ball, he’s as good as anybody in the country. Very few guys can do what he can do. He can guard one through five and he can guard anybody. He could be more active in the gaps and things like that. The younger guys are still learning sort of how hard you have to play. We do a lot with our defense, we can switch one through five, one through four, we do different things. That’s where we want these guys to pick up those types of situations, because possession to possession we might be switching defenses and it’s based on personnel and what we find out through scouting. You’ve got to give our coaches a great deal of credit for that because that’s the side they really emphasize every day and they do a great job of it in practice.

**Freshman forward Olivier Nkamhoua**

**On the pride the team has on having the longest active home game streak:**

“It is great. It is just a great feeling because you know your fans are going to be there for sure and just playing at home and winning at home is just one of the best feelings ever.”

**On how it felt to have all four freshmen out on the court together:**

“It was a lot of fun, but there are a lot of things we have to do a lot better. Especially with executing on our offense. We all need to know what we are doing at all times. We always love playing with each other and it is a great feeling playing each other, but when he (Coach Barnes) does let us play together we need to show him that we know what we are doing because then we can do it more.”
On how he feels about playing Memphis next:
“Everybody on the team is excited and we want to play that game. That is one of the biggest games we have all been looking forward to. Obviously, every single game we look forward to, but there is just a good amount of hype around that Memphis game.”

Freshman guard Davonte Gaines

On how he felt about his performance tonight:
“With the offense we run, everyone gets a chance to find open guys. So, tonight I was able to find the guys in the post and make plays off of them.

On if he felt comfortable playing point guard and if he played the role in high school:
“I am very comfortable. I played point guard in high school and shooting guard in prep school. So, finding the open guys is something that I am kind of used to.”

On if they enjoy playing defense:
“Defense is something we have to practice. It is really something that the team has talked about. We have to have a defensive mindset, even if the offense isn’t working and the shots aren’t falling, we know that we have to get into the defense to create more offense. We look at defense as the primary goal to help lead our offense.”

Florida A&M Head Coach Robert McCullum

On what makes Tennessee’s defense so effective
“Well for one, they’re committed to being a very good defensive team, and for so many of Rick’s [Barnes] teams, that’s where they hang their hats. You play against a Rick Barnes team and you know that you’ve got your work cut out for you. I was at Oregon prior to taking the job at FAMU, so my last year there we actually played them [Tennessee] in the Maui Classic. I think [Jordan] Bone and [Lamonte] Turner were on that team, and even then, you just knew it was just a matter of time. That’s what they do well, so you know you’re going to be in for a fight.”

On what he has learned about his team after playing Kansas State and Tennessee back to back
“It’s tough. It’s kind of what we do in non-conference. We’ll play at least eight of those games every year, so we’ve kind of come to expect it and yet we still expect our guys to play as well as they can. Tonight, we didn’t play as well as we’re capable of playing. Of course, your opponent, Tennessee, has something to do with that.”

On where his team could improve
“We’ve got to learn to compete, be more patient, and not just sort of give up on things that we’re looking for so easily. That’s what’s happening right now. Sometimes the opponent’s size is a strength, like tonight.”