

Atlantic Coast Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Wednesday, March 11, 2026

Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

Spectrum Center

Wake Forest Demon Deacons

Steve Forbes

Juke Harris

Tre'Von Spillers

Postgame Press Conference

Clemson 71, Wake Forest 62

STEVE FORBES: Congrats to Clemson. I thought they came out with great intensity in the first half. They looked like they were the aggressive team.

I don't know if I've ever seen a team have 22 points off the bench in the first half, and their bench played more minutes than their starters. It's almost like they platooned us and maybe tried to make us tired. I don't know if that was their plan, but they got off to a great start. They made a lot of threes.

I thought that early on we weren't very good in defensive transition. They got some easy baskets. We were having a hard time guarding the ball. That's why they were getting middle penetration, kick-out threes and they made nine in the first half.

I thought our switching was not great. In the first half we didn't communicate well, but in the second half we didn't switch as much. We went back to hard hedging the ball screen. We got pulled in, and they shot 7 percent from three in the second half. I thought we did much better, 31 percent from the field.

I just thought we really competed our tail off in the second half defensively and got back in the game, just couldn't put enough scoring pressure on them. I thought on offense early their physicality bothered us. We had turnovers and shot turnovers were standing too much. I thought second half our play after the play-action was a lot better.

Clemson is a great defensive team. They pursue the ball.



Obviously the last thing is just the 17 offensive rebounds. It's just discouraging for you as a team to get a stop and you can't get the ball, and we gave up 17 offensive rebounds tonight, and I think we gave up 21 yesterday, but we got to the line 30 times. Last night we didn't get to the line that many times.

I'm pretty proud of my team, how tough and resilient they are. They fought and fought and fought, just not quite enough.

Q. Tre, Juke, Steve just mentioned the offensive rebounds. For about the last month, month and a half that's been a pretty big strength for you guys. What was different coming into the last 48 hours on that end?

JUKE HARRIS: I think the difference was we just wasn't boxing out. There was a lot of long rebounds, so of course our big guys down there were fighting down with their big guys, and it was our job as guards to come down and clean it up, and I feel like we didn't do that enough.

STEVE FORBES: I'll help him on that. I think that we're not really a big team, obviously, so sometimes we box out, but it's hard for our 4s and 5s to go straight up and get the ball above the rim against bigger people. So we have to team rebound. We have to gang rebound. The guards have to come down and get those balls, and we didn't get enough of them.

It's not just their fault. It's my fault for not being able to help them more. But we have worked hard on it, and we got better at it. We got better at it until we got here, to be honest with you.

Q. For both players, what was the feeling in the first half when they're raining in threes? I think they scored on eight of ten possessions and six of them were threes. Was it just miscommunication on the defensive end?

TRE'VON SPILLERS: Yeah, it was definitely miscommunication. Before the game we knew we were



switching, and just in the midst of the game we were having miscommunication, not talking, not talking early enough. I feel like that's what got them started on them hitting threes like that.

JUKE HARRIS: He said it word for word.

Q. For both players, what was it like when y'all were making that comeback in the second half? What were you telling each other? What was the feeling in the huddle?

TRE'VON SPILLERS: Just telling each other that we've just got to stay connected, just one play at a time. No matter what's going on on the offensive end we've got to come down and get a stop, and I feel like that's what helped us bring our momentum into that deficit. Just staying together and just helping one another.

JUKE HARRIS: Yeah, and just continuing to believe in each other, not guard several ways, make sure we're coming together, and I feel like we did that. Yeah, I'm just going to leave it like that. I feel like we did that.

Q. I feel like it's a broken record, but the "grab the ball with two hands part of it" is how much of the frustration with rebounding?

STEVE FORBES: Yeah, you know, it's frustrating, but it's not like -- it's not something that just started. It's kind of been that thing all year long. I thought we had shown improvement in that over the month of February for the most part, but like even tonight, how many times did we have the ball in our hands and we couldn't get it or we just stepped out of bounds or whatever. When you're playing in tournament play and you're playing against a really good team like Clemson you just can't do that. When we beat them at home, I think they only had 10 offensive rebounds or less. They didn't have that.

And I thought we were quicker to the ball, I thought we guarded the post better. There was just some things that we just didn't do tonight early.

I thought we found our way in the second half, but when you're playing from behind, and again, just not enough score pressure to really get to where we could take control of the game.

Q. I know it's still fresh, but when you reflect back on the season as a whole, what are some things that come to mind?

STEVE FORBES: Well, the positive is just how freaking together this team is and how hard they play together, how

much they cared about each other. When they went through a lot of adversity, they never -- they kept coming back. As a coach, that's a really good feeling, right. You want your players to be a reflection of your personality. I'm not one to back down to anybody, and I kind of -- I just feel like this team kind of embodied that. Did they play perfect? No. Did they win every game? No.

I think it's also going to be a season of what-ifs, right? We've talked about this ad nauseam about we had some really great opportunities early to beat Michigan, to beat Texas Tech. Didn't get it done. One-point games. Didn't beat Oklahoma. We're not used to losing at home. We lost to Oklahoma at home and Vanderbilt at home. Had great opportunities there. Miami at home, had the game and just didn't finish it. Those kind of things.

Then losing Nate for 10, 11 games, I think you saw tonight he's a pretty damned good player. Just not having him -- we can't overcome our depth-wise. We played a lot of guys, but he's too talented for us not to have him. I think Sebastian and Isaac did a really good job in that situation.

But those kind of things come to my mind probably -- I usually have to take some time to reflect, but coming from a hard-hitting clone of Josh Graham, that's my answer.

Q. On the other end of that question, you're probably waiting for an NIT invite or potentially the crown. How do you handle roster management moving forward just in terms of who's going to come back, who's not able to, and what are you looking for in the portal and how confident are you with the resources you have that you'll be able to move forward?

STEVE FORBES: Look, the resources that I have I will take full advantage of; you know what I mean? I'm fully confident in my ability and in our coaches' ability to maximize the finances that we have, okay.

That process has already started. That's not tampering; there's players out there to sign that aren't portal-type players. Obviously the portal will open up on April 7 and we'll get involved in that.

Retention, had some conversations already. Not with everybody. Probably do some the next few days. That was part of the proposal of moving the portal back was to give coaches some time not to have to run back tomorrow and have 12 meetings, which is kind of nice.

They're a little bit more complicated -- they take a little bit longer now because there's more people involved with an agent. Everybody has an agent. So you talk to the agent, you talk to the kid, the agent talks to the kid, kid talks to the

parent. It's not just (snaps fingers) one of those kind of deals.

That will all start. Yeah, I hope -- correct me if I'm wrong, I think the ACC gets three bids in the NIT, the top NET teams? Am I right or wrong on that? Or is it two? I don't know.

Yeah, we'd like to play. They want to play. I like that about them. They want to play. They like playing. They like each other. I like coaching them. I don't like not getting offensive rebounds or defensive rebounds, but I do like coaching them. So we'll see. We'll play if the opportunity presents itself. That's my little plug.

Q. Speaking of Nate, key factor here in this game and against Virginia Tech, how is he feeling right now? Have you had any conversations with him? How is he feeling about the adversity he has overcome?

STEVE FORBES: He's really a grateful person. So he's just thankful that he got to play again because I went and announced a couple weeks ago he was done for the season, because I thought he was. He put so much into his rehab to get himself back ready to play. In all honesty, if he would have had to he could have played Saturday against Cal and he would have. I just didn't think it was necessary to try that.

I thought he came out here and played his heart out for two days. He's a senior; it hurts. Tre, it hurts. Mekhi -- this is something that's important to them. This portion of their life is now over.

I haven't really had a chance to talk to Nate as much because I'm pretty brief in the locker room after the game. I've learned that you need some time to think about what you're going to say. Too many times you just say stuff that you probably wouldn't mean because it's never as bad as you think it is, and it's never as good as you think it is. That's why you need time to reflect.

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