

# Atlantic Coast Conference Basketball Tipoff Media Day

Wednesday, October 8, 2025

Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

## Wake Forest Demon Deacons

### Coach Steve Forbes

### Nate Calmese

### Mekhi Mason

### Tre'Von Spillers

### Men's Press Conference

STEVE FORBES: We're excited to be here, and at the end of the year you always make an assessment of your team and what you need to improve, and I thought that we obviously need to do improve our three-point shooting, we needed to improve our passing with more assisted baskets, improve our rebounding on both sides of the ball, and improve on some movement and cutting on offense. I feel like we've accomplished those things and more since March.

These three guys sitting up here have a lot to do with that. I think our team as of today, the strength is in our numbers. Ten or 11 deep. Not a lot of separation between the players. I think sometimes that's not good, but I think with this team it is.

I think that we have some really talented players. The strength in numbers will allow us to play in a lot of more of an attacking style on offense. We'll have mobility at every position and skill, have more pace, more cutting.

I think one of the great things that we've been able to do over the last four years is have consistency in winning, and we've done that by having a consistent philosophy on how to do things, but being able to adapt our Xs and Os to the players that we have.

I brought Tre Spillers today who was a great player for us last year. Expect him to have a great year this year. Mekhi Mason, transferred from Washington. Was a very good player in the Big Ten a year ago. He has great size at the wing position and can play defense. Pretty good all-around player.

Nate Calmese averaged over 15 a game last year at



Washington State. I think everybody in Washington State is confused. They're mad because Coach Dickert came, and now he came. They have nothing to do with each other.

It's a great group of guys. I've really, really enjoyed coaching them. I think one thing I just wrote down, you know, size. I've always kind of had a footer. This year we don't, but we have guys with really incredible wing spans.

Omaha Biliew is plus 8. Tre is plus 7. Mekhi is plus 7. Juke Harris is plus 6. Myles Colvin plus 6. Jaylen Cross plus 5. Even though we may not have a five man in there at 7 foot, we have good positional size and length across the board, which will really help us on defense.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Coach.

**Q. You talked about the size. You don't typically single out players, but there's a player I'm intrigued by in your system, Juke Harris. I think you can kind of feel what you did with Hunter Sallis that kind of role, especially with his wing span, his ability to shoot the ball. I think he's a little better defender than what people give him credit for. Can you talk about what you've seen from him through the summer going into the season?**

STEVE FORBES: Yeah, incredible improvement. We're talking about Juke Harris. He always had really good positional size at 6'7", and he's gained a lot. Probably, I don't know, 10 or 15 pounds in the weight room.

He's really improved his shooting. He's shooting 47% from three right now in practice, okay? We're shooting 41% as a team. Now, you know, when the lights come on like here, we'll see, right, but yes, I agree, he's a two-way guy. He can be a really good offensive player and be a dominant defensive player.

We had an NBA scout in last week, and he talked to me about him afterward. One of the things he said was, the offense is going to be there. He needs to try to be the guy -- who was the guy that got drafted from Virginia just recently? Really good defend -- Ryan Dunn. That type of



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three and D player.

So if he can stay on that path he's got a chance to be an outstanding player at Wake Forest.

**Q. Maybe you answered this with the 41% three-point shooting, but what affect have you already seen with Nick Friedman and what he's brought to the program?**

STEVE FORBES: Yeah, we hired Nick Friedman. He was in Charlotte for four years with Boreggo and Clifford. A tenured journeyman at the professional level.

One thing, he's just a very positive person. These guys would probably tell you that. He's outstanding at what he does, but he has a real positive outlook on the game and how he works with the players.

I think it's just more spacing, some conceptual ideas maybe with passing. These are some things that we did in '22 and '23. It got a little bit more sticky last couple of years. I'm not being disrespectful. Hunter Sallis and Cameron Hilldreth are both 1,000 point scorers. That wasn't the strength of their game.

That's why I think we're good at what we do, is because we adapt to the strength of our players. That's why we've been a consistent winning team. This team, the ball zings. We're way up in assists ratio in practice, and I go back and look at the numbers every year. Not based on the date, but on the amount of attempts maybe we've attempted in practice.

We're so far ahead in attempted field goals this year in practice than we were a year ago because we played more, and I think that's really helped us. These guys can tell you that, or not.

I think with Nick it's more conceptual things, what we're doing offensively that I'm not really going to get into today. He's done a really good job. But a lot of it is giving the guys confidence to do the things that they do really well.

**Q. Coach, when you look at the way this team has been playing in practice thus far, how does the team basketball that you are seeing from these guys stack up against other teams that you've coached?**

STEVE FORBES: How do they do? I'm sorry. How do they what?

**Q. (Off microphone.)**

STEVE FORBES: Yeah, I've always been a coach that has liked it when we have balance. We are always going

to have a leading scorer, but if you can have four or five, six guys averaging around double figures, you're just a lot more harder to play against, because I know as a coach, preparing for teams like that is really hard.

I've just seen a lot of joy and a lot of passion from these guys sharing the ball. When you do that, there's energy in the ball. The ball will find the open shot. It won't just stick in somebody's hands, and now it's your turn to go do it. Sometimes you got to have that.

Sometimes you got to make plays late, man, but these guys have shown the ability to have tremendous joy sharing the basketball and finding each other.

I would think about our team in '22. Jake was a first-round pick, but he was a really good passer. Alondes was the MVP ACC player Of the Year. Great passer. Threw a great pass here in Charlotte. Left-handed hammer pass to the corner to Demetrius for three for a win against Charlotte.

One of the best passes in traffic. He threw one against NC State like that. Just things like that.

Ty Appleby. Tremendous passer. Those guys can really move the ball. I see a little bit more of that, I guess, this year.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you. Questions for Nate.

**Q. Nate, four teams in these four seasons that you've had in college. What can you say about that journey that you've had utilizing the portal to the best of your ability and why Coach Forbes was the right coach to spend this time with here as a veteran?**

NATE CALMESE: I would say four schools in four years has been a great journey. I say I wouldn't be where I am today without that.

Just trying to seek new opportunity when there was, but I think Coach Forbes, the opportunity here was great. Like I've been saying all day, in the portal he called me every day, and most head coaches don't do that. That was really big for me. Then just our Zoom was great. My parents loved him. Our visit was great. I think just the opportunity to play for him was a no-brainer choice, to yeah.

**Q. Nate, you came from -- you were at Washington, at Washington State. Your teammate was at Washington. It's just interesting that a couple of guys came from the West Coast all the way to the East Coast and Wake Forest. I know you mentioned why you wanted to**



**come to Wake Forest, but how excited are you to be in the ACC?**

NATE CALMESE: I'm very excited. You know, it's a great conference, great opportunity to play against great teams day in and day out.

I play with great players on my team, so I'm really excited to just play against great teams every night, so I'm really excited.

THE MODERATOR: Nate, thank you. Questions for Mekhi.

**Q. Watching your game it feels like it's smooth. Every time you shoot it feels like it's going to go in. One, does it feel like that when you shoot it? And two, when Steve talks about how he needs three-point shooting, how excited does that make you feel in this offense?**

MEKHI MASON: Yeah, it makes me very excited just knowing what I can do with my shooting ability. He instills confidence with me every time I let the ball go and says, keep shooting them. Just to have a coach like that that gives you the ultimate confidence, it's all you need to be a good shooter.

THE MODERATOR: You've had a chance to be around a couple of different programs, learning a lot from a lot of different players. What is it about creating cohesion early to make sure that it all clicks as the season starts?

MEKHI MASON: Yeah, it's very important. It starts from the summer just doing stuff off the court and just doing things together as a team. It obviously makes you a better team as a whole, having that chemistry and knowing where guys are going to be, like, oh, is he going to cut, what type of player he is. So just learning that is very important, and that's what makes great teams, great teams.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you. Questions for Tre.

**Q. Tre, to have a coach that in multiple different places, including Wake Forest, has sent guys into the National Basketball Association, just what does that mean for you to have someone who has the eye and the knowledge and the IQ of what it takes to get to that next level that goes far beyond Wake Forest?**

TRE'VON SPILLERS: It's great. I just know every time he just wants the best out of us. We know we're not going to play perfect. He just expects us to go out there and give it our hardest every time we step on the court.

**Q. What did the team do this summer to build that team bond to get ready for this year?**

TRE'VON SPILLERS: We spent a lot of time off the court. Whether just going to each other's house or we'll go to dinner, get pizza. We just do little things that just helps us. That's going to help us when it comes to March.

Oh, yeah, we did do Airsoft gun. I forgot all about that (laughing). Airsoft --

STEVE FORBES: Who shot me?

TRE'VON SPILLERS: I did (laughing). Yeah, Airsoft. It was a great experience. Just going out there it was very hot, but just spending time with my teammates, I feel like that's going to bring us very closer.

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