

Atlantic Coast Conference Basketball Tipoff Media Day

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Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

Wake Forest Demon Deacons Coach Steve Forbes

Isaac Carr

Jamari McDowell

Men's Press Conference



So those things -- you know, I think we turned them over a ton and scored -- turned defense into offense.

Offensively I just thought we had too many dribble threes. We shot 29 threes. Probably nine of those I wouldn't have shot, so got to work on that. I thought we had some really good ball movement at times, and then at times we over-dribbled.

It's the earliest we've ever played. Ever. We chose to play out in public because I thought it would be good for our fans to see us play and good for our players to play under the lights.

Credit to Georgetown. They made 16 threes, and I think 7 of them or 8 of them were heavily contested. They made them. I thought it was really good for us. I've been very positive about it because, you know, it don't count, and we need tape.

Three years ago we beat Alabama and they went to the Elite Eight. It didn't really bother them. When I was at Tennessee we lost to a Division II and we were ranked in the top 10.

So I don't put a lot into the result. Love to win, but I think we learned a lot from it.

Q. What does Isaac Carr give you as one of those few players who actually experienced last season within the program?

STEVE FORBES: One of the few players? The only. You know, Isaac is just a good, all-around player. He's really tough. I think he can be a really high-level defensive player. He's a really good athlete. He's in elite condition.

Offensively he's had a great summer and fall until Sunday. I don't know -- not that he played bad. He just didn't exert himself, which has disappointed him, disappointed me. I think he's a guy we got to have, you know, average 8 to 9, 10 points a game at least for us. He's been playing with a lot of confidence on offense. He's a ball mover. We can penetrate. He can get on the glass.

STEVE FORBES: I'll open it up for questions.

THE MODERATOR: We'll take the Q&A for Coach.

Q. Steve, you had the scrimmage on Sunday. Now that you have had a chance to review what happened there, what discouraged you the most, and do you now think you have your team's attention?

STEVE FORBES: Well, here's the thing about -- you've heard me say this a million times. It's never as good as think it is. It's never as bad as you think it is until you turn on the tape.

We did some really, really good things, okay? We did some things we've got to get better at. I don't think it's any big secret. They got in the lane 29 times. They scored 44, 45 points on that. They scored -- I told you we were really bad in defensive transition. They scored 33 points in transition.

They got eight live offensive rebounds. Eight. But they scored 14 points. It's pretty simple to say, hey, I told you we gave up too many direct line drives guarding the ball, so that's how they get in the lane.

So we got to guard the ball better, and we got to be in our 50 better or help in our gap. Defensive transition is communication and organization. We have some new guys, a lot of new guys. I'm not surprised in some ways that we struggled with that. We'll get better at it.

Then, you know, eight offensive rebounds is a pretty good number, because it was ten, but two of those were team. They scored 14 points, so that means the rebound's coming closer to the basket. We got to do a better job of getting them out of there.



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He can do a lot of the things, a lot of winning plays. So just feel very fortunate to have him on the team and have him back.

Q. Bringing in Kennedy from Merrimack, what did you see from him at that institution that made you want to pursue him and ultimately sign him?

STEVE FORBES: First of all, he played for a great coach, Joe Gallo; winning program. I think anybody can be the leading scorer on a bad team. He's the Freshman Of the Year and the Player of the Year in the league for the first time, I believe, in that league's history, and he's from Philly. He's Philly-tough.

He grew up on a playground. He didn't grow up with a trainer and some cones. I believe in bones over cones.

So I think that he embodies a lot of things that I believe in is that grittiness and toughness and relentlessness. We have these things called -- what's those things you guys wear? Vector? What is that? Catapult. It measures game intensity, okay? He had the highest ranking or rating for game intensity of any player at Wake Forest ever since we've been tracking that on his first game at 41. It's off the charts.

All those things, you know, that -- and then you got to meet him, and then when you meet him it's, like, okay, he's about those kind of things. I think he's about the right stuff. I think at that position he's a point guard. He's got a joy to play.

I do think he's got to distribute more than what he did on Sunday. Now, he's done it all year since we've had him, but he probably over-dribbled a little too much. Come on, man. It's the first time the lights came on. It's the first time the bullets are flying. He'll get there. He's a really good player. Really good player.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you. Questions for Isaac Carr.

Q. Isaac, as I brought up earlier, you went from being a freshman learning from everybody else to being one of the few returning players. How has that changed what's expected from you this season?

ISAAC CARR: Yeah, I think being a returner and just having been here for a year, I think I have to, like, you know, know the standards of what we do for a year.

I mean, I've got a year's worth of experience of being with this coaching staff, so I think the things that we do in

practice, I should be good at by now and just translating that to the court now is my next step.

Q. As a returnee on this program, how have you seen the roster elevate itself when you look around you for '26, '27? What can you say about the elevation of this team?

ISAAC CARR: Yeah, I think the guys we have on our team, we get along really well. I think that's a big part for us.

We also got some good size this year, but I think the biggest thing is just how competitive we are in practice and how together we are.

THE MODERATOR: Coach recently brought an hourglass to practice. Why did he do that?

ISAAC CARR: That was a really powerful speech. He gave a really powerful speech before practice about how, you know, don't take things for granted because time runs out.

That was a really good message to the team and for myself is just take advantage of all the moments you have while you're there and be where your feet are.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you. Questions for Jamari McDowell. I will start from the podium here. You're the oldest of four kids; is that right?

JAMARI McDOWELL: I am. I am. I have a younger sister and two younger brothers.

THE MODERATOR: What is it about being the oldest that has translated into being a leader on the basketball floor?

JAMARI McDOWELL: It kind of starts really young you know. Honestly you go, you're born, all your siblings are born pretty much immediately after you, and you kind of just have to figure out how to do things on your own.

Slowly through time, I mean, it develops and translates throughout your life and you kind of -- you're kind of used to being the head of a ship essentially. It's nothing foreign to me, but...

STEVE FORBES: I got a question. Jamari, out of high school you took two official visits to Wake Forest, correct? You're the only player coming out of COVID that I ever had to take two official visits.

JAMARI McDOWELL: Really?

STEVE FORBES: How did you pick Kansas over Wake Forest?

JAMARI McDOWELL: Well, Coach, that's a really good question. No, I'm not going to say that. Not going to say that. That's an in-house answer. In-house answer (laughing.)

STEVE FORBES: Sorry to put you on the spot.

THE MODERATOR: Obviously this is not the house, right?

JAMARI McDOWELL: No, no, no, no.

Q. Jamari, to piggyback off of that a little bit, what did Coach Forbes show you about the role he envisioned that made Wake the right next step for you?

JAMARI McDOWELL: It was pretty much more of the same from what they told me coming out of high school. I know, it's crazy I didn't go there out of high school. I know. I can say it.

But it was more of the same of just going to have the opportunity to show what you can do, an opportunity. After being in college in three years that was really big to me. That's kind of what I wanted to do, and I wanted to still be able to do it at the highest level.

Q. In those three years that you spent at Kansas, what have been your takeaways that you believe kind of add to do the toolbox that now you are at Wake, things that can help you raise the level of this team?

JAMARI McDOWELL: I would say a lot of young players are silent on the court, and I feel like everybody has different times that they take that leap of being able to trust their voice and trust that people are going to receive them the way that they need to be received.

I think just being in Kansas for three years, it really showed me the importance of how detailed you have to be with not only your work, but the way you speak to people, the way you operate on the court.

All of that matters, and eventually it will lead up to the bigger picture that you never even seen coming.

Q. Don't let them be too hard on you. I'm a Kansan. I'm sorry. I just wanted to ask you kind of in that same realm of questioning, just going to a school of that stature, what have you tried to bring to this program and also bring with -- show your teammates?

JAMARI McDOWELL: Yeah, kind of like this question here

I was saying about the detail of your work and making sure every rep you get something out of it and every drill. All of that stuff, it slowly adds up, and before you know it, it snowballs, and you have a whole bunch of either problems or you got a whole bunch of things that your team can rely on.

So that's kind of what we are striving for here to do at Wake.

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