

Atlantic Coast Conference

Operation Basketball

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Justin Jackson

North Carolina Tar Heels



Q. What did coach tell you that he needed you to be for the team this year?

JUSTIN JACKSON: You know, just be more confident, be as aggressive as I can, whether that's offense or defense, scoring the ball if I need to. Rebounding the ball is a big thing that I need to do better at.

And then defensively, I just really need to take more pride on the defensive end.

Q. There is a giant leap that people take from their freshman year to their sophomore year, not basketball related. What is it about you that you learned during that transition?

JUSTIN JACKSON: The biggest thing for me is confidence. This time last year, I was nowhere near as confident as I am now, on and off the court. And I think that will really help me individually and help the team, as well. And so for that, I think I'm really looking forward to how the season will play out for me and then how the season will play out for the team. We're really looking forward to it.

Q. What has Marcus done this off-season to kind of get you guys ready to play and ready to maybe win a championship, him being the leader of this team?

JUSTIN JACKSON: Obviously Marcus is a leader for us, but I wouldn't say it's just Marcus. Everybody has come in with the mindset that we can really do this. And so with that mindset, I think going into the off-season everybody tried to work on their weaknesses, everybody tried to do whatever they could do to make themselves better to make the team better.

With that, Coach always comes into practice and says if we do all the little things, do everything we can, we have a chance to be really good. And for that, it just gives us all motivation to keep doing everything we can, to work as hard as we can.

Q. You guys have really bonded well, it seems like. Seems like you like each other. Where does that come from?

JUSTIN JACKSON: You know, honestly I don't know. When me, Theo and Joel stepped foot as freshmen on campus, we all just clicked. I think that'll be a big aspect of the team this year as far as staying together through tough times and just being able to do

everything for each other. I think that's a big thing for us is everything we do, we try to do for each other, whether it's on the court or off the court. So being as close as we are, I think it'll be really good for us.

Q. Who is the most competitive guy on your team during practice?

JUSTIN JACKSON: During practice? That's tough, honestly. I'm going to have to say Joel or James can get a little heated. He can get a little heated sometimes. Maybe it's just him being so big, it's kind of intimidating for me. But I think everybody honestly this year, it's a whole different level of everybody wanting to win, all the competitions, everything we do in practice. If we lose, everybody is upset. And so I think whenever we step out there on the court, if everybody can keep that same fire, it'll be really good for us.

Q. It's not often in college basketball anymore that you have so much upper class leadership and the kind of players that you guys bring back. From your perspective as a sophomore, how does that manifest itself day in and day out?

JUSTIN JACKSON: It's huge. We've got guys that have been there before, and with that, even me as a sophomore and the other two sophomores that we have, we've even been to the Sweet 16, and with that, we know what it takes.

Last year we didn't have it all the way, but now we know what it takes to be one of those great teams in the country, and so that'll really help us.

Q. You sort of smiled and laughed it off when you said that Joel intimidates you a little bit. Are there things that really do intimidate you?

JUSTIN JACKSON: No. I mean, when it comes down to it, there's not really things that intimidate me. Obviously Joel is a big huge being, one of the biggest guys I've ever been around. But there's nothing really that really can intimidate me on the court.

Q. Do you think Roy sending you to this event was giving you any kind of a nudge of what he expects from you this year?

JUSTIN JACKSON: You know, a little bit. I think part of it was Marcus and Brice didn't want to come. But obviously Coach definitely has confidence in me. I started seeing that a little bit more last year.

So to be here is definitely a blessing, definitely an honor to be able to represent the University. We're just looking forward to the season.