

# Atlantic Coast Conference

## Operation Basketball

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### Roy Williams

North Carolina Tar Heels



**Q. You've got a lot of established commodities on your team with Marcus and Kennedy and Brice.**

**What are you expecting to see out of the now sophomore class? How much improvement and how important are they to your overall success?**

COACH WILLIAMS: Well, you know, Marcus and Brice, particularly, seniors who have played a great deal since they were sophomores; Kennedy a junior. You don't see a lot of experienced teams in the top 20 level. You know, Marcus could have gone to the NBA. No one else was beating down the doors for any of the other guys, but they're pretty doggone good. Now all of a sudden we're here.

It's fun at practice. They know if I do repeat something from the year before, they jump into it quicker. They help coach the other kids to get it quicker. I've always said every coach would take talent, your second choice would be experience and if you could get experienced talent that's the best you could have. And I think we have some of that.

You go back and look in the recent memory, pick a number, 10 or 15 years, most of those teams that win the national championship with the only exception that jumps out at me is Kevin Ollie where he had a great run there with Connecticut. But most of those teams have two or three or four No. 1 draft choices, but my guys have hung around and hopefully used as a fuel the way we felt after the Wisconsin game last year. We had a seven-point lead with 11 minutes to go, and led Duke at one point in both second halves of those games and Duke and Wisconsin played for the national championship.

So we think we've got a chance. I don't know if we've got those two or three or four No. 1 draft choices on our team that I talked about, but it's a fun group of kids, and I'm really enjoying going to practice every day except my stupid knees.

**Q. Can you address Pinson and Justin and Joel, what you expect from them?**

COACH WILLIAMS: Well, it's a really good class. Justin started almost every game, if not every game last year, with the exception of senior day, got better and better as better as the season went along.

Joel Berry was out for a little while injured.

Theo broke his foot in the Wake Forest game, sat out about six weeks and tried to come back, didn't do it, and then had surgery, I think, May 4th, didn't play a single pick-up game all year, all summer. The first time he played five on five after our season was over is when we officially started practice this year. I think next week he'll be completely released to do everything.

And all three of those guys are going to play a heck of a lot for us and be extremely important to us. I think Justin can take another huge step. I think that Joel Berry can do the same thing. And Theo, even though he didn't get as much time as those two guys because of the injury, he's had some real moments at practice.

If I can get him to play nearly as well as he talks, we'll be really good, because that young man can talk with the best of them, but it's a fun kind of thing. I'm enjoying him immensely, enjoying the heck out of him almost being healthy.

**Q. Your teams at Kansas were well known for their defensive pressures, especially in the backcourt. Does this team have the depth and the athleticism to play defense the way you like to play?**

COACH WILLIAMS: You know, last year I didn't think we were a very good defensive team, and we've challenged them -- I told Tony this this morning, I asked our guys, maybe it was Monday's practice, I said, who was the best defensive team we played last year? And everybody sort of stood around and looked. And Marcus, of course, said Virginia. I said, they won the last two regular season championships. And I'm trying to get our guys to have a little more pride defensively in that.

We're having a geographical problem because I'm trying to explain to them that we wanted to pick up our pressure at the mid court line and they keep thinking that's the foul line instead of the mid court line. We've got to get through some things like that. But I really hope that we'll be a lot better defensively.

**Q. Kennedy was telling us about a sign that you put in the locker room to remind them of maybe games that you guys let slip away. Can you tell us**

**about that sign and why did you decide to do that?**

COACH WILLIAMS: Well, the sign says very easily we need to finish better, what can you do to help. Let's finish better. There were eight games last year where we had leads in the second half and ended up losing. We did come back a couple of times. We had a couple of those the other way.

But I think we're a mature team now, much more mature, to say the least, than we were last year, and we've got to be able to finish games. You've got to have some toughness about you, and toughness is not just being willing to fight somebody. Toughness is making a better box out, diving on the floor, getting the loose ball, or simply do what you're told to do. If I tell you to go across the lane and set a screen, guess what I want you to do, go across the lane and set a screen, and don't forget that just because it's a one-point game and you're trying to do something that momma or grandma like. We have that in the weight room, we've got it in the locker room, but they've still got to come up with it and get something from it.

**Q. You of course like to play fast. A lot of the other coaches and teams in the league don't like to play fast. You've seen a lot of different ways to kind of slow you down. Do you feel like you've learned anything in all those late night creative brainstorming sessions about how can we get the tempo up? Have you learned anything and will the new rules help you?**

COACH WILLIAMS: I personally don't think that going from 35 to 30 is that big a difference. I was coaching when we started out with a 45 clock. Well, started out we had no clock, and then went to 45 and that was a big difference. And 45 to 35 was quite a difference, also. I'm not so sure that 35 to 30 is that big a deal.

We all the time are concerned about trying to speed teams up because I really love to play fast. We've never had a team that played as fast as I wanted them to play. I had a team at Kansas that averaged 92. We had, I guess, our '09 team averaged about 90.

We've been practicing this year, it's been fun. We've been practicing with a 15-second clock and trying to get them to go harder and be more aggressive and attack more and see if that helps us. You know, it's been fun to watch. They say it's a hard drill, but that's the worst thing to tell a coach because he's going to do it more.

**Q. Outside looking in, you seem to have a lot of fun-loving guys, like you were talking about Pinson and Kennedy comes off that way, as well Joel James. Who's maybe the guy on the team that has the fire in his belly that you would like the other**

**players to adopt?**

COACH WILLIAMS: You know, Marcus is one of those kids that you find a difficult time finding anything wrong with him. He's got every part of the game, every part of the makeup that you want. He loves having fun. He loves to laugh and sometimes the guys get on him, or somebody hid in his locker one time and he opened it up and they jumped out and you'd thought he had a heart attack. He will not get in an elevator with more than one person. So he's a little whacko.

But he's the one that's the most serious guy, and he's the one that's telling our guys all the time, hey, we've got some big time dreams and goals. But it is, it's a fun, fun team. We've got to get tougher.

Kennedy, I'm scared to death what Kennedy said to you guys today. There's no telling what's going to come out of his mouth. But if you do see Kennedy, just call him 10, and then he will just turn every shade that you can because the fact of the matter is that they took 40 ccs of fluid out of my knee a couple of weeks ago. I did not miss one practice. They took 10 ccs out of Kennedy's knee, he missed a week. So I just nicknamed him 10. Now, he'll tell you it's the other way around, but trust me, I'm telling you the truth.

Think of what that young man has done. Came in at 319, he's touched 258 this year on the scales. He's done some good things to change his play. He's a fun-loving guy, a kid that I love being with, and I'm just pushing him a little bit more, but I'm very fortunate to have a great group.

**Q. Speaking of Kennedy, he said adding Sean to the staff, Sean May, was really important to him. Can you kind of compare those two players since you coached them both?**

COACH WILLIAMS: Well, they were two guys that have fought a tremendously difficult battle of losing weight. Everybody tells me that's the hardest thing in the world to do.

Sean refocused his energy, focused on doing something that was great for his body, and it had immediate dividends with his play. My first year back at North Carolina in '04 we played Texas in the second round NCAA game and they had about four 6'9", 6'10" guys that were running in and out at Sean and he just wanted the game to be over with. But he focused after that, and his focus and determination made him lose a lot of weight, change the weight around, and he became the most dominating player in college basketball in '05.

Kennedy has had to lose a lot of weight from 319, like I say, down. He's seen 258 on the scales. That's really, really difficult.

Now, Sean has to take that new body and do different things. Don't think that you can't explode up and shoot your jump hook, that you always have to do the double pump and lay it up against the guy's armpits or anything like that. Jump up in the air and be a better basketball player.

Kennedy has really paid a tremendous price, and I think he's getting it each and every day, and like I say, if you see him, call him 10. He'll try to turn it around, but that's the truth of the matter.