

Atlantic Coast Conference

Operation Basketball

Wednesday October 24, 2018



Jim Christian

Jordan Chatman

Ky Bowman

Boston College Eagles

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Boston College.

Q. Coach, you lost Jerome Robinson to the NBA which obviously is a big loss. On the other hand, you returned four starters. How would you compare where you are coming into this season at Boston College with your previous seasons?

COACH CHRISTIAN: I think it's been really helpful for us to have those many guys back, especially in practice. For the first time I feel like we're not explaining things for the first time to everybody. And really an important ingredient is that we have older guys who are able to teach the younger guys.

It's something that we all think is important. But we've never had a chance to have that. So for the first time we've got guys who have been in the program in three years, and four years can explain some of the things we do and why we do it. I think we're just way ahead of where we were because of that.

Q. Ky, your point production per game is going up steadily, your freshman year to sophomore year, what do you expect of yourself from your junior season?

KY BOWMAN: To be more consistent from the 3-point line is a big thing for me. Also being a leader on the court and to establish the roles for other players to help us get these road wins and home wins.

Q. Ky and Jordan, last year, with Jerome as the third shooter, the three of you were very difficult for opposing defenses to cover. Without Jerome, maybe they can key on two of you, unless you find a third shooter. Is there a third shooter in the hopper?

KY BOWMAN: So the freshmen coming in is going to help a lot. But also the players we still have in the system from there are maturing into the level is going to help a lot knowing big shots and just every shot we take needs to go in. So it's going to help us a lot as far as dedicating on one person but also having to look out for the whole team.

JORDAN CHATMAN: I think we have more versatility this year. Steffon and Niko are both back, and they've taken steps, as well as myself and Ky, and the freshmen coming in will help us a lot.

Q. Jordan, there's a line in the media guide that says last year the Eagles were 17-9 when you scored 10 points or more. Is that a coincidence or is that just sort of what you bring to the floor?

JORDAN CHATMAN: I just try to be aggressive and take the shots I can get and I think it just works out when everyone's aggressive and trying to play their game, good things happen.

Q. You averaged about seven rebounds a game. Not every 6'1" player does that. How do you explain -- does your football background come into play here? How do you explain your success on the glass?

KY BOWMAN: I say that we know that we need to get in transition so the easiest way for us to get into transition is me getting the rebound to start the break. So it helps out a lot if I just go for the rebound, just play off that.

Q. Coach, from the podium couple years ago football and men's basketball did not have a great run throughout the league. But since then everything is ticking up. From a patience standpoint, from building a product, building a program, what's your comment from where you were a couple years ago to where you are today?

COACH CHRISTIAN: It's part of a plan and I had a plan when I took over this job and there's no timeframe for that. You don't know how quickly things will come together. But I think just by sticking with our plan and getting really key pieces to remain loyal. And I think that's the hardest part of rebuilding anything, because we understand how hard it is to just pass one team in this league.

So I think those key pieces, their ability to stay loyal to me, our program and to Boston College have attracted other players now, because their story is out there. And they can tell it. That there was nothing there. They believed in it and now these other guys were coming and now they get a chance to see it. And once that happens it just keeps going. And that's how things

get built. It's not an easy process but you have to stay loyal to the plan and believe in what you do and we never wavered from it, not for one second.

Q. That same type of patience, have you been taught the patience? Have you naturally been patient players? You obviously have to be part of that building of the program as well, you're reaction, Ky?

KY BOWMAN: I say going into my first year we all had to believe in one thing and that's just being able to compete against other teams. But also being able to know that we have each other's backs. So we stepped into an environment where we knew what we was getting ourselves into, but also knowing that every day we was going to fight to bid ourselves throughout the whole system.

JORDAN CHATMAN: Playing in the ACC, we all know it's a tough conference. So patience is just something that we've had to learn, just to take every game step-by-step and as we've trusted in the coaching staff good things have happened.

Q. Coach, when you lose a player to the first round of the NBA draft, do you feel like you can be better this next year and what have you seen in practice that makes you think that this year's team can make strides from where you were last year?

COACH CHRISTIAN: I think you're going to be different because a lot of stuff that we did, Jerome was a big part of that, in terms of things we ran and options that we had off those particular plays because of how he was going to be guarded.

But in a lot of ways, our team, this year, because we added two impactful freshmen, in my mind we literally have six starters. I couldn't tell you today which group of the five are going to start. But I know -- group of the six, rather, are going to start.

But I think our team with the addition of those guys and then the continual growth of not only the returning players but some who played a lot some of the returning players who came off the bench, I think in a lot ways our team is more versatile we can do a lot more things now than we could, and I think that helps.

Obviously you never want to lose a great player. Although we couldn't be happier for Jerome. Happy when it all happened throughout the whole process for him. But I think in a lot of ways, our team, now, because of the addition of new players, is a lot more versatile.

Q. If I recall, you had a front court injury last year. And there were some teams you had a size

disadvantage against. How would you assess your height and strength in the front court this year?

COACH CHRISTIAN: Again, Steffon Mitchell is the all-time leading freshman rebounder in the school. Think about that. There's some unbelievable players at Boston College, unrecruited player. Nik Popovic is back as a junior. If you watched our team the last eight or ten games when he was starting to get consistent, he always had ability, when he was consistent we were a different team.

So another year of growth for him. You add a Jairus Hamilton, who is 6'8", 240 pounds, coming in the door, explosively athletic. And the development of John Carlos Reyes, for us it's formidable. And we just have to keep developing and getting better. We have a guard that's a unique guy.

We might not have been as tall. But I didn't really look at many games, but they outtoughed us. We weren't a team that outpost every play. We didn't have to do those things because we had some tough kids, some physically strong, tough kids, and I think it's only gotten better.

Q. Jim, this question is for you. Chris Mack, one of two new coaches in the league this year, what do you think with the new style of play he's bringing to Louisville, what are the unique challenges their team is going to pose to you guys this season?

COACH CHRISTIAN: Obviously he's an unbelievable -- I've known Chris a long time. I scrimmaged against his teams when I was at Ohio. I'm familiar with him. We have similar backgrounds, other people who taught him also taught me.

You know you're going to have a hard-nosed, tough basketball team that's going to fight every possession. They're going to execute very, very well. He's just a phenomenal coach.

And so I'm expecting nothing but great success from him. He's had nothing but success. And I think his adjustments to the league will happen. I think there's some adjustments you have to make because of the unique styles of a lot of teams in this league and you have to do it on short preparations.

When you're going from one style of you're playing a Virginia to the next game you're playing Syracuse, well, not everything you do against every team that plays that way works against them. So you're going to have to do some things that in a short period of time that these players are going to have to grasp to give yourself a chance.

Q. Ky, you've been given some good-natured

ribbing about your hair over the last couple of years. One, how did it start? And two, how do you decide what color it might be for a game?

KY BOWMAN: It started coming out of high school. So every year that we went to the state championship for football, all our teammates would dye our hair blond. So my senior year I didn't play football. So I already had it blond. But I started to cut it out. But then again I got it back. So I got tired of seeing everybody with blond, so I decided to go red.

But then I had one game where I dyed it jet black and Coach didn't like it. And we just had a horrible game that day. So I decided not to dye it back. So I kept it colored now.

Q. Coach, your reaction to the hair at all?

COACH CHRISTIAN: I'm excited about it. I'm excited about it. I think I told him that if we make the NCAA Tournament I'll go red, too. If he wants me to go red, if that's what it takes to get us there, we'll do that.

But he's a unique guy. The enthusiasm he brings to everybody in our program, everybody at the school, it's a once-in-a-lifetime type personality.

Q. Jordan, you've been on a bit of a basketball journey. Can you take us through the changes in your life and how it is you ultimately decided on BC?

JORDAN CHATMAN: Yeah. You know, just I met with the coaching staff when they started recruiting me when I decided to transfer. And, you know, I didn't play a lot in my previous school. And they had a lot of confidence in me and believed in me. So that was the biggest reason I chose to come play for them.

But, yeah, it's been a lot of hard work, a lot of patience. And I just trusted in the process and good things have happened.

Q. Coach, to follow back up on building a program, do you have to have a trophy this year in order to say that you had a successful season?

COACH CHRISTIAN: I think there's one goal and one goal in mind. Everybody else in this league, we're going to try to do what we can to put ourselves in position to compete for the regular season championship and play in the NCAA Tournament. That's our goal and should be the goal for every team here. And we're no different.

We have some good aspirations. And I just feel a different swagger about our team this year. I think just the way we practice, the way we approach things, this is just a different maturity. Some of that is confidence. Some of that is we know, if we do what we're supposed

to do, we can play with anybody in the country. And that's got to carry over.

Q. Thinking back to your first year in the league, have you made changes in the way you play offensively and defensively as you've gotten more and better players?

COACH CHRISTIAN: I think you have to. I think because the players are different. So they come with different strengths, different abilities. So, yeah, we have. And I think the other thing, we've worked on our area this year of concentration. We have to become a better defensive team, especially on the road. More consistent.

But I think we spent a lot of time talking about what we did, what broke down and how do we fix it and keep playing in that possession, as well as working on some secondary defenses that we can go to when things just aren't going our way.

We started doing that a little bit last year. It was effective for us in a lot of games. But I think, again, it comes down to understanding and being through it.

So we have now -- we have points of reference with this group of guys because everybody's back, minus Jerome, that we can go to and say: Man, look at this play, look at our attitude or our mindset or determination on this play, imagine if we upped it a bit what would have happened.

We were one of those teams, a ball goes in here, ball goes in there, Teddy Hawkins doesn't get hurt, we'd be having a different conversation about where our program was. And I think our guys feel that.

Q. I'm going to stay on building the program aspect. How do you design a non-conference schedule with the thought of building towards something? What are the variables that go into those games outside of the league?

COACH CHRISTIAN: That's a great question. I mean, it changes. It changes because there's the fine line of you want to get confidence. You want to work on things but you also want to build yourself a resumé. So we wanted to challenge ourselves on the road a little bit in non-conference.

So we're going to a Texas A&M. We're going to a DePaul. We play an NCAA Tournament team in Providence at home. And obviously the ACC-Big Ten challenge and 18 grueling games.

It's a fine line between you have to really get a good gauge on your team: What can we handle. Where we need to -- different styles we're going to play against

that are similar to some of the things we play against in the year in the ACC play. So it's a great question. I wish I had a simple answer to it.

Q. Ky, I think we asked you this question last year. Again on a lighter note. Being from Havelock, North Carolina in the Tar Heel state are you getting used to the Boston winters yet?

KY BOWMAN: It's been easy for me to get through, as far as living on the coast, getting all the wind from the beaches. It's easier for me to adjust to the Boston weather.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.