

Atlantic Coast Conference

Operation Basketball

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Danny Manning

Chaundee Brown

Brandon Childress

Wake Forest Demon Deacons

THE MODERATOR: We welcome in the Demon Deacons of Wake Forest. Who wants our first question?

Q. Brandon, you're stepping into a role as the point guard of this team. How have you prepared for that? We talked in the summer about how you were preparing. Since then, what have you been doing as the season quickly approaches?

BRANDON CHILDRESS: I'm just taking it one day at a time, cherishing these moments with these guys, building the chemistry, building a better bond between one another, helping these guys out.

A lot of young guys on the team, a lot of new faces. Four of us returning from last year. Basically we got a whole new team. Just showing them how we do things over here at Wake Forest.

I'm probably maybe the only guy on the team besides an Anthony Bilas and Aaron Spivey in terms of post-season success, in terms of making it to the NCAA tournament. Helping them out with that so we can get back in the swing of things and put Wake Forest back on the map and put the program where it needs to be going.

Q. Brandon and coach, obviously last year didn't finish the way you would have liked. Besides the incoming freshmen, what is different about this team this year that should flip the script?

BRANDON CHILDRESS: Our versatility is going to be a big thing for us. We got a lot of guys that can play multiple positions. We didn't have a lot of that last year. I think this year that will help us out a lot, especially how we transition on to this new year.

DANNY MANNING: Well, I like to agree with what Brandon just mentioned. I think our versatility this year will be something we'll be able to lean on at different points throughout the course of the season, whether it's defensively or offensively. Just the mix of guys.

Yeah, we have a lot of new blood, but this group has kind of bonded really well. They're very well connected. They go out and they compete at a high level. That's something that for us as a coaching staff we enjoy and we respect.

We have to continue to take steps each and every day. But we're looking forward to stepping out on the court and representing our university and our program in a way we feel like it needs to be represented. That's at the highest competitive level.

Q. What did you learn about yourself and college basketball in your freshman year, Chaundee?

CHAUNDEE BROWN: This is a tough conference. Every day you got to bring it. You're playing one of the best teams in the conference. You got to bring it every day. You can't take days off. You got to stack days, like Coach Manning has been telling us every day. We have to buy into the principles they've been teaching us and just come together.

Q. You had a good recruiting year. What do you expect the five freshmen will be able to contribute this year?

DANNY MANNING: We feel like they're a very talented group. We feel like they have an opportunity or will have an opportunity to have a contribution throughout the course of the year.

But they're also freshmen. At some point in time, all of them had really special moments in practice, then they've all had their freshmen moments, as well.

For us, it's going to be continuing to challenge them, encourage them to enjoy the process. It's not something that's going to happen overnight. Chaundee for us played quite a few minutes last year as a true freshman, about 20 minutes a game, started every game for us. There were some nights last year that he played really, really well, then there were some nights he was a freshman. That's to be expected.

The biggest thing is making sure you stay encouraged throughout the course of the process, getting better, challenging your teammates to get better, go out there on the court and find ways to help your team be successful.

This freshman group has definitely come in and been willing to do that. The two guys on my left and right are part of the reason we had that mindset, because they are helping these guys in this process.

Q. Danny, you mentioned a couple weeks ago the versatility for this team wasn't quite there yet.

Update on that. Then also when you mentioned versatility, I'm curious, is your philosophy on whether it means kind of the position-less basketball or multiple guys able to play multiple spots two through five, one through five?

DANNY MANNING: To be honest with you, I think it's all the above. I think we have a chance to be extremely versatile. In order to be versatile, you have to know multiple spots. So we've got a lot of guys that we're teaching spots to. They're picking it up. But we still have to continue to work, to have a better understanding of those spots.

As far as how we want to play, we think with our skill set and versatility, we have a lot of guys that we can put in different positions out on the court, take advantage of certain things in terms of matchups and things of that nature.

It's early on. Getting freshmen to know, Hey, you need to learn this spot, now you need to learn this spot, that spot. It just takes a little bit of time. We feel they do have the skill set and the talent to be versatile, but we also have to understand all those positions and what we're looking for, as well.

Q. How much more difficult is it to establish versatility when you're trying to work in five freshmen and two grad transfers, some newcomers there?

DANNY MANNING: That's our challenge (laughter). It is what it is.

I think for us as a coaching staff, our guys have come in, they compete at a high level. They have a thirst for trying to understand bigger things out, whether it's coming in the office and talking with coaches about different things we're trying to accomplish defensively or offensively, coming in and watching film, looking at mistakes, figuring out ways to try to eliminate those mistakes.

As long as we continue with that mindset, that's going to speed up that learning curve.

Q. Chaundee, with 10 new guys on the roster, at what point in the summer did you look around and be like, Who are all these guys?

CHAUNDEE BROWN: It didn't hit me till, like, the middle of the summer. When we first started

practicing, a lot of people didn't know the plays, did not really realize that a lot of people went out and a lot of people come in. We just got to buy in as a group.

I'm glad we had the summer to get the freshmen on campus, to get them to know the drills, some of the plays.

I would say the middle of the summer when I realized it.

Q. Coach Manning, obviously the FBI investigation in college basketball has been a big talk for really the last year. I wanted to ask you, because as a former elite college basketball player, now a coach, has any of this kind of surprised you? What are your thoughts as far as what's been going on?

DANNY MANNING: Well, for us, it's certainly something that has caught the attention and brought a lot of additional attention to our sport. But right now I think we're still in the fact-finding phases of this situation or this ordeal. I think there are a lot of other things that will come about.

When you look at our game of basketball in college, I think it's at a good place. I think we have one of the premier events when you talk about the Final Four, all of athletics. That's something that is very special, regardless of whether you're talking about the Super Bowl or the NBA Finals or the World Series. The Final Four from college basketball ranks up there.

I think our game is in a very unique place in terms of the attention that we're getting because of this. I don't think it's as bad as what it's portrayed out there. Obviously there's some smoke, but we don't know the extent of the fire. We're still trying to figure that out.

I still think college basketball's a wonderful sport. We've got to continue to help these young people use this sport to gain their education and hopefully have a professional career of some sort, and if not, get prepared for life.

Q. Brandon, an assistant coach, who happens to be your dad. It's one thing to be a high school student in which you're coming home to dad every day, but now you're seeing him every day.

BRANDON CHILDRESS: It's definitely an adjustment. Biggest thing for me coming in as a freshman, understanding, taking coaching, understanding that taking it from Coach Childress and dad. That's kind of the battle I had in the beginning. As time comes along, things have gotten much better before. I'm not saying it was bad before, but it's an adjustment from, Hey, dad how can I do this, to, That's Coach Childress talking to me, coaching me, telling me what to do, how to

become whether it's a better leader, my jump shot, putting guys in the right spots and things like that.

Sometimes it's intriguing just to hear like, This is my dad talking to me, then I have to snap out of it, understand that this it's Coach Childress.

One thing I do like about our coaching staff, Coach Manning can vouch for this, his son went through the same thing in college. I talk to Evan a lot about going through it now. Evan helps me out a lot with this. I appreciate him every day, giving me advice on taking coaching from your father, not taking it personal, just understanding that it's Coach Childress, not my father talking to me, as well.

Q. Coach, you gave a half smile in there. What has been your perspective of that evolution either with the Childresses or Mannings?

DANNY MANNING: I went through it. My father was an assistant coach in Kansas. We kind of coined the phrase that coaches' kids probably get a little more aggressive counseling than other people at certain times because you get that 24/7 when you go home. Understanding that.

But it comes from a good place. He understands that we want what's best for him, we want what's best for all of our student-athletes. We're very fortunate.

The one thing that does not get enough credit for us as college coaches, we get a chance to impact lives every day. We get a chance to coach these young men and help prepare them. It's no different from Brandon. He just happens to be one of our sons.

We're going to coach and help prepare him, get him prepared for life, just like anyone else. To me, I think it's kind of a cool story that you're able to be with your father day in and day out. He can see that growth, from the father's side, not necessarily a coach side, but the father side. I think that's pretty cool.

Q. At the previous press conference, Leonard Hamilton was talking about growing up an ACC fan, talked about his excitement about having the tournament in Charlotte. You grew up in North Carolina. What are your thoughts as someone who grew up an ACC fan and is now an ACC coach about having the tournament cycle here for a couple years?

DANNY MANNING: I like it in this area (smiling). Obviously for me, growing up, I remember being in junior high, I remember being in elementary school, teachers rolling in TVs, plugging them in. They're still teaching class, but you're watching the games on TV. That was just a great time.

Even so for me, the NCAA tournament is a huge deal. But growing up in this area, it's the ACC tournament. That's the tournament that you always talked about.

So I enjoy it in this area. I think our area has embraced it. To me, it just feeling right being in this general vicinity.

Q. Chaundee, what kind of team are you bringing back here in March?

CHAUNDEE BROWN: A winning team, most of all. Like Coach Manning was saying earlier, very versatile, a lot of newcomers, freshmen, grad transfers. We can just buy in and switch up positions, switch up defenses. We'll use our length.

Q. Does it help you to see this building today as you think about the season and the progress that it's going to take to get to March?

CHAUNDEE BROWN: It does. It does most of all. That's our goal since the beginning of the summer, since we got on campus, just to get here.

Q. Chaundee, what has been one of the things that's impressed you or the main thing about the freshmen so far?

CHAUNDEE BROWN: I would say the bond they have with each other. They're really close. They came in, a lot of chemistry. They acted like they know each other for years already.

As a team, it's like that right now. We act like we've been knowing each other for years, hang out on weekends, we don't have practices, get food after practices, whatever we're dealing. It feels like a whole bonding team.

Q. Coach, do you have to have a trophy to call the year successful?

DANNY MANNING: It helps (smiling).

You know what, I mean, a lot of it, too, is everybody's definition of success. For us, we want to obviously win as many basketball games as we possibly can. That's part of the equation or the definition of success.

But also it's seeing your young people walk across that stage and get their diploma. It's also seeing them five years down the road when they bring their son and their daughter to practice. It's also seven years down the road when they get a promotion at the job and now they become one of the leaders of the company that they're working at.

The definition of success is very broad. At the end of the day we want to help all of our young people we

come in contact with get prepared for life.

THE MODERATOR: Wake Forest, thank you. Good luck this year.