

# NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Four

Monday, March 17, 2025

Dayton, Ohio, USA

UD Arena

**North Carolina Tar Heels**

**Coach Hubert Davis**

**RJ Davis**

**Seth Trimble**

Media Conference



how we could get the opportunity to play in Milwaukee, and I always joked about with Coach Davis bringing the team to Milwaukee, playing a game against Marquette, whatever it is.

Now we actually get the opportunity. A bunch of things were going through my mind, but that was definitely the biggest one. I've seen a lot of people say, I don't know if you're familiar with this, clip farming or aura farming. That's what we say in this generation.

I seen a lot of jokes from it, but I was really just locked in on the show and super excited in the moment.

## **Q. When you saw Louisville pop up at 8...**

RJ DAVIS: Yeah, Louisville had a really good year and I feel like an 8 seed was kind of disrespectful to them.

But then I didn't really know where we were going to end up at. It was kind of just like a guessing game, like what seed they were going to be. So yeah.

## **Q. Talk about the thought of Louisville opening up as an 8 seed and where that was in your minds.**

SETH TRIMBLE: I just took it as a sign of disrespect to our conference, honestly. I know we've had somewhat of a down year this year in the ACC, but I feel like every single year once it comes to March, the ACC does a great job.

But I think it was just a little bit disrespectful. Louisville had a great year. They had a really good tournament run in the ACC Tournament. That's all I really saw it as. I wasn't worried about it for us.

## **Q. Can you describe the last 25-ish hours for you guys, finding out where you were going to play, who you were playing? Can you kind of describe what --**

SETH TRIMBLE: It's been a whole lot of anticipation, I feel like. We had practice yesterday, and we practiced around 4:00 I think, and while we were practicing we had no idea.

Coach Davis gathered us around and told us as of right now he doesn't know, but we're going to practice and we're going to focus like we're playing in the next couple days.

THE MODERATOR: RJ, just your excitement last night in seeing your name on the board?

RJ DAVIS: I was very excited seeing our name pop up on the screen and being in the play-in tournament to get an opportunity to play.

It's March Madness. This is what you play for. You set a goal at the beginning of the year to be in this tournament and succeed. Just to see our name pop up on the screen, I was just overly excited. I had a smile across my face and I was ready to hoop.

SETH TRIMBLE: Super, super grateful, super blessed. I didn't have the most expressive reaction, but I was just really locked in on the show and just saw our name really quickly, and then I saw that we'd have a chance to be able to play in Milwaukee where I'm from.

It was a bunch of emotions for me. But like RJ said, just to get a chance to play in this tournament and succeed here, which you want to do, it's just a real experience and something that only a few people can accomplish. So we're grateful.

## **Q. You mentioned your reaction on that video that went viral. What was going through your mind and what have you heard about your reaction?**

SETH TRIMBLE: I was just shocked. I expected ourselves to make the tournament, but the show had literally just started, so I was kind of just like zoned out a little bit or locked in, whatever you want to say.

Then I just -- it was a crazy full circle moment for me because my dad and I two days ago were just talking about



... when all is said, we're done.®

He said most likely be playing Tuesday or Wednesday, and we all knew that was the deal.

But a whole lot of anticipation. We watched the show as a team, as y'all saw. We were finally able to just release that excitement when we saw the good news.

RJ DAVIS: I agree with what Seth said. It was a quick turnaround for us, obviously things happening so quick. You find out that you're playing either Tuesday or Wednesday; we found out last night that we were playing Tuesday so we had to hop on a plane. Just didn't know what time we were leaving yet.

And then just overly mentally getting ready to play our best game because obviously travel happens and you've got to pack and understand that you're going down there to play a game, and then hopefully, God willing, be ready to play the next day or the next night or the same night over to Milwaukee. It was really just mentally preparing yourself for traveling, but at the same time we're going to win some games.

Quick turnaround from practice to watching the selection show Sunday and then just going back to your apartments and just getting ready for a road trip.

**Q. Just wanted to ask, if you think about the season as a whole, all the way back to Kansas, Maui, so much is happening, going on, the ups and downs. Do you in any way look at getting into this tournament as sort of like a clean start or a clean slate, given the ride this thing has looked like this season?**

RJ DAVIS: Yeah, 100 percent. I think anytime you enter March it's a new season, and given the way our season went, it's been an up-and-down year.

But been very fortunate and grateful for the opportunity we've had to be in this tournament and kind of have like a clean slate. It's 0-0. What happened in the regular season, what happened in the ACC Tournament is now in the past, and we're focused on winning some games in March.

We've got to have that mindset and that mentality going into it because it can be anyone's game, and I think that's been shown previously throughout the whole years of March Madness.

But it's a fun time. At the same time, it's just one game at a time, and you've got to have that approach. You've got to have that preparation going into each game, each practice, because it could be anyone's game. It's a clean slate for sure.

SETH TRIMBLE: I agree absolutely with what RJ said. It's a clean slate. We're not looking back on what went wrong this season and what went right for us this year, because if we do that we'll get left behind and there's no time for that.

We're looking on to San Diego State today and then we go from there. It's 0-0. But yeah, there's no time to look back into the past.

**Q. In the past seasons teams have talked about the do-or-die feeling in the First Four. How do you stay calm and confident in that kind of environment?**

SETH TRIMBLE: Been do or die for us for the last month, so we're good. Simple as that.

RJ DAVIS: I agree with what Seth said.

**Q. RJ, this is your fifth year with the Tar Heels, showing your loyalty and commitment towards the team. How are you going to use your experience and knowledge coming into the First Four tournament?**

RJ DAVIS: That's a great question. Really just rely on my teammates and my coaching staff. Obviously being in college for a long time, five years, but then experiencing what I've experienced in March Madness and NCAA tournaments, once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, from playing in the Final Four, National Championships to Sweet 16s to Elite 8s, those are what you dream of. It's a hard route to get there.

My approach, my mentality is kind of just stay confident, stay composed, one game at a time, and understand that we have a team behind us that can really do a lot of great things.

Like Seth said, it was a do-or-die situation for us for the past month, and whether we realized it or not, we performed at a high level. I think that's a good sign for us, knowing that when our backs were against the wall and the pressure was on us, we were able to perform at a high level.

We don't really see it as pressure, and I think that's what would be my message to the team. It's really about the opportunity. What are you going to do with the opportunity. Are you going to take advantage of it? I feel like we did it the past month, and we've just got to carry this over into this stretch.

**Q. You posted earlier about a day ago that you're very blessed to have this opportunity. Can you further explain what you meant by that post?**



RJ DAVIS: Yeah, I just rely on my relationship with God and putting all my faith and trust into Him. He doesn't make any mistakes. You may always have questions of why things are happening to you and why things may not go your way, but I lean on Him when times are rough and even when they're going well for me.

What I meant by that is just I'm blessed, blessed to be in another position to put on this jersey one last time. Because it's my last year of playing basketball, so I want to go out with a bang, and God just told me he wasn't done with me yet. So it's really just take full advantage of it.

**Q. You guys coming in as an 11 seed, last team in the field, it's the lowest UNC has ever been seeded. Do you feel as if you have something to prove in this tournament?**

SETH TRIMBLE: Absolutely. Absolutely. I think we've all kind of felt the hate, the disagreement, all that, from everybody outside of the Carolina family and fan base.

We're just running with it. We definitely feel like we've got something to prove. We wanted to be better this year, but we deal with the cards at hand. So absolutely.

RJ DAVIS: Yeah, 100 percent. For us to be considered an 11 team and to have people asking, do you think you're a tournament team, that irks my soul because I know we are and I know what we're capable of. It's really just about proving ourselves right than people wrong.

**Q. RJ, when the Tar Heels are at their best, what does that basketball look like?**

RJ DAVIS: When the Tar Heels are at their best, that basketball is so much fun to watch. You watch us get up and down in transition. You watch us for a full 40-minute game executing our defensive game plan really well. We're sharing the basketball. It goes down the list.

You have multiple guys that can score in double figures any type of night, and we lay our hat on whatever it takes. That's been a huge emphasis for us. Coach Davis came up with that motto, and each game we always ask ourselves -- we always tell ourselves whatever it takes to win this game.

That's Carolina basketball for you, and that's when we're moving the right path and succeeding.

**Q. Seth, the best quality of this basketball team?**

SETH TRIMBLE: I think just the heart and the passion that

we've shown in spurts throughout the year, that is absolutely there. We haven't shown it every single minute of the season, we haven't shown it every game, but when it's there, you just feel and see kind of how much it just raises the whole level of this team.

**Q. For either of you guys, I wanted to talk a little bit specifically about Friday night and kind of after the Duke game. You got a day and a half until the selection show. Everyone is saying you're still in, now you're out. How did you manage those emotions? Obviously you go ahead and practice, but there's so much uncertainty and it's out of your control now. How did you guys kind of deal with that, and what were those emotions like?**

SETH TRIMBLE: For me personally, I was able to control myself. I was okay. I was confident when I was talking to the media and they were asking all these questions after the game. I was very confident that we put ourselves in a good enough position just to get a bid in this tournament.

I didn't worry because my dad always tells me, what God has for you, no man can be against. If he puts us in the tournament, we're in the tournament. If he doesn't put us in the tournament, then we're not.

Whatever happens, it's because of Him, and it's just the right thing, whether we appreciate it or not.

I was able to be at peace with it.

RJ DAVIS: Yeah, I completely agree with what Seth said. I just think after the game Friday going into Saturday you have a lot of emotions and feelings, thoughts about what's next, what's going to happen, the uncertainty level.

But I think worrying about it is out of your control. We have no control over whether we're going to make the tournament or not, and it was all up in the air and it was all in God's hands, and that's when you lean on Him the most. That's where Seth was saying and I'm saying, all of our faith and confidence was leaning on the Lord.

Yes, we're mad about the game, but at the same time, we still had to prep, and we knew or we understood that we could possibly be playing Tuesday.

It was kind of just like a deal with your emotions now but then be ready and be prepared to play Tuesday. That was really just everything that happened within the next 36, 48 hours.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, before we open it up to questions for the media, talk about your excitement last



night in seeing your name called.

HUBERT DAVIS: Well, yeah. I mean, the excitement was seeing the reaction of the guys when they saw our name being selected to the NCAA Tournament. As a coach, that's what drives you. That's what gives you joy, is to see the reaction and the happiness and the joy from the players.

To see how excited they were to be a part of this was something that I will remember for the rest of my life and something that always brings joy to my heart.

**Q. Hubert, I'm just curious, you come off a tough loss Friday night. You have time to wait before the selection show. How did you try to manage their emotions and kind of get to the point where you'd find out the answer on Sunday? That's a difficult time for kids and athletes to sort of deal with that uncertainty.**

HUBERT DAVIS: Well, I never looked at it in regards to managing their emotions. One of the things that we were all frustrated of how Friday night turned out in the game versus Duke.

My concern was with the players in regards to basketball. I thought -- I was so proud of their fight, being able to come back down from 24 in the second half and to put ourselves in a position to possibly win that game. It was a dramatic ending.

So my focus was on the players and supporting them and encouraging them from a hard-fought loss.

**Q. What's your preparation look like having such a quick turnaround from finding out you're playing in this game on Sunday and then having to play on Tuesday?**

HUBERT DAVIS: Yeah, I mean, this is -- the preparation is the same. We've played three games in a row in Maui. We've played three games in a row in the ACC Tournament. There's twice during conference season where we've had Saturday games and then had to play Monday against a different opponent on the road.

In regards to preparation and practice, none of that has changed, and we'll be prepared to play our best tomorrow against a really good San Diego State team.

**Q. Ian Jackson is a sixth man and also a freshman for the Tar Heels. What are your initial thoughts of how he's experiencing the beginning for his March Madness career and how he's initially feeling in general about this whole feeling?**

HUBERT DAVIS: I mean, all of them are really excited. I don't know the exact number, but at least I think half of our team -- most of our team, this is the first time that they've experienced the NCAA Tournament. They're excited, but they have no idea what they're excited about.

Ian this year has been one of our better players. Our success, a lot of it, has been directly tied to how talented Ian is and his ability to score, his ability to make plays on both ends of the floor, and just the type of kid and character he is.

It's been so much fun coaching him this past year, and he's somebody that always brings a smile and puts it on your face every day.

**Q. Coach Dutcher has coached for a long time, has a lot of experience, but he said this is a new experience for him. I'm thinking it's a new experience for you. I wonder what are your initial impressions of being in the First Four?**

HUBERT DAVIS: It's really not a new experience to me. It's a basketball game, and we're preparing the same way that we've prepared all season.

One of the messages that I consistently tell the guys is focus on what is real, and what we have control over is our preparation, our practice and our play, and the process in which we do it.

We'll be detailed in our approach and our practice today and have a good shootaround tomorrow and be excited and be ready to play tomorrow night.

**Q. Have you been here before? Do you have any history here?**

HUBERT DAVIS: First time. First time here in Dayton, so it's really exciting for me to be here.

**Q. This town loves its basketball, and these games are going to be -- they're going to have a lot of energy. How important is it to have the crowd on your side?**

HUBERT DAVIS: Well, I think it definitely helps, but I think it's going to be a packed house, and there's going to be a lot of energy in the building. And rightfully so. That's something that our players and our coaching staff, myself personally always feed off of and are really looking forward to it.

As I said before, this is my first time here to Dayton. Obviously my first time here for the First Four. I've seen it





on TV. To be able to experience it is something that I'm really looking forward to tomorrow night.

**Q. Do you anticipate any changes in tempo or style ahead of the San Diego State game?**

HUBERT DAVIS: For us or for --

**Q. For you guys, yeah.**

HUBERT DAVIS: No. I mean, for 35 games this is who we are. From an offensive standpoint, we've been clearly definitive that we like to play at a fast pace. We like to be the fastest team from free-throw line to free-throw line and our transitioning from defense to offense, regardless if it's a made, missed basket, turnover. We want to play at pace.

But it's also important for us to play with purpose and pace, taking care of the basketball and trying to dominate points in the paint through post and penetration and putting ourselves in a position to get to the free-throw line and generate really good threes off those penetrations and off those post catches.

That's something that we've done consistently offensively for 35 games, and we're not changing it for tomorrow night.

**Q. In looking at your last 10 games, only two losses and both coming against Duke. Do you feel like your team is playing some of its best basketball here at the end of the season?**

HUBERT DAVIS: Well, I don't feel it. We are. And where we are better is we're consistently doing the little things that allow you to experience big things out there on the floor.

I think at the beginning of the year, we had struggled with inconsistencies in terms of little things like boxing out, defending without fouling on the offensive end, our shot selection, turning the ball over.

Those are things that we're consistently doing a lot better, and as a result of that, our team has played a lot better.

Over the last month and a half, and you mentioned those 10 games, we have improved a lot.

**Q. Taking it to the media, a lot of people are stating that you guys don't belong here and they're surprised that you got the last pick for the First Four. What are your initial thoughts, and what do you have to say in general about those thoughts, about the social media saying you guys don't belong here? What do you have to prove?**

HUBERT DAVIS: I don't have any thoughts, and I'm not on social media. In regards to those comments, that would be negligent on my part to comment on something I've never read or never heard. I'm not on -- I didn't listen to bracketology. I didn't listen after our name was selected on CBS. I didn't listen to the telecasts. I haven't listened to anybody's comments in regards to selections, seedings.

I know that we're really excited to be a part of this, and we're looking forward to tomorrow night.

**Q. Coach Dutcher was up here and mentioned that the score can't be in the 80s or 90s; he feels like it's got to be in the 70s for the Aztecs to win. For you, what's the most important key tomorrow night getting a victory and moving on to Milwaukee?**

HUBERT DAVIS: Well, there's a number of things. I would probably say first thing is our ability to take care of the basketball. San Diego State is obviously an outstanding offensive team. They do a terrific job guarding the ball one-on-one, creating turnovers, making it difficult to score consistently in the paint and get to the rim.

And so for us, taking care of the basketball and being able to generate good shots, that's just going to be huge for us. We've been able to do that this year. We've either been able to make the shot, and if we don't, we can get to the offensive glass. Or if we can get fouled, get to the free-throw line.

So our efficiency and our approach from an offensive standpoint of taking care of the basketball and getting good shots is going to be really important for us.

**Q. Obviously your faith is really big to you, and it is also for Ian Jackson and what he's going through with fasting and Ramadan. What are the challenges you've seen for him going through that? And it's kind of what the NC State player went through last year.**

HUBERT DAVIS: One of the things for Ian is we're supporting him. The challenges you would have to ask him. I'm not going through it. But we support Ian, and we're thankful for not just Ian, for all of our players and their faith, and that's something that we support in all of our players and all of our staff.

**Q. He goes to team meals and he just talks to everybody and doesn't eat?**

HUBERT DAVIS: No, not at all. I think it's quite natural that Ian comes and is talking the whole meal.

**Q. Seth did say that they were aware of some of the social media hate that they've seen and were going to use that as motivation. But do you want to make sure it's not too motivating, maybe keep an even keel with that kind of a thing?**

HUBERT DAVIS: No. I mean, I speak to the guys, not just in regards to the NCAA Tournament. All year long I tell them that you're going to have to learn how to turn down the noise from the phone, the family, the friends, and the Carolina -- not the Carolina college basketball fans.

They asked me what is noise, and noise is anything that doesn't help you become a better person, a better player, and a better teammate. So anything that doesn't help you become those three things, you're going to have to learn how to turn down and turn off that noise.

I also talked to them about focusing on what is real. I give them a Bible verse, proverbs 4:25 where it says keep your eyes straight ahead, ignore all sideshow distractions. Why I give them that is what is real is our preparation and our practice and play against San Diego State. Anything outside of that is really irrelevant.

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