

# NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Four

Tuesday, March 18, 2025

Dayton, Ohio, USA

UD Arena

**North Carolina Tar Heels**

**Coach Hubert Davis**

**RJ Davis**

**Seth Trimble**

Media Conference

North Carolina 95, San Diego State 68

**Q. RJ and Seth, San Diego State came into the game, they hadn't allowed more than 80 points in a game all season. Tonight you guys scored 95. What was working so well for you guys on offense?**

RJ DAVIS: I think we did a good job of sticking to our game plan and playing Carolina basketball. We got out in transition, we shared the ball, and that's what got us going. We shared the ball, everyone contributed in so many ways.

And I just think our defense really set the tone for the remainder of the game, the way we were able to get into passing lanes and help guys were there and defensive rebounding was key for us. That allowed us to get easier looks.

Elliot was phenomenal today. He had 12 assists, and he was able to find guys with pitch-aheads. Seth was amazing attacking the rim. Little things like that allowed us to go into a run.

**Q. What did you guys think of the crowd and the atmosphere here tonight? Looked like you had some friendly faces out there. How did that help you?**

SETH TRIMBLE: The atmosphere was amazing. The North Carolina fan base and family, they always come through no matter where we go. We kind of know when it comes to March, we feel like we always have a home-court advantage no matter where we're at. They're amazing. They're always our sixth man. They give us the extra boost. We'll need the same thing in Milwaukee from them.

**Q. It has been a very noisy last three or four days. Do**



**you guys think you sent an unmistakable message tonight about North Carolina deserving to be here?**

SETH TRIMBLE: We know we deserved to be here. We're not looking to send a message to anybody else. We're just looking to compete as a team and be the team that we know that we're capable of being.

I think we did that tonight. We'll go through that when we get to Milwaukee and go from there. We hear what people say. We don't really care. It is what it is. We're focused on us.

RJ DAVIS: I think just to pick up what Seth said, I think one thing about us, yes, we hear the noise but we don't really pay any attention to it. We stay within ourselves, and I think Coach Davis sets a good example for us.

In order to play at this level, he always uses this reference, horses have blinders going into races, and that's to avoid any distraction that doesn't allow them to be their best in the race. I think that reference sits well with the team.

We're just focused on what we have to do, not really paying too much attention to what's being said about us and whatnot. Just our preparation leading up to the games.

**Q. What have the last few days been like not knowing if you're going to make it, you make it, get in late here, all the noise that you're hearing but trying to block out, and then obviously playing as well as you played? What's that experience like to go through the last couple of days?**

RJ DAVIS: I mean, it's a whirlwind of emotions, especially leading up to the Selection Show. We were watching as a team in the lounge, and we didn't know where we were going to land at as a team. Just praying that we hopefully -- we're in the play-in and whatnot. Obviously just getting here just allowed traveling and -- it's a quick turnaround from Saturday, Sunday, all the way up to Tuesday.

But I think one thing about the team, we're all grateful for the opportunity. Yes, there's a lot of emotions on a Sunday and just traveling, getting here. But I think at the same time we were ready, mentally and physically. It was a



... when all is said, we're done.®

quick turnaround, but we were ready, and I think we showed that tonight.

SETH TRIMBLE: Kind of going off what RJ said, a lot of anticipation, especially from Friday night after Duke to Sunday around 6:00. We just had no idea, but we knew we had to have the mindset of staying ready and being in the moment and just thinking we're in the tournament because you sit around waiting doing nothing, come tournament time, you're going to fall behind.

Coach Davis and the rest of the coaching staff, they did a great job of just ensuring and allowing us to stay ready, and we just had to fight through anticipation. Once we found out we were in, it was go time, simple as that.

**Q. San Diego State ranked No. 1 in the nation in field goal percentage, 38 percent coming into the game and 13th overall in Ken Pom defensive efficiency. Were you surprised they did not put up more efficiency tonight against you?**

SETH TRIMBLE: We know who we are on the offensive end. We know what we're capable of. This doesn't surprise me, what we did tonight. It's what I expect every single night.

**Q. Hubert, I just want you to take me through what the very brief practices you've been able to have with the team, what was just your advice to them and what were the things you really wanted to hammer down before playing today?**

HUBERT DAVIS: Yeah, we did have -- we practiced on Sunday and then we got here, we were supposed to have an earlier practice before we came for the open practice here, and because of flight delays, this was the only practice that we had.

But it was a really good 40-minute practice.

Look, we've had 98 practices and 35 games. We knew what we needed to do. We knew what we were up against against San Diego State and what an outstanding team, defensive team that they were, and just the type of competitive fight that we needed to bring tonight.

**Q. You mentioned last week about how proud you were of your team, dealing with all the questions about if they will make the NCAA Tournament throughout the past month and a half or so. Now that those questions are out the window and you guys are in, do you feel like you guys have played looser, free of that weight tonight?**

HUBERT DAVIS: No, I don't think it was a weight on us to try to get into the NCAA Tournament. My communication with them is to always focus on us. It's not the noise on the outside in terms of comments and critics. Focusing on our preparation, our practice and our play.

I consistently send that message in a number of different ways because that's the only thing that we have control over. So why waste time doing anything else.

This group has been one of the best at staying connected and staying the course through windy and turbulent times and also clear-sky days, as well.

It doesn't surprise me that they played one of their better games today. It's been a real focused group. You can just -- over the last two months, their commitment to team is just continuing to grow.

I talked earlier in the year about how quiet this team was, and the voices, the volume of the voices is exactly where it needs to be, whether it's in the huddle, on the bus, on the floor. Just a real connected group right now.

**Q. Just watching RJ for the last five years, what does it mean to see him perform like this tonight in his last run in the NCAA Tournament?**

HUBERT DAVIS: Yeah, it's not surprising and it's also comforting as a head coach to have him out there on the floor. As a head coach, I don't know what it looks like to exist without him on the sideline and on the floor, and I don't want to think about it.

You think about not just his game but his character, who he is, the type of person, the relationship that we have and developed over the years, and to see him just have an outstanding game tonight was really fun to watch.

**Q. Just wanted to ask, do you feel like -- can you put your finger on maybe the fact that it looks like this team's confidence is continuing to grow even at this time of the year, even through those heartbreaking losses to Duke in the last 10, 12 games? It seems like this group, like the confidence continues to go up.**

HUBERT DAVIS: It does. You asked me that question after we lost to Duke at home, and you said you had a six-game win streak, you asked if I was concerned if we would be able to continue that momentum, and I said no. I said, I just feel like this group is getting better. Irregardless of the outcome, I feel like we're getting better, and I feel like our confidence is growing.

It did during the ACC Tournament, and then after having a



tough loss to Duke, it just continues to grow.

We're getting better. Over the last month and a half, two months, we've just gotten better and better. It's coming at the right time.

**Q. North Carolina is a hard place to do something for the first time given the program history. You guys had a few of those milestones tonight. What do you think that means for this game and then obviously going forward, whether it was RJ's threes or the total number of threes that you guys hit as a team?**

HUBERT DAVIS: Yeah, I know that we hit a record number of threes here. But made shots come and go. I think the thing that I was most proud of is we started the game and had six quick turnovers, and then for the rest of the game we only had five.

San Diego State is excellent at getting steals and deflections, and we did a really good job of taking care of the basketball. And I thought our defense was real, especially in the first half. We did a great job of protecting the paint, defending without fouling, and finishing every possession with a box-out and rebound. That allowed us to get out in transition, and all year transition has been our number one way to score.

We did a number of good things defensively to be able to put us in position to score on the offensive end, and it just helps that you took care of the basketball.

**Q. After all the hustle to get here and everything you had to go through, what did you feel about the setting and the crowd and everything that went into tonight?**

HUBERT DAVIS: This is my first time to Dayton. Obviously I've seen the First Four over a number of years with the NCAA Tournament, and it really -- the atmosphere, everyone here, from the hotels to the busses to the people working here at this facility have been so kind and nice.

It's just been a great experience for all of us.

We have 15 guys on the team, and eight of them, this is their first time going to the NCAA Tournament, and I couldn't think of a better way for them to get their first taste of the tournament than coming here to Dayton.

**Q. What do you remember about your five-for-five in the NAAs back in 1991 --**

HUBERT DAVIS: It was Eastern Michigan, it was in the Meadowlands, and it was a tight game in the second half.

And then somebody elbowed Eric Montross, and we got upset, and then I think we ended up winning by 20 or 30, and we played Temple in the Eastern regional final.

**Q. Can a game like tonight when a team is hot collectively and individually, can that carry over?**

HUBERT DAVIS: What I think can carry over is the defense, the taking care of the basketball and the rebounding.

Now, it would be great if we hit 14 threes on Friday; I'll take that. But the reason why I consistently tell the team the three boxes that we have to check is defense, rebounding, taking care of the basketball is because those are things that travel, and those are the things you can take care of, you're in control of.

Making, missing shots, those things go in and out. But if you defend, you rebound, you take care of the basketball, it doesn't matter who you play, you're going to be in the game.

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