

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Round - VCU vs North Carolina

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Greenville, South Carolina, USA

Bon Secours Wellness Arena

North Carolina Tar Heels

Hubert Davis

Henri Veesaar

Seth Trimble

Media Conference

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by North Carolina's Henri Veesaar and Seth Trimble. Appreciate you joining us today.

Q. Guys, how easy was it to flush what happened in Charlotte, and what kind of things did you guys do to kind of regroup?

SETH TRIMBLE: It wasn't easy. It was one of those really frustrating losses. Your first game in the ACC Tournament. One of the things you always want to do is do good in your conference tournament, so just losing one right away was really tough.

We all took it hard and personal, but we've been here. We've been on this road before. Coach Davis and the rest of the coaching staff did a really good job of getting us right back on track, working on the things we didn't do good, and we've been doing that this whole week since then.

HENRI VEESAAR: Just embracing having a chip on our shoulder, knowing that we have not showed up on the big stage. So we kind of have to do better this tournament. We have to realize to just focus on the game, don't look ahead. We have VCU. Just play against them. Don't think about anything ahead of it.

Every day just have a good practice, think about the game plan, try to execute as much as we can, and keep 100 percent effort.

Q. Just kind of piggy-backing on that, I know we try to flush games and kind of get rid of the past games. Coming out of that game with an 18-point deficit



previously, how do you hold your hat on how you made that game and came back and really almost had an opportunity to win to use that as momentum to go into this tournament play?

SETH TRIMBLE: After a tough game like that, it gives you a reminder of the team you can be, and it gives you some motivation and just helps drive your fight.

The frustrating part is you know why you can't be that team for a full 40 minutes, and we had to ask ourselves that question. Definitely some motivation after an 18-point comeback like that, like you said.

HENRI VEESAAR: I think it just showed the resilience of the group, just being able to fight back. Even when we were down 18, nobody gave up. Like how Seth said, we just have to find the juice to bring it 40 minutes and just play with the same energy and confidence, not just when your back is against the wall, but the whole game have the same confidence.

Q. What are your guys' early impressions on VCU, what you've seen on film and getting ready to play them Thursday night?

SETH TRIMBLE: They're a guard-heavy team. All of their guards can really go. Even their big, he's really good. He's electric. He has really all the tools. They're a team that really spaces the floor. They're all incredible shooters, and they have very good spacing with a good drive-and-kick game.

We've played a few teams like that this year. I feel like we've been doing a good job of preparing, but we know that they can really shoot the ball, and they're going to want to space you out and take you one-on-one almost.

HENRI VEESAAR: You can definitely tell they're a confident team. They have won a lot of games. I think their spacing is a big part, the way they go five out and try to drive close-outs and put teams in rotation and just try to work on those. I think that's going to be the key for us.

Q. How much of a shock was it for you guys to lose Caleb when you did, expected him to come back? Now that it's been over a week, have you guys



adjusted to that and kind of come to the reality that this is what your team is now?

SETH TRIMBLE: It was definitely a huge shock. He was supposed to be back, and we were all looking forward to it. Then all of a sudden, we heard that he had broke a bone in his other hand. So just to hear that was a complete shock. Unfortunately, we've been through it many times this year.

We know how to not put it to the side, but we know how to play through something like that now and embrace Caleb like in this moment. I'd say it definitely was a shock, but we've done a really good job in that moment and all this year of having to play through something like that.

HENRI VEESAAR: I feel like he's such a good guy. We feel more bad for him than the team, just the moment of him to play March Madness got taken away. He's been looking forward to it all year. Out of everybody, it ain't the coach, it ain't the team that got the biggest hurt. He got hurt the most.

I've seen him every day just hoping that he could be on that court. He's doing a great job of being a leader off the court, just giving energy to everybody.

THE MODERATOR: Lucky now to be joined by North Carolina head coach Hubert Davis.

Q. Hubert, we didn't get to ask you yesterday, but obviously the good news with Caleb getting an All-American nod there, with all that he's had to go through the last few weeks, what was it like to deliver that news, and how did he react there?

HUBERT DAVIS: Yeah, it was nice. Obviously it was great being able to give him that news, and getting that news, what that meant for him in terms of being remembered in North Carolina and being able to have his jersey up in the rafters. I've said before that just my heart is broken for him.

He's somebody who obviously people have seen how gifted and talented he is on the basketball court, but he's just as gifted as a person and as a teammate. He had a burning desire and a dream to play in the NCAA Tournament, and he's not being able to do that.

So being able to give him that news doesn't replace not being able to play in the NCAA Tournament, but it did put a smile on his face, and that's something that brightens up our room every time he smiles like that.

Q. Also about Caleb, I imagine it has to be human nature for your team, when you see him go down, that

there is an automatic lull because they were expecting him to come back and be ready for the postseason. Did you notice that with your team, and do you feel like they're maybe now over it? They've had time to digest it and maybe now they're over it and ready to move on and try and compete here?

HUBERT DAVIS: I actually feel like this team and this group has done a nice job of dealing with different circumstances and still going out there and playing their best. You talk about the nine games that Caleb has missed, well, Seth missed nine games at the beginning of the year, Henri missed two, so that's over half of our season we've been without our top three scorers.

That's one of the many reasons why I'm proud of this team, just the toughness, the resiliency to with those circumstances still find a way to be successful. It's something that has given us confidence moving forward heading into the NCAA Tournament.

Q. Zayden was telling us in the locker room that you switched out the teams in practice, and he felt like that contributed to some of the chippiness that you mentioned yesterday. Is that something that you do occasionally if you try to just inject some energy into a practice?

HUBERT DAVIS: I do that all the time, whether it's shootaround, practice. We always try to go good versus good, highly competitive, drills to put us in a position to be successful. I made a couple switches in practice this week, and as I mentioned, it's been a little chippy, but it's been good for us and it's something that is needed.

Q. I hear a lot of your incoming recruits talk about the family culture that you guys have at UNC, and I know you guys experienced a lot of highs and a lot of lows and a lot of adversity this year. How will you take that to help propel you throughout this tournament, that family culture, that family environment that the new recruits talk about?

HUBERT DAVIS: The family atmosphere is built on one thing, and it's relationships. I always tell players, recruits, parents I can't coach them unless I know them. They can't play for me unless they know me. So the only way I can get to know them and they can get to know me is we have to spend a ton of time together -- not on the phone, not texting, not tweeting, just face to face being able to spend time together.

I have guys required a minimum of stop by the office at least three times a week. We can talk about basketball, but I like to talk about other things outside of what's going

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on out there on the court because the communication during practice and during games is real.

I'll give you an example. Last week after practice, I just felt like we needed to break away and do a little something different. So I took the whole team to the driving range. Some of the guys, this was the first time they ever swung a golf club.

Between our best golfer Derek Dixon to Jonathan Powell, which was Adam Sandler the way that he swung the golf club. It was fun. We just had a smile on our faces, and those are experiences that you'll remember the rest of your life. I really believe those things help you and bind you together when you're playing out there on the floor.

Q. What are some of your early impressions on VCU as you've scouted them on tape?

HUBERT DAVIS: Just a really versatile, talented team, athletic. Because of their versatility and athleticism, they can do a number of things and guard a number of positions out there on the floor, which allows them to get in the passing lanes and steals and get into the open court.

Obviously they can shoot 3s, but they also do an excellent job of getting into the paint, putting max pressure on the rim, and finding a way to get to the free-throw line. They lead the Atlantic 10 in free throw attempts and made.

So for us defending, defending without fouling, and finishing every possession with a box-out rebound obviously is key in every game but even more important in this game.

Q. Hubert, obviously Derek has delivered in some big moments for you guys. How have you seen him continue to elevate? How does that calm demeanor help him in big games like this in a tournament like this?

HUBERT DAVIS: He's just never been scared or tentative or afraid of the moment. He just walks towards it, and that's something that you just never know about a player until he's actually in that situation.

Obviously he's very gifted. He can shoot the ball. He can handle. He's done a really nice job of taking care of the basketball. I feel like every day he's gotten better defensively, competes, rebounds the basketball. He's a big guard, but in pressure situations, he's not tentative at all at taking a big shot or making the pass.

That's what you want out there. You want guys who are confident to be able to make plays, whether it's successful

or not.

Q. Everybody knows about the finality of this tournament. How do you keep the guys from getting too tight or too wound up thinking about the importance of these types of games?

HUBERT DAVIS: Stuff like taking them to the driving range. Getting them to understand to just dive into the team, but also I want them to enjoy this. I know that being at North Carolina, it can be taken for granted just to make the NCAA Tournament, but it's a real privilege and honor to be in this position, and I want them to have fun.

The guys have been able to do that all year, and they'll continue to do that in this tournament.

Q. You've been here before as a player, obviously as a coach. How do you take out of what you've experienced and inject it into that locker room, so it can propel them onto the court?

HUBERT DAVIS: One of the things we found out on Selection Sunday, I had the guys to come over to the house to find out where we would be, what seed and who our opponent would be, I told them something that I learned from Coach Smith and Coach Guthridge and Coach Williams and something that I really believe in is not looking at the NCAA Tournament as, wow, we've got to win six games in order to win a National Championship, it's just focus on what is right in front of you.

What is right in front of us is the Greenville tournament. We get to play one and the possibility of playing two. So let's do everything that we can in our preparation to see if we can win the Greenville tournament, and if we play well in two games, then we'll get invited to the Houston tournament. Then if we play well in those two games, they'll invite us to the Indianapolis tournament. So kind of break it up.

That's consistent with the things that I talk about during the game about playing in four-minute stretches. Let's put strings together where we're getting multiple stops and scores and not looking at the score, not looking at the entire game or the half, but just trying to win the moment.

So those are things that have been communicated to the team leading into the NCAA Tournament.

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