

# CBS Sports Classic: Kentucky vs. North Carolina

Saturday, December 16, 2023

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

State Farm Arena

## North Carolina Tar Heels Coach Hubert Davis

Press Conference

Kentucky 87, North Carolina 83

**Q. What was that like with 10 seconds left and what happened --**

HUBERT DAVIS: Which one are you talking about, when it went off of Cormac? Yeah, there was turnovers. We had 17 of them. That was just an unfortunate situation, and sometimes you turn the ball over. We ended up turning the ball over in that situation.

**Q. How difficult --**

HUBERT DAVIS: The play was not to turn the ball over.

**Q. How difficult is Kentucky to guard with kind of the scoring balance that they have?**

HUBERT DAVIS: I mean, they have a number of players that can create their own shot in one-on-one situations, and so from a defensive standpoint and the way that we play defense, they had to make some tough shots, one-on-one against us, and specifically down the stretch they were able to do so.

**Q. The team continued to fight through the game. What was the difference in that --**

HUBERT DAVIS: The team has always had fight. That's never been a question or a concern at all. I love this group, and I love their competitive fight.

One of the things that I talked to them before the game that -- in any game, but specifically in games like this, where they're won are in the trenches, and in the trenches what lives there is boxing out, loose balls, rebounds, packing the offensive glass, finishing around the basket, those type of



plays.

They out-rebounded us by 10, they got 18 offensive rebounds, and we had 17 turnovers, and we lost by four.

**Q. For the turnover on that last possession, was Cormac going down to set a screen?**

HUBERT DAVIS: I know you guys are trying to make it deeper than just a turnover. It was just a turnover. We were trying to get a quick score, and it just -- we turned the ball over. I don't think it's any deeper than that.

**Q. Cormac's performance tonight, obviously he had a rough shooting night against UConn back to back and this game.**

HUBERT DAVIS: Yeah, I understand where you guys are coming from in terms of asking me questions about Cormac and his shot. I'm the head coach, and I don't have a concern about that at all. I don't think about that at all. Cormac is a basketball player, and as I said before, what he brings to the team is many things that helps our team be the best that it can be.

I'm glad that he made shots tonight, but again, he brings so much to this team, and I'm so thankful that I get a chance to coach him.

**Q. Coach Cal just said he feels like the Tar Heels are a Final Four level team. After that performance, how do you feel about where this team is at?**

HUBERT DAVIS: I feel like we're good, but we've got a long way to go. We have a lot to improve on and a lot to learn from.

We're going to be in this situation again where we're up by one with five minutes to go, and be able to learn from this and grow.

One of the things that Coach Smith used to tell us all the time as players is a mistake is good when you recognize it, admit it, learn from it and grow from it. So the things that



we need to tweak and alter and pivot and change, let's grow from it.

I always tell the guys, when things happen to you whether it's good or bad, the only thing you have control over is how you react and how you respond, and we have an opportunity to react and respond moving forward for the rest of the season.

**Q. You guys put a big emphasis on rebounding. It's kind of the second straight game where you got worked over on the boards. Are you back to the drawing board? Where do you go from here in assessing that?**

HUBERT DAVIS: In terms of the drawing board, to me, rebounding, those energy and effort plays, it's not about technique. It's just will and want-to. There's an attitude about it.

We have to make a commitment to be able to create contact first and be strong enough and to be able to do a better job rebounding. It's good that RJ got seven rebounds, but it's not good that he led the team in rebounding, and he ended up with seven. He had six in the first half, and he still led the team in rebounding.

As I said before when we talked, that is a huge emphasis for us. We've got to find a way to become a better rebounding team. That's just No. 1 on our list.

**Q. Is there an edge or an effort -- you talk about playing with an edge there, in that area?**

HUBERT DAVIS: Well, it has been missing. It was missing -- but the great thing about it is it's not lost. We can get better. We can improve. I feel like we have a great bunch of kids that can improve in that area, and for that area to be a strength of ours moving forward.

**Q. Four shots for Armando today; only four free throws. What do you guys have to do to get him more touches and what does he have to do to make himself for available to get those touches?**

HUBERT DAVIS: Well, one of the things is a lot of times they'll either double-team him down low on the post or as soon as he puts the ball on the floor they'll bring somebody on a hard dig.

In those situations, catch the ball, deeper in the paint so that you can score before the double-team comes, getting out in transition, attacking the offensive glass. There's a number of things that you can do.

Armando is one of the best players in the country. He's going to have a lot of attention. There's a responsibility of being one of the best players in the country, not just Armando, whomever, that you have to adjust and tweak and pivot to do things to still be effective out there on the floor.

**Q. You mentioned the 17 turnovers ended up being a season high. What do you think was unique about the ball control today compared to the previous games?**

HUBERT DAVIS: I thought especially in the first half, in a timeout I told them -- I think they were so ready to play. We were going too fast, and it was -- I always say that turnovers are one of two things, they're carelessness or selfishness. It was 100 percent never selfishness, it was just carelessness.

I think they were so hyped up that they were moving so fast that we were turning the ball over. We talked about it in the huddle just to take a deep breath and just settle down and let's just get into our set, get to our positions and work it with purpose and pace, but not from an offensive standpoint, not to do it so fast.

I just felt like that resulted in a lot of our turnovers, especially in the first half.

**Q. Did you think they did settle down, I guess 11-6 --**

HUBERT DAVIS: At times. At times. Much better than the first half. But at times I felt like we did settle down, and then other times we didn't.

That's an area that again we can learn and grow from, and we've got to get better at that.

**Q. You brought up Coach Smith. What type of advice do you think he would provide you after a game like this?**

HUBERT DAVIS: After a game he would never say anything, so I didn't say anything to the team. After every game, whether we won or lost, he would bring us in together and tell us that he loved us and that we'll move forward.

He always felt like saying something after a game where so much emotion that it would be better just to let things calm down and then come back and talk the next day.

Those are things that I do with the team, as well, after a game.

**Q. RJ's averaging nearly 27 points in the past six**

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

**games. Do you feel like the offense has shifted more from Armando to RJ the past few games?**

HUBERT DAVIS: I think the offense is the offense. It's shifted to everyone. It's not a shift for Armando and now it's an RJ. RJ from an offensive standpoint is in a really good rhythm. He's finding shots. He's creating shots. He's creating shots for other teammates, and he's taking good shots.

One of the things that I love about this team, it's equal opportunity offense, so it's nobody's -- from an offensive standpoint, their team. We have a number of guys that can make shots, and we try to take advantage of that every game.

**Q. Just to follow up on RJ; (indiscernible) what do you think led to that?**

HUBERT DAVIS: Well, he's been a pretty good accomplished player. This isn't like he's never been good. He's been really good throughout his four years. As I told you before, the growth in him has been his leadership out there on the floor. Vocally he's been a lot more to the team in huddles and practices. But just the way that he carries himself, the way that he shows up every game and competes. I'm just really proud of him, and it's been an honor and blessing to coach him the last four years. He's fantastic.

**Q. Do you think Armando and the team as a whole brought physicality tonight?**

HUBERT DAVIS: No, we did not. That's why we got out-rebounded by 10. That's why they got 18 offensive rebounds. It just is what it is.

Kentucky was tougher than us in the trenches, and in order to win games like that, you have to win the battle in the paint, whether it's rebounding, loose balls, finishing around the basket. You have to win those individual battles, and we did not, in terms of rebounding, and that's why we lost the game.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports