

CBS Sports Classic: North Carolina vs. UCLA

Saturday, December 21, 2024

New York, New York, USA

Madison Square Garden

North Carolina Tar Heels

Coach Hubert Davis

RJ Davis

Ian Jackson

Press Conference



felt like a home game. I know for Ian, he played really well.

Just to have that confidence and support on your back provides like extra motivation. There's nothing like the Garden. I've heard a lot of NBA players say this is their favorite arena to play in just because of the historic players that have come through here.

Just overall the energy and the environment. We made a run, and fans got out of their seats and you weren't able to hear who's on the court. That's how loud it was.

This is my favorite place to play as a neutral site game. Just want to continue to keep winning because I'm 2-1 here and something I want to keep bragging about.

IAN JACKSON: Yeah, absolutely. The energy here was electric. It felt like a home game definitely. Yeah, just someplace I've never gotten to play before. My first time playing in the Garden. I had so much fun out there.

Q. Was playing here always something you dreamed of.

IAN JACKSON: Yeah, absolutely, absolutely. I wanted to play anywhere near here. This is one of those places as a kid growing up watching basketball you just want to be a part of.

Q. RJ, in the last minute you went 1 for 2 on the line for one trip and then second time (indiscernible). What's going through your head and was that a moment of redemption?

RJ DAVIS: Yeah, because I still had missed the first free-throw, so Seth -- I mean, I wouldn't have got to the second free throw if Seth didn't get that stop in the diamond the press.

That's the reason why we won the game. He was able to deflect the ball off the boards to give us a chance. Going to the line, the next time I was able to just kind of free my mind a little bit and just tell myself I was going to knock it

North Carolina 76, UCLA 74

Q. Coach, you guys were down 16 (indiscernible). What was the difference in closing the deal tonight as opposed to some other games?

HUBERT DAVIS: Well, I mean, I don't think it was a big difference because down the stretch we talked about an experience, not doing the little things that make big things happen, box out, an execution, a loose ball, a free throw, different stuff like that.

Down the stretch in terms of the discipline and details, with the exception of us putting the ball on the free-throw line, I thought we were really good on both ends of the floor. I thought our execution was really good. Defensively we rebounded. We took care of the basketball.

We had 11 turnovers in the first half; only seven in the second. I always say that for us to be efficient offensively we got to limit the paint, limit the free-throw line. Went to the free throw line 35 times; we out-rebounded them.

And so down the stretch we got a stop, got the rebound, made the free-throws. That's something we haven't done in past games, so I was really proud of them.

Q. For RJ and Ian, both you guys are playing in front of friends and family. What's it like to have this big win at home?

RJ DAVIS: I mean, it's great. It's is my third time playing in the Garden, and every time I've played here it's been electric, just from the fan base, and then you have your family court side. Just the overall support from everyone, it

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down. I kind of visualized it before I got the ball that I was going to knock it down.

Q. Coach, Florida's offensive rebounding hurt you guys. Must have been pretty gratifying to see (indiscernible) in a huge spot like that.

HUBERT DAVIS: It was. It was huge for the team. We were talking in the huddle and we were up by one after RJ made the free throw. A little bit over 10 seconds to go, and we talked about being in that situation in the past and for us not getting the box-out costing us a win, and that all we needed was one stop.

I was just really proud of them. For them to be able to get the rebound, for them to be able to get the stop and to step up in that situation and be able to win, UCLA is a really good offensive rebounding team, and we were able to out-rebound them. I thought that was a huge determining factor for us winning today.

Q. RJ and Ian, at the very end when you guys needed the stop, I think it's one-tenth of a second left, you're coming back for Elliot's free throws or whatever, what was that moment like? It seemed like there was a lot of relief that one of these comebacks actually worked out for you guys. What was that like? The place was up and jumping.

IAN JACKSON: I feel like for us it was just a moment where we kind of got the job done. There have been several games where we've been close and kind of didn't finish it, and this was one of the games where we got it done. It showed how hard winning is, especially in this type of game. So to come out and get that final stop was a big pick-me-up.

Q. Hubert, what kind of maturation have you seen in Ian so far this year and how he played today?

HUBERT DAVIS: Well, he's still a freshman. I'm just really proud of him. Obviously it has nothing to do about today. Every day after practice he always sends me a text and he says, Coach Davis, that's it. So I have to call, I have to go, player Jackson. He goes, how can I improve? What can I do better? Every day he does that.

That's the thing that when you have -- you're around great kids like RJ and Ian and you get to coach them and they want to be coached, that's the biggest -- like that's really enjoyable and fun for me.

Really happy for both of these two, especially here being in New York, and shocking that this is the first time Ian has ever played in the Garden.

It was interesting at pregame meal today I had one of my former teammates come to a pregame meal, John Starks, and talk to them about what it means to play in New York and play in the Garden. The way that they came back, the way that they fought, how resilient they were reminded me of what being a Nick is all about. I was really proud.

Q. The four-guard lineup, is that something you see yourself continuing throughout the rest of the season?

HUBERT DAVIS: Yes. The lineup change that we made in the second half, it just felt like they were just loading up RJ, and Ian got it going offensively, as well, so just having multiple scorers out there, and I thought it would be really good for us because it puts teams in a situation, do you want to go big or do you want to match up with us.

Then extending that pressure, we may not have tremendous size, but we do have athleticism. So you pick up full court, speeds teams up, we can get steals and deflections and get the pace that we want.

Q. Tyler Bilodeau was on his way to a big game for UCLA; got his fourth foul. Are you surprised he didn't come back in sooner than he did?

HUBERT DAVIS: No, I didn't think he should have come back in. (Laughter.)

He's a fantastic player. He can defend. He can rebound. There's not many players in the country that can score in the post with that patience, face up, mid-range jump shot and knock down the three.

He's one of the better big men that I've ever been around as an assistant and a head coach. It's been an honor and a privilege to coach against him, and he's a big-time player.

Q. For Ian, obviously we've kind of asked you several times this year and you always say you're a confident player. I guess today specifically, what kind of allowed you to get into a rhythm? You played a lot in that second half, almost every minute in the second half. What allowed you to get into a rhythm and then sustain it?

IAN JACKSON: Trusting my teammates, them finding me and potentially based on their actions and getting me the ball like I said, I got a lot of confidence in myself. I've always had that. But my teammates definitely put it over the top today, and they helped me, and I appreciate them for it.

Q. RJ, being battle tested in these sorts of games

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recently, how much did that help you, and was there any anxiety that slipped in because of how some of these games have gone?

RJ DAVIS: I think it's just our schedule from the start. We've had a lot of -- we've been battle tested all year. The first 12 games, it seems like we've been in March Madness games. That's what it's going to be like at the end of the year when we're playing against tough teams all the way to the wire and being able to execute, being able to get that extra rebound, that extra stop.

I think that's what we're starting to get the hang of a little bit. I think Coach Davis does a good job of emphasizing to us -- he said yesterday in shootaround or at practice that we're not going to have a chance of a one more or another possession to get a stop.

Life is not always going to move that way. You're not always going to have another chance to get another stop, get another win. When you live in that moment and be present and you got to give it your all. I feel like having these battle tested games early on helps us build.

And obviously we made some mistakes and we lost some games that we should have won, but I think overall it's helping us build into a team that we can be.

Q. (Regarding the tough non-conference schedule).

HUBERT DAVIS: Well, I mean, I just always tell them that the only thing that you can control is how you react and how you respond. So after the Florida game, hey, let's look at it, see if there's some things that we can learn and grow from, and from the things in late game situations, whether it was Florida or Kansas or Michigan State, how we're going to react and how we're going to respond.

I felt like they reacted and responded. We were down in the second half. There was no panic. It was not a situation where we're trying to make a 16-point play to cut it but even make it tied, and it was just a possession on possession type of approach, and then when we got it close, just understanding how important little details are.

It's because we've been in those situations against really good competition that allowed us to have the confidence to come back and then also the experiences of what we needed to do to finish it out.

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