

# Atlantic Coast Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Friday, March 8, 2024

Greensboro, North Carolina, USA

**NC State Wolfpack**

**Coach Wes Moore**

**River Baldwin**

**Aziaha James**

Postgame Press Conference



NC State 54, Duke 51

WES MOORE: I mean, obviously it wasn't very pretty, but I'm proud of the way our kids hung in there. They were really hurting us on the offensive boards. They were getting to the rim, transition, and I thought we did a much better job, especially down the stretch. We were able to get some stops.

Obviously, again, we didn't shoot free throws like we normally do. We usually shoot them well.

But this time of year, survive and advance. Find a way to get it done. We live to play another day.

I'm proud of them on kind of a rough offensive day to be able to find a way to get a W.

**Q. I wanted to ask you about Zoe Brooks. Of course she came in with a high pedigree being highly recruited coming out of high school. As she's been growing and had big moments in this game with three steals and of course that lay-up at the end to give you guys a five-point lead, how big has her growth been and how big has she been in tight moments?**

WES MOORE: I thought Zoe played great today. She also had five assists, zero turnovers. She hit six out of 13 shots, and as you mentioned, three big steals. I think the rest of our team had one steal maybe.

Again, Zoe stepped up in a big way. Again, for a freshman on this stage for the first time, proud of what she did.

**Q. You turned the ball over 15 times but only gave up**

**two points off of those turnovers. What was the key to not letting those mistakes compound into more mistakes?**

WES MOORE: Well, way to find a silver lining. Thank you. My staff was in there trying to do the same thing a minute ago.

Obviously not pretty. Nine assists, 16 turnovers. I just think, again, we were a little bit pumped up and maybe too much adrenaline. We forced a few things.

We've got to settle down and play better half-court basketball. We've got to be able to score in the half court.

Again, Duke makes it hard. You've got to give them credit. They do a great job in their defense. They deny passes, really get out in the passing lanes. They show big on pick on the ball and really try to take you out of what you want to do.

Again, I'm proud of the way our players were able to make it work, find a way.

But yeah, you're right, that's pretty amazing to give up that many turnovers and only give up two points off turnovers. Pretty impressive. They did a good job of getting back and recovering off those turnovers.

**Q. You mentioned going into the tournament that when you get a bye you're going to get a great team out of the gate. After having this win, how do you digest that afterward, like hey, now you're woken up?**

WES MOORE: Yeah, I do think the team that played the day before has an advantage in the first half because they have gotten the jitters out of the way a little bit and gotten used to the venue and the backgrounds and all that.

But still, if your goal is to try to win the whole thing, you'd much rather only have to win three games. I don't think anyone has ever won four games and won the tournament.

It's pretty important you get that double bye, and we were able to survive it.



Now hopefully it helps us moving forward.

**Q. River, you played a lot of minutes and had to box out a lot of wiry, active guards. Can you speak to your stamina and poise?**

WES MOORE: Yeah, again, they had 14 points off turnovers at one time, and that was probably maybe going in -- maybe during the third quarter. I'm proud of the way we were able to slow that aspect of it down.

Stamina-wise, I know we don't go real deep on our bench, but this time of year you're just trying to survive the game that day. I always say -- we may practice three or four days in a row. They'd much rather play games than practice. They'll be fine. They'll find it, I guarantee you.

RIVER BALDWIN: I think that's been a lot of growth this year for me, even fighting back from injuries, just trying to stay in shape the best way that I can. There's a lot of teams who have gone small against us, and I try to keep up the best that I can, do what I can for my teammates. They always have my back in help anyways.

**Q. Aziaha, you guys I think made 10 out of 16 to start the game and then everything went cold after that. As a team how do you think you guys managed to not let the frustration get the best of you in some of these sequences where maybe you had good looks and you weren't making them?**

AZIAHA JAMES: Just dedicated to Coach Moore. Just him saying, play 40 minutes, just locking in. Defense helped us the long stretch, so just keeping that motivation on defense and just getting turnovers and executing off those turnovers, it helped us.

**Q. Aziaha, you've won an ACC Tournament before with NC State. What's the key to managing the quick turnaround here?**

AZIAHA JAMES: You know, just keep going, playing 40 minutes every game. Playing like it's my last game. Just keep my team motivated, playing together.

And just cutting down those nets felt good, so I just want to do it again.

**Q. For both students, in regards to this season, it's been kind of return to the standard at NC State. Do you feel like you guys are doing a good job of that, and how much as upperclassmen would it mean to you to sort of leave your own legacy, leave your own stamp?**

AZIAHA JAMES: I think we done good. The leaders on the team helping the freshmen out. As you can see, Zoe came out and did her job, so I feel like we've been doing good.

RIVER BALDWIN: I think coming into the year so little was expected of us, and we have used that to our advantage. We've really -- we came in with a chip on our shoulder, and we've proven to ourselves throughout the season that we have given way more than what was expected of us.

**Q. Going back to Zoe, how comfortable does she make you when she's on the floor controlling the offense and then setting you guys up? How does she do that for you guys?**

AZIAHA JAMES: She's another one of us. We don't call her a freshman anymore. She put her head down at halftime, we got to her and said, look, you're not a freshman, you've got to step up, and that's what she did.

It felt very comfortable for us to have her on the court with us.

RIVER BALDWIN: Yeah, I trust Zoe a lot. I'm always there for the dish it seems like, and I trust her wholeheartedly that she's going to draw two and make the right decision on offense.

**Q. Coach Moore, do you feel like your team has done a good job this season of returning to the standard, and what more growth would you like to see in the coming weeks?**

WES MOORE: Yeah, again, as River mentioned, start the season unranked, picked eighth in the league and all those things. I'm proud of the way this team has proven themselves, so to speak. But I also know we've got a long way to go.

I'm not into really evaluating, celebrating during the season. I want to win every game, and so I want to keep grinding, keep digging.

Obviously we've got another one in less than 24 hours, so our focus is switching to that and see if we can get to Sunday.

After that, we have spring break. We will give them a few days off, and then we'll come back and get ready for the big one.

But I want to see -- I do think we've still got a lot of room in the ceiling. I do think that we're leaving a lot of things out there, and that falls on me, too, as a coach. I've got to put

them in a better position, and I've got to do a better job of just, I guess, demanding that we do things right and not settling for shortcuts, but continue to clean things up and get better.

I don't think we've played our best basketball the last couple of weeks. But I also realize people -- the sky is falling. We played four out of five on the road, and in this league, that's pretty hard. I was hoping we could win four out of five of those games to be honest with you, and we won three out of five. Big win at Notre Dame, for instance. But again, I think we can be so much better. Not satisfied. Got work to do.

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