

Atlantic Coast Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Saturday, March 9, 2024
Greensboro, North Carolina, USA

NC State Wolfpack Coach Wes Moore Mimi Collins Zoe Brooks

Postgame Press Conference

NC State 69, Florida State 43

WES MOORE: I'm just really proud of our players and the performance today. Much better. I thought yesterday we played really good defense in the fourth quarter. Today I thought we played really good defense from the tip all the way to the end.

That's a very explosive offensive team, so we were fortunate that we played well, held them to 20 in the first half, nine in the third quarter. So it says a lot about their defense and their rebounding.

When you do those things, you've got a chance every time out.

We shot the ball better. We made a lot better decisions with the ball, and we settled down, which again, you know the first game of the tournament you have to get through some jitters and all that.

So we survived that, and then today I thought we played much better.

Q. Mimi, when you're playing a team that is for the most part shorter than you, what's the key to taking advantage of that size difference?

MIMI COLLINS: Just understanding my strengths. Understanding that I am 6'2", but I like to use my strength. That's why we use Felipe for a reason, our strength and conditioning coach. We want to get in the weight room for these things.

But I'm blessed and grateful to be able to use my shot, but



also be able to go inside and post-up people who are smaller than me.

Q. Wes, when you talk about the rebounding edge you guys had, I think it was pretty big edge there. Secondly, looking forward to Notre Dame, what is the biggest challenge?

WES MOORE: Yeah, again, I was around Pat Summitt a lot early in my career, and she used to say offense sells tickets, defense wins games, rebounding wins championships.

Yeah, just looking here, they went and got two offensive boards. That's amazing. I think they had 21 last night. That just says a lot about the effort and just going out and competing on the boards and finding a way to get it done. Proud of them.

ZOE BROOKS: I'm excited to play them tomorrow. Obviously a couple weeks ago we went down there and we defended them very well and took away their key players, so I'm excited to see how the game goes tomorrow.

MIMI COLLINS: Just like Zoe said, defense was something that we took pride in and something that we'll take pride in tomorrow, so just being able to see that matchup again, I think that's going to be a wonderful thing, and we've just got to lock in defensively.

WES MOORE: Yeah, they're playing really well right now. Really since we played them up there, I think kind of kick-started their run, so they're playing a lot better. It ought to be a great game and great opportunity to be in the championship.

This league is unbelievable. 15 unbelievable teams. When you get to this point, it's something that you really want to make it special. We're excited about the game.

Q. What do you do when you get up 15 going into halftime to make sure your team keeps their foot on the gas?

WES MOORE: Yeah, again, we just reminded them that



Florida State is so explosive. First of all, they can rain threes in. All three of their starting guards are great three-point shooters. They also are super quick off the bounce, so in transition they can get up and down the court and get some easy buckets and get momentum.

You saw they came out and hit a couple early and cut it to 11, I think, and then we were able to turn it back around.

We know how explosive they are. We stressed at halftime -- the day before we felt like we played really good D for about 10 minutes. Today was our goal to play good D for 40 minutes, so just reminded them of that at halftime.

Q. Two things I noticed early on, it looked like the guards sped it up. It looked like early on you wanted -- maybe they just did, they were going up the court a lot quicker, and also there was an emphasis on getting the ball inside, particularly to Baldwin. Was that something you spoke of?

WES MOORE: Well, last time we played them, River had 21 points in three quarters before she hurt her ankle. We felt that. We felt Mimi had an opportunity to really do some damage there inside, as well. Definitely was an emphasis. We wanted to get some post touches.

As far as the transition goes, yeah, kind of a combination. We want to run. We want to push. We want to look and see if we've got a good opportunity numbers-wise, matchup-wise, but I thought what we did better today for the most part -- wasn't perfect, but for the most part we were willing to downshift and just swing the ball and be patient and get a good look.

Much better in that regard.

Q. Duke and Florida State play pretty different styles of basketball, so from the final buzzer of Duke to tip-off at Florida State, what does that look like preparation-wise to get ready to play such a different type of game?

MIMI COLLINS: I would say just understanding scout and film and taking pride in that. I think this team really takes pride in film and understanding the scout and just being able to prepare for everything, like we prepared for Duke, but also we were preparing for Florida State.

I just think that as a player and as the coaching staff, as well, we just took pride in scout and film.

ZOE BROOKS: I think that they're a lot alike, actually. They both have tough guards that can shoot and take you off the bounce, but I think that we really locked in on what

we needed to do and got the job done.

WES MOORE: Yeah, as a staff, obviously we have each team assigned to an assistant coach, so they get a head start.

As soon as we won yesterday, the assistants stayed to see if they could get calls and things like that. Myself and a couple others went back to the hotel. Last night I watched the scout that our assistant had put together, so they'll give me like 80 something clips and I'll try to trim it down to 60 something to show the team, which is probably still too much. But late last night, I don't know what time it is, 9:30.

ZOE BROOKS: 10:15, and we didn't get out until 10:45.

WES MOORE: Was it worth it?

ZOE BROOKS: Yes.

WES MOORE: It took us a while to put it together. We played at 5:00 yesterday and got out of here, so we watched film at 10:15, and this morning before pregame we had a court taped on the floor and we walked through all their offensive sets and then we watched a different set of film from the first time we played them. So you cram it in.

In the past, me, I was a hard-core old guy. We've played in the championship game here before at 12:00 noon and I'd have them in the gym at 7:00 a.m. This team doesn't respond that way. They're better off being rested. Do a walk-through at the hotel, watch the film a couple of times, and let's go. I'd rather have energy right now than maybe an extra little bit of preparation.

Probably more than you wanted to know, but there you go.

Q. Coach, Aziaha has led your team in scoring so far in the postseason, and she's upped her game last year from five points to 16 points a game this year. How have you seen her grow into her game this year? She also had four assists tonight, too.

WES MOORE: That's just coaching, man. No.

Aziaha, she worked hard this summer. She and Saniya both spent a lot of time in the gym and tried to improve certain aspects of their game, and then they also, I think, with opportunity, you gain confidence. They were able to get out there and have some big games earlier in the year, and that carries over.

A lot of hard work. I always remind them, the harder you work, the luckier you get. So she's lucky.

Q. What seemed to be the motivating factor coming into the tournament run and then what will be the factor for motivation for tomorrow's championship game?

ZOE BROOKS: I love winning. All my life I played at a very high level, and I just really take pride in winning, so I'm excited to try and win a ring tomorrow.

MIMI COLLINS: We're just a player-led team. I think that's what's very different about us. So I think that everybody is hungry and everybody wants to win, and I think this team is willing to do whatever it takes to win.

WES MOORE: Yeah, I mean, it's the ACC Championship. What do you say? It's a great opportunity, like I said. We're fortunate we have spring break coming up this next week. They're going to get a nice little break here for a few days.

Hopefully we can go out there tomorrow and play at a high level again.

I think it was good today to get our confidence going, see some shots go through the net, execute and play well. Again, Notre Dame is a great team, and it ought to be an exciting day for sure.

Again, this league is so, so good. So many great players. So many really good coaches. To have this opportunity, you want to take advantage of it.

Q. Zoe, you've had back-to-back games where you have multiple assists and no turnovers. What do you attribute that to?

ZOE BROOKS: In the beginning of the year, I think that I went through a spurt where I was turning the ball over a lot, although I was having a couple assists. I definitely try my best to make the right decision and make sure that the pass is going to get to my teammate. If I see defense, try and draw a little bit more help before kicking it.

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