

Atlantic Coast Conference Basketball Tipoff Media Day

Thursday, October 10, 2024

Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

North Carolina Tar Heels

Coach Hubert Davis

RJ Davis

Seth Trimble

Men's Press Conference



One of the things that we talk at great length with each one of our players is for them to be elite in three areas -- on the court, off the court, and in the classroom. I can't think of anybody better than RJ. He has checked all three of those boxes for five straight years.

Him being in his fifth year, it would be very easy -- he's had a historic career. ACC Player of the Year, First Team All-American. For him to stay in that spot and be disconnected with the others and his ability to reach out and connect the three freshmen, the three transfers, the four walk-ons and being able to bind us together as a team has been something that's been really special to all of us.

Q. Coach, we heard Jim Phillips say the perception of the league has been undervalued, despite that the last several years we've seen ACC teams advance to the Final Four and even a championship game. How does ACC play prepare teams for March?

HUBERT DAVIS: Well, I mean, I'm obviously extremely biased. I think the ACC is the best conference in college men's basketball. I know the history of the ACC growing up in North Carolina and right outside of Washington D.C. My uncle played in the mid-'70s here at North Carolina. I understand the history and the significance of being a part of this conference.

It does. For us to be successful, one of the things we talk about is our non-conference schedule and being challenged in that area to prepare us for our conference. It prepares us when we get to the NCAA Tournament in different styles, unbelievable coaches, program, history.

It puts all of us in a position to be successful in the postseason.

Q. You have a very different group this year. What's pleased you so far about this group, and what are some areas you need to work on heading into the season?

HUBERT DAVIS: I've been really pleased with this group in terms of their commitment to wanting to be a team. It's not just on the court, but off the court. It even goes to the

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Coach Davis, please.

Q. Armando Bacot led the ACC in rebounds last year. Of course that's a big loss for your team. But how do you plan on replacing his production, and do you still plan on having a traditional five there and maybe trying to implement more spacing in the front court?

HUBERT DAVIS: One of the things I've said a number of times is Armando is a one of one. He is not somebody you can replace. You talked about his rebounding, which was at a historic, elite level. Actually, Harrison Ingram led the ACC in ACC games in rebounding, and they were one and two.

One of the things that for us to be successful, we've always identified it, we've got to be a great defensive team. The second thing is we have to be a great rebounding team. Losing Armando and Harrison, others have to step up.

It's a huge part for us. I've always said it's the number one determining factor in an outcome of a game is rebounding on both ends, attacking the offensive glass as well.

I'm really excited about this group, the versatility, the depth, the athleticism that allow us and put us in a position to continue to be good in terms of rebounding the basketball.

Q. One of the themes you had going into this season that I read off the News & Observer, listen to RJ, watch RJ. Can you talk about RJ Davis's transition to the leadership role from last year into this year?

HUBERT DAVIS: Well, it's not a transition from last year to this year. RJ has been that type of leader in the five years that he's been here.



meal room where they will move individual tables together so everybody is sitting at one table. I know that sounds small and insignificant, but it's of tremendous significance for us to become a team and having a desire and a passion and a thirst to be one and to be the best that we can be.

Also, something that sticks out is just the way that each one of the players has valued the gifts and talents that others have brought to the table. We always say that you have to acknowledge it. You have to celebrate it. Our guys do that every day, whether it's practice or off the court.

That's just going to be huge for us. I think one of the things that we're working on is in terms of the level. It's a quieter team than last year's team and just the importance of not having the same voice as previous teams, but for this team developing their own voice.

That will come in time, but I really like the direction that we're going, and I'm excited for this season.

Q. I just want to ask you, we talked about it a bit the other day in Chapel Hill, but with NIL and just maybe this past year, how have you seen it change just in the last year? It seems like it's gotten more transactional. What effects do you see there, and how have you maybe had to try to adapt to how it has changed recently?

HUBERT DAVIS: I think, you know, you're right. There has been changes, and things in terms of NIL and the transfer portal. I've talked about in the four years that I've been head coach, it's been the explosion of the transfer portal, NIL, the involvement of agents on the back side of a pandemic. And you've added three more teams to the ACC. So there's been some change in the last four years.

I would probably say the biggest difference in regards to NIL right now is the involvement of agents. That was something that wasn't really present at the beginning, and now it is.

So there's conversations not only with the recruit, with the family, but also with the agent. When that happens, it does become a little bit more transactional, but recruiting is recruiting, whether it's coming from the high school or the transfer portal and getting guys like Seth and RJ that have a commitment to this university and this program and an understanding that it's not just on the court, but it's in other areas in the community and also in the classroom.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you. You can switch with RJ. Questions for RJ, please.

Q. RJ, for you, just what's been the most impactful moment at North Carolina so far, the thing that maybe sticks out to you the most on or off the court?

RJ DAVIS: That's a great question. I would say the most impactful moment for me would be my sophomore year just in terms of how we came together as a group, as a unit, not knowing our chances of making the NCAA Tournament, going to the Syracuse and Duke game.

The way we believed in one another, especially going into that Duke game, Coach K's last game, of how we came together. That whole week we sat down in the locker room saying, This is our week, this is our time to kind of just shock the world, because obviously they had a phenomenal game against us at home. We didn't play our best.

Just in terms of just that moment we shared after the game going to Franklin, that's one of the best experiences I've experienced just because you see the love from the school. From that moment on, I think we just believed and took off from there.

Q. Being a fifth-year veteran, we've seen three freshmen come in. James Brown has big shoes to fill with Armando Bacot who you played with for many years. What's his transition been like, and how have you stepped up to mentor him?

RJ DAVIS: James Brown has been tremendous. Just in practice he's been asking questions and learning on the fly.

One thing that I love about him is his eager and his competitive edge. He's always willing to learn, but he is always willing to compete. Even if he makes mistakes, he's going to do it by going hard. James has been great.

He is great defensively. He is able to guard guards on the perimeter and bigs down low. So he's going to improve and progress throughout his years of playing here, but it's kind of just taking him under my wing a little bit, telling him how to set the screens. Whenever I snake, just kind of be there on the roll.

But he is learning on the fly. At the same time, I think guys are going to expect a lot of great things from James Brown, not just this year, but for years to come.

Q. We talked about the loss of Armando and Harrison, but a constant is Coach Davis. Can you just talk about your relationship with him and the identity he wants you guys playing with.

RJ DAVIS: Coach Davis, we established a relationship since the day he recruited me when I was just at Stepinac camp. We always talk about this when -- it was a team camp at Archbishop Molloy. From that point on, we established a relationship that's bonding, and it's been strong throughout my five years of being here.

He's a coach that I can rely on, and he's put me in positions and has put so much belief in myself. Sometimes I didn't have that within me, but he's instilled that in me. That's something that you can't really ask for a coach. You can only be grateful for. We've built a relationship that goes beyond basketball.

When you have a coach like that, when it's just not strictly about basketball, when he wants to know about your personal life, making sure you're doing well in school, wants to know about any siblings or family, just stuff like that. Those conversations, they go a long way.

For my five years and him being my coach for four, I mean, I can't really put into words just how much he means to me.

THE MODERATOR: RJ, thank you. You can switch spots with Seth. Questions for Seth Trimble.

Q. Seth, in coming back to Carolina, one of those big voices that you talked about was from Coach Lebo. Can you talk about your relationship with him and why it's so special?

SETH TRIMBLE: Yeah, Coach Lebo has been my guy since the second I stepped on campus. My freshman year, Coach Lebo made it his mission every practice to pick on me in some type of way. He knew it would make me better. He knew I would learn from it and grow from it.

I just appreciate him for doing that. And just over the years as he has done that, we've been able to grow, like -- I don't know. I don't see my coaches as friends, but I see him as somebody I can go talk to. I see him as somebody that I can just really have a relationship for years to come.

Q. The evolution of your role this season, just how you see yourself going into 2024-'25?

SETH TRIMBLE: To step into a role of being a much bigger leader than I was last year. Just playing a more complete game this year, to play my game. That's one thing that me and Coach Davis discuss all the time is just to do me, play free, play whatever it is.

I mean, I think the biggest thing I have to do this year is lead. RJ is our guy, is our leader, is the one who we look up to, but he can't be the only one. If he's the only one,

then this year won't go well, so I really have to step into that role.

THE MODERATOR: Last year you were third in voting for the ACC Sixth Man of the Year. This year do you have something to prove?

SETH TRIMBLE: Absolutely, absolutely. Yeah, I was third, but that doesn't really mean too much to me. I hear the doubt. I hear the criticism, and I don't really listen to that.

I have a lot to prove to myself, the player I know I can be, the player that I know I can be for this team. So there's a lot of motivation going into this year.

Q. More than likely we could see you in a starting role. My question is, what do you expect? How do you expect your role to change from sixth man to that starting role?

SETH TRIMBLE: Not much changes. I just start out the game. That's the only way I see it. That's really it. I just start the game. That's offensive player, just start the game doing me. That's it.

Q. What was your best memory of last few seasons?

SETH TRIMBLE: Honestly, the whole season last year, 2023-2024 season, was, like, truly genuinely one of the greatest times of my life. It's like the second everybody got here on campus, the bond and the brotherhood and just the friendship that we all had within the team, it was truly one of a kind. I wish you could all experience something that I experienced.

But beating Duke I think at home and at Duke, honestly, were the two biggest things that stuck out to me most this last year. It wasn't something I had done my freshman year, and it was just a huge motive for us. We wanted our get-backs, and we made sure we got them. We had a very good time doing that.

THE MODERATOR: North Carolina, good luck this year.

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