

# Atlantic Coast Conference Basketball Tipoff Media Day

Thursday, October 10, 2024

Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

## Wake Forest Demon Deacons

### Coach Steve Forbes

### Cameron Hildreth

### Hunter Sallis

### Efton Reid

#### Men's Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: The Demon Deacons are here with us. Questions for Coach, please.

**Q. The Commissioner, Jim Phillips, spoke about this conference being undervalued nationally when we talk about the NCAA Tournament and bids and whatnot. Just what can you say to the strength of the ACC and your thoughts on the Commissioner believing that there's more value that should be seen?**

STEVE FORBES: Well, I think the strength of our league is the players. We have really good players. Over the course of history, we have the most players drafted in the history of the NBA, and it's really not close. Even over the last 11 years.

So we've won the most national championships, and it's pretty obvious when we get into the tournament what we do. We win, and that's what it's about.

I don't undervalue it because I'm in it. I know what it's like, and I've been in a lot of other leagues. I've coached in the SEC. I've coached in the Big 12. So I've been around. I think there's great players. This year we're going to have really good depth with teams. When you have a league like we've had and gone to 20-league games, there's always going to be a bottom with your league, and analytically that hurts your league, where some of the leagues haven't been quite as big that now are expanding to the same number that we have. So they're going to go through the same issues that we've gone through.

Plus, I think the last thing is we've had three Hall of Fame coaches retire, you know, in the last few years -- Coach K, Coach Williams, Coach Boeheim. Every league is going to



go through that at some point.

I think we've done a really good job of hiring some really good, younger coaches that are doing an outstanding job. I think our league is going to take off.

**Q. It seems like one of the flaws for Wake Forest was the ability to play on the road. How do you prep a team to be able to play in a different environment and come out successfully?**

STEVE FORBES: Yeah, I don't think you have to do that. I think it's just the way you prepare and you practice and your preparation.

You know, you're right. I mean, I think we were ahead at halftime of every road game we played but one, but you got to bring it home. That's on me. I'm the head coach. It's my responsibility.

So I have to do a better job of coaching our players. We have really good players. They are older, which I think will help. They've been grizzled a little bit, been through that.

We've gotten more athletic and faster. So defensively I think we can have tougher possessions late in the game. I think we're always -- we've been really good offensively. Our numbers speak for themselves.

So it's a combination of having tougher possessions defensively and having really good possessions on offense and maybe turning a little clock and not shooting it quick. It's a fine line, and that's the way all these games are.

But, you're right, for us to get to where we want to be, we have to win more on the road. We obviously are a really good home team. We have the second most wins in college basketball at home in the last three years, most in the ACC. But you have to win both on the road and at home.

**Q. What do you know about this team so far, and what are you looking forward to figuring out with the exhibition and then whatever is to follow the exhibition?**



STEVE FORBES: What I know about this team is these three guys right here, first. What a great place to start, right? You know, you have Hunter Sallis returning, who is a First Team All-ACC player, Newcomer of the Year. One of the best players in college basketball. So that's a great place to start. Came back from the draft, and very blessed and honored to have him back.

Cameron Hildreth is a four-year player. I've seen him grow like I saw Daivien Williamson grow as a person and as a player. He's already a 1,000-point scorer, and he did that with a broken wrist last year after the NC State game pretty much for a month and a half. So he is one of the toughest guys in college basketball. I think he is one of the hardest playing players in college basketball.

I think he is a little underrated nationally when it comes to talking about who the better guards are. I think he is definitely one of those guys.

Then we have Efton Reid who missed nine games last year at the beginning of the season, averaged nearly a double-double. I think he is one of the best centers in the league and the country. He can score with both hands, which most bigs can't do. He can shoot the three and play hand game up top. The most important trait of his is he is the best leader on and off the court. The team follows him.

Those things I feel really good about. Parker Friedrichsen is back. He made 50 threes as a freshman, and that's going 2-for-22 down the stretch. He is not going to do that this year. He knows it. He has gained 20 pounds. He is an ACC-level starter, and he's going to be a really good player. He already is.

So then you look at the depth of our team. I think we did a really good job in recruiting starting with Juke Harris a year and a half ago. He committed to us. He is a top 100 player in the country from Salisbury and a 6'7" wing. And then we went in the portal like we've done in the past. We got Omaha Biliew from Iowa State. McDonald's All-American like Hunter. Like I said, went for a Big Mac, we got him for a Happy Meal. Make him happy, right?

We got Tre'Von Spillers. I didn't know who he was until we played him in the NIT, and then he went in the portal, so figured I better go get him. He's pretty darn good. He's first team all sun belt player.

These guys will tell you, now, he's athletic, and he plays hard, and he runs. So him and Omaha, there's great competition at the four. The most athletic fours I've had since I've been here. This is the most athletic, fastest team I've coached at Wake Forest and probably as a head

coach. I would have to really think hard about it.

Ty Johnson, starting point guard at Louisville last year, averaged nine a game. One of the best free-throw shooters in the league. Really, really fast. Churchill Abass, backup center at DePaul, 6'9", 250. And then we have Davin Cosby from Alabama, who I tried to recruit out of high school. Just didn't get him. He is 6'5". He can really shoot it. Between him and Hunter -- or him and Parker, they're making five, six threes every time we scrimmage. He made five or six on our first scrimmage.

I think we have a lot of depth. Marqus Marion has shown a lot of promise. He's been hurt, but he's back in there. I feel like we're 10, 11 deep right now. Now, do we play that many? I don't know. We'll see. But we have a lot of competition.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you. You can swap spots with Cam.

Last year you were third on the team with 4.7 rebounds per game. Do you need to be more of a ball hawk this year?

CAMERON HILDRETH: I think definitely the guys need to rebound down more. You have Efton with him down there, the big guy. So we have to come down and help rebound. I guess I just come in and snag a couple. But yeah, I definitely need to help rebound so we can push out in transition.

**Q. Steve has talked about this is the fastest, most athletic team. You've lost some weight. When you are practicing and scrimmaging, when you are going that fast, how fun is that offensively? What challenges is that going to bring defensively for you guys that you need to shore up heading into the season?**

CAMERON HILDRETH: No doubt. I think we spoke about it a lot. Being in this kind of shape is super fun. It's challenging to get in this shape. Our defense is second to none. We have so much energy. We play with so much joy. I think that's one of the biggest things that I'm seeing this year is that we're just playing with so much joy with each other, and we're doing it for one another, and there's no selfishness.

**Q. The transfers coming in, just what this team looks like and what the environment is with the new faces that the coach has brought up?**

CAMERON HILDRETH: I think every year the coach does a great job of bringing new guys in to fit the system and fit the style of play that we have, and they've come in and done a great job. We have a great core that's returned.

We're able to help them bring them under our wing. Yeah, I'm super excited for everyone that's come in. I think we'll have a great year.

THE MODERATOR: Cam, thank you. You and Hunter can switch spots. Questions for Hunter.

**Q. Two questions from me real quick. Number one, what brought you back to Wake Forest being the first Wake Forest player that made First All-Team since 2003-2004 to return to the school? Then, number two, I understand you put your name in the NBA Draft. What did you learn from any of those workouts?**

HUNTER SALLIS: The biggest thing was I knew I would be coming back to a great team. I know we have a chance to be really good, and that was something I wanted to be a part of, coming back to play with great guys and a great coach. So that definitely was what caught my eye. I'm sorry. I didn't catch the second part of the question.

**Q. I understand you put your name in the NBA Draft. Did you get to go to any of those workouts? If so, what did you learn? How did it, I guess, improve your game at all or if it's still the same?**

HUNTER SALLIS: I would say the biggest thing I took away from each workout was just I say how to work. I feel like I took that from just the whole pre-draft. It was just like a certain schedule on how I should be working out on a consistent regimen, and I feel like that stuck with me.

**Q. Hunter, between you three guys returning, and obviously the tournament is something that -- a big goal you guys wanted to get to, what do you feel like between the three of y'all or as a team, what will it take to get that next level to make the tournament for you guys?**

HUNTER SALLIS: I think honestly just us buying in. I feel like we know the things that we need to fix and the things that we need to do to take that next leap. I think the next step for us is just buying in and actually doing it, so...

**Q. I understand that you used to have the nickname Bambi. My question is, it seems like coordination is obviously better. Does that nickname still get brought up, or have you been able to push yourself away from it?**

HUNTER SALLIS: I kind of shook that a little bit. That's actually crazy because that's like a nickname I was given my freshman year of high school by my teammates. I was the youngest dude on the team, so I was real skinny, kind of similar frame. Yeah, they gave me that Bambi.

Hopefully I got away from that now.

THE MODERATOR: Hunter, we can leave it at that. How about you and Efton switch places. Questions for Efton Reid.

**Q. Two-part question. One, how weird was it when you walked in the gym and saw Tre'Von Spillers? You guys had played a month or two beforehand. Secondly, with him, Omaha, Churchill, what have they really brought to the big room?**

EFTON REID: When I first talked to Tre, we talked about the game first thing, and I was, like, (indiscernible) dunk on AC like that. He started laughing and stuff.

It's all love. Those basketball things happen and stuff. Those two guys are going to bring tremendous rebounding and defense to the team. And they bought in and I'm bought in, so it's going to be a good year.

**Q. You and Hunter decided to come over from Gonzaga to Wake Forest. When you reflect on that, how much of it was the two of you working together on this decision? Was it, hey, if we're going to go somewhere, are we a package deal? Or was it very individual and then kind of after you had both made your mind up you said, okay, that's kind of cool that we're going to be playing together again?**

EFTON REID: Hunter didn't really recruit me to come to Wake Forest. My high school coach was eyeing this, and I think my high school coach had made a couple of calls. He called me too. I was, like, yeah, Wake is a great fit. I didn't know Hunt was going to visit at the time too. It was a coincidence how we both ended up at the same school. I did call him and I was, like, how was the visit? When I visited, he called me too. It was a great visit. I loved the atmosphere, so...

**Q. Efton, as you enter this season, it's a different feeling for you because last year you didn't know if you were going to play or when you were going to play. How has that changed your approach to this coming season knowing that it's -- off the jump you're going to be a part of it, and do you look back and think just how difficult that was having your fate basically in somebody else's hands?**

EFTON REID: Yeah, it wasn't unfortunate. It was difficult, but when I came on the visit, me and Forbes really talked about it. At some times I did get down, but I mean, he reminded me just to trust the process and keep going, and he really kept me level-headed through the process. That's why I picked Wake Forest because I knew he would be a

backboard and supporting me through this whole process. I'm just grateful for him even giving me this opportunity to play for him.

THE MODERATOR: You were a member of the All-ACC Academic Team last year. Describe that integration between athletics and academics and staying on top of both.

EFTON REID: We actually go to school here, you know. We hold ourselves to a high academic standard.

I mean, school has been a big part of my childhood. My mom has always been on me about my grades. I've made A/B Honor Role plenty of times. It really wasn't a big accomplishment to me, but it's just getting the work done, you know.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Wake Forest. Good luck this year.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

