

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Round - North Carolina vs Ole Miss

Thursday, March 20, 2025

Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA

Fiserv Forum

North Carolina Tar Heels Coach Hubert Davis

Media Conference

THE MODERATOR: Questions for North Carolina head coach Hubert Davis, please.

Q. Good to see you. Wanted to ask you about Seth. He's playing in his hometown, Milwaukee. The other day, he had a productive night. For one, how cool is it that Seth gets to play in his hometown. Also, can you speak a little bit to his ability to get to the line a lot the other night against San Diego State?

HUBERT DAVIS: He's really excited about playing back at home. Irregardless if we're here or not, he has a pretty good following everywhere we go. His family does a terrific job of supporting him, whether we're at home or on the road. To be able to play the NCAA Tournament here is really special for him.

You mentioned Seth's ability. He does a number of positive and great things for us. One of them is being able to attack the basket and get fouled and get to the free throw line. One, because he has the ability to do that. Two, he has the ability to do that consistently and be able to score and finish because of his athleticism and strength.

Three, when he gets fouled, he can go to the free throw line and is one of the best free throw shooters in our team and conference. I tell him attack, attack, attack under control because I think good things happen when he attacks the basket.

Q. Hubert, wanted to ask you your overall impressions of Ole Miss as you've started to dig into studying them. Also, seeing Sean Padulla again after facing him at Virginia Tech, what have you noticed about how his game as changed? Your impression of how he fits with this team.

HUBERT DAVIS: Ole Miss is obviously talented on both



ends of the floor. They hang their hat on the way they play defensively. They do a really good job of creating turnovers, which allows them to get out in transition where they're really good in transition.

They've got athleticism. They're able to switch any type of action, whether it's on the ball or off, and try to force you and take you out of your offensive sets and force you into a one-on-one situation.

For us, especially over the last month, month and a half, we've faced a number of teams that switch 1 through 5 on and off the ball. Obviously, Ole Miss does it at an elite level.

Talking about Sean, he's just -- when I say he's a basketball player, what I mean by that is from an offensive standpoint, there's very few guys in the country that can -- he is very efficient shooting the ball from 3. He can get to the basket. He has a great mid-range game. Pump fake. Can get to the free throw line.

I talk to the team about elite players make routine plays routinely. That's a perfect description of Sean. He just makes routine plays routinely. He's tough. He's competitive. We'll have our hands full tomorrow afternoon.

Q. You held San Diego State to eight shots at the rim. What's changed? What's the switch that's been flipped for the perimeter defense where it feels like you're not allowing straight-line drives anymore?

HUBERT DAVIS: I would say over the last month and a half, our defense has just continued to improve. We've talked about containing, contesting. No middle, no paint, no foul. How important it is to protect the paint.

One, we don't have tremendous length and size from top to bottom. So it's important to keep teams away from the basket because we don't have a definitive, consistent shot blocker on our team that can alter shots as well.

A huge emphasis on trying to protect the paint. Our team defensively not only has gotten better in the last month and a half in that regards, but have seen the benefit of defense and protecting the paint because it allows us to get stops, finish it with a box-out rebound, and then allow us to get

out in transition where we've been pretty good all season.

Q. I guess simply put, do you feel your team is playing with a chip on its shoulder now? Super convincing win in Dayton the other night. Have you silenced the critics that thought you shouldn't be in this tournament?

HUBERT DAVIS: I always talk to the guys about focusing on what is real, and what is real is our preparation and our play for Ole Miss.

I talked to them at great length of turning down and turning off the noise from the phone, the family, the friends, and college basketball fans. And so our eyes are fixed on us as a team. I give them a Bible verse all the time, Proverbs 4:25: Keep your eyes straight ahead. Ignore all side-show distractions.

The only thing we have control over is us as a team, how we prepare, how we play. If you want to say we have a chip on our shoulder, we've had it the entire season because our pursuit is to become the best we can be as a team. That's something we've focused on all year, not just right now.

Q. I think some people might be curious, did you go back to Chapel Hill or come right here from Dayton? How did that work?

HUBERT DAVIS: No, we didn't go back to Chapel Hill. We came right after our game against San Diego State. We caught a 2:30 a.m. flight and got here about 4, 4:30 on Wednesday morning and had a good practice yesterday. Have a couple good practices today in preparation for tomorrow.

We're very thankful and blessed to still be part of this tournament and be here in a wonderful city, Milwaukee.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks, Coach, good luck tomorrow.

HUBERT DAVIS: Thank you very much.

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