

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: Regional Semifinal - Alabama vs North Carolina

Thursday, March 28, 2024

Los Angeles, California, USA

Crypto.com Arena

North Carolina Tar Heels

Coach Hubert Davis

Armando Bacot

Cormac Ryan

RJ Davis

Sweet 16 Postgame Media Conference

Alabama - 89, North Carolina - 87

Q. Probably the first part of the first half, what could you guys have done to keep that momentum going offensively?

CORMAC RYAN: I mean, I don't fully understand the question. But I think, in general, I think we needed to rebound the ball a little better and continue to get stops. I think that hurt us and allowed them to get back in the game.

Q. What did you make of the way you guys started the second half? Tough shooting stretch there for you after halftime, and that seemed to be a factor.

ARMANDO BACOT: I thought in the second half we came out a little flat. But like Cormac said, they got a lot of rebounds. We knew coming into the game they shot a lot of 3s, and it would lead to a lot of long rebounds.

I think me, personally, I didn't do a good enough job just boxing out and coming out with more intensity, especially coming into the beginning of the second half because we knew they would come in and try to come back and come fired up. But at the end of the day it just boiled down to them just making more shots than we did.

Q. Armando, the feeling, is it a feeling of shock, sadness, surprise? Did you realize Alabama was this



good? Did you expect your team was capable of going all the way? How do you justify what happened tonight?

ARMANDO BACOT: I mean, I'm definitely hurt. I think we all are, a little shocked. We don't underestimate any opponent. I think today, I mean, it was tough but all year we play hard and today we played hard and they just made more shots than us. And it's tough losing. It's not easy losing especially as talented as a team we are we felt we had the chance to win the national championship this year.

I wouldn't change anything that happened all year. It was a special year with teammates, coaches. It was just, for me personally, a restored sense of fun-ness. My love for the game just grew so much. My faith this year has grown a lot, and I'm going to miss everything about just being with this team, the coaches.

I've known Coach Davis since I was 14 years old, 15 years old. And knowing this is the last time I'll play for him, it definitely hurts.

Q. Seems like a lot of guys in the locker room were emotional because they really believe in this team. They thought it was a really special group. Now that the year's done, how would you define this team?

ARMANDO BACOT: Best team I've ever played on. The amount of fun we had and the love we have for each other, I mean, it was amazing. It's obviously tough that we lost. Because we played so hard and we cared about each other so much and we loved each other so much.

Q. Armando, the knock on Alabama was they can't play defense or they won't play defense. What are your thoughts about that?

ARMANDO BACOT: I mean, like I say, I think it just boiled down to them just hitting more shots than us today. You look at it, I missed a few chippies, a wide-open dunk. Abnormal stuff. We missed some shots we usually make and later down the stretch they made some shots. So that's really all I can point to.



Q. RJ, you've had such a great year. What was kind of your mindset out there to have a game like you had? And what goes through your mind when you look down at the stat sheet and see the shooting struggles tonight?

RJ DAVIS: I mean, I just wasn't good enough today. Missed a lot of easy shots I normally make.

CORMAC RYAN: I've got to chime in here. You guys can write whatever you want about tonight's game. You could talk about RJ you could talk about the stats. You could talk about whatever.

We would not be in this position today without RJ Davis and Armando Bacot. Carolina wouldn't be in this position today without these two guys. And so say what you want, there's just not a true fiber in your being that could actually believe that anything that happened tonight could be the result of something RJ did wrong, because RJ's done something incredible for this team. He's done stuff that's never been done before. He's one of the greatest Tar Heels of all time. And for anybody to come and say anything negative about RJ is unacceptable, and I'm just going to say that.

Q. RJ, I had a question about the final 30 seconds there. After they had gone up to, I think it was 85-87, could you take us through that position that Nelson had the blocked shot on you and you got another one off in the lane that didn't draw iron, could you sort of take us through that possession and what was happening?

RJ DAVIS: We just tried to get the best shot possible. Try to get an easy two going. I thought I had an advantage on Nelson, was able to blow by, but he was able to swat it.

And then got the ball-screen covered, kind of doubled, I was able to go by, get in and heave one up, but kind of hit the other side of the rim, by the time the shot clock went out. I mean, that's what went on with that play.

Q. RJ, Alabama players credited Rylan Griffen, No. 3, for what he was able to do against you. What do you think made him so effective tonight?

RJ DAVIS: He's a good defensive player, height and length, but at the same time I had a lot of open looks that I normally able to knock down, I'm able to make. The ball didn't go my way in today's game.

Usually I'm confident, and one thing my teammates did throughout the whole game was pick me up and told me to continue to keep shooting. But sometimes the ball doesn't

bounce your way.

Q. How would you describe that second half for your guys, what did you see the differences down the stretch?

HUBERT DAVIS: The entire second half or --

Q. Just in the closing four minutes or what in your mind was the difference tonight?

HUBERT DAVIS: I mean, always in the closing minutes, it comes down to a play here or there. I've talked all season about the little details that make big things happen, not just necessarily shots -- rebounds, free throws, loose balls. At the end of the day, they made down the stretch more plays than us. And unfortunately we came out on the short end.

Q. So you've played against Alabama in the tournament as a player and now you're playing them -- you've played them as a coach. What was it like having that perspective change from the player to being a coach now?

HUBERT DAVIS: Really didn't think about it from a player's perspective. That was really a long time ago. But it was an honor and a privilege to play against Alabama tonight. They're one of the better teams in the country.

Obviously very gifted from an offensive standpoint, not just shooting the basketball. They have guys that can create their own shot, just go get buckets. But also felt like their length and athleticism bothered us, bothered us defensively.

I think that was a huge reason for our percentage, field goal percentage in the second half. Being down, we were just -- their length and the way they challenged our shots bothered us, and then their ability to get second-chance opportunities. I know we won the rebounding battle, but in order for us to have won this game we needed to dominate the boards on both ends of the floor. We did get 22 offensive rebounds, but not enough defensive rebounds to come away with a win.

Q. What did you feel changed from the first half to the second half? Was that a surprise in any way because your percentages were great in the first half. You hit the 10 3s. Rolling pretty good offensively and then it dried up.

HUBERT DAVIS: It did. And I think it's a number of things. Number one, we missed shots. I thought we had good looks that -- not normally that we make that we can make. And we just missed.

I thought secondly their length bothered us. They had length and athleticism at every position. And so when they're switching different types of actions, that made it difficult for us to score and for us not doing the job on the boards didn't allow us to get out in transition. So we were always going up against a set defense. I thought that played a part into it as well.

And sometimes your shots just don't go in. It stinks when it doesn't. And I don't know if that might have been the lowest percentage we shot in the half all year. It's close. And just came at a really wrong time.

Q. We heard what Cormac had to say about RJ, reflecting on his importance of the program. I'm wondering if you had any thoughts to sum up -- I know it's tough after a loss -- but RJ's impact and Armando's impact?

HUBERT DAVIS: It was everybody's impact. At a time in college basketball where there's so many moving parts and so many changes, you had two players that you couldn't ask for them to be as successful as they have been for four and five years, respectfully, at the same institution. Their commitment to Carolina, their commitment to this program and the community, those are the things that -- my hope is -- is talked about more about guys staying committed to the process, and not just RJ and Armando but also Cormac.

You've got Cormac and Harrison and JWit and Pax and James, and you've got guys that come in here as transfers and they dove right into what this place is all about, so much so that you don't even think they've been here for one year. You feel like they've been here for four years.

So the commitment of this team from the start to have wanted to be a team, is the thing that has blown me away and has restored my faith that you can have a bunch of guys in a locker room that genuinely enjoy being around each other and celebrate the success of others and really want to be a team.

Q. I wanted to ask you about rolling with Pax a little more than maybe usual in the second half. I think he had more minutes than Seth and Elliot. What you saw there, why that was the decision to do that?

HUBERT DAVIS: The way they were playing us defensively, they were laying off some of our guys, and Pax is somebody that has always been ready when his number is called and somebody that throughout his career has had an ability to be able to shoot the ball from the outside.

So with them loading up on Armando in the post and loading up on RJ on any type of drives, and then them, I think, even staying more connected to Cormac after the first half that he had, putting in somebody that throughout his career is more proven from the outside would give Armando some more space, RJ more space to drive, and be able to move. And I thought Pax did a good job when he was in there.

Q. Armando said that he saw his faith grow this season. Is this because of the process, and how did you see this group of young men mature this year?

HUBERT DAVIS: I did. I thought these guys, that's what I want. I would love to keep playing and win, just continue to play, but more importantly, my job and my responsibility is to help and to serve and to prepare these guys for outside of basketball, so when they leave here, they're in a position to be successful whatever they do, wherever they do it.

And the growth and the faith of Armando and all of the guys has grown this year in a way that it has refined their faith. It has developed their character so that they can move forward and be successful wherever they go.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports