

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - Vermont vs NC State

Saturday, March 22, 2025

Raleigh, North Carolina, USA

Reynolds Coliseum

NC State Wolfpack

Wes Moore

Saniya Rivers

Zoe Brooks

Media Conference

NC State 75, Vermont 55

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by NC State Head Coach Wes Moore. We'll have an Opening statement from Coach.

WES MOORE: Yeah, I mean, again, first of all, you gotta tip your hat to Vermont. I knew they were gonna come in here, they were hot. They won 9 of their last 10, 16 of their last 18. They got great interior play, they got great guard play. So, you know, I knew it was going to be a challenge, and gotta, again, they played great. Hanson coming in off the bench, scoring 21, hitting, what, 5 out of 8 threes. I think she was three or three in the first half. But just the balance.

Obviously their post players hurt us some inside. But I thought we really picked it up defensively in the second half, holding them to 13 points in the third and 9 in the fourth, so I thought our energy and our effort was a lot better in the second half. On a day where we didn't shoot well, again, give Vermont credit for that defensively, but we had a rough shooting day, and that's when you gotta defend and rebound. So proud of -- I think we went and got 18 rebounds, so that's something definitely we have been stressing, and hopefully we can build on that.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach. Our student-athletes here are Saniya Rivers and Zoe Brooks. Any questions for those two?

Q. For either player. When the Catamounts were making their run at the tail end of the first quarter and the start of the second, what did you see that allowed



them to get on that run and how did you counter that?

ZOE BROOKS: They came out hitting shots, they came out aggressive, moving the ball very well. Teams are going to have that run in the tournament. Everybody wants to win. Everybody is going to play well, and I think we adjusted pretty well in the second half.

SANIYA RIVERS: When the team scores 16 points in the first quarter, it was a automatic red flag for us. We knew we had to turn it around immediately or else they were gonna run us out of there, and like Zoe said, we had a phenomenal second half and we were fortunate to get the win.

Q. Like Coach said, offensive rebounding played a pivotal role in your win today. Seven different players secured at least one offensive rebound for y'all's team, including five different players with multiple rebounds. What does that speak to the team effort it takes to be able to win on the offensive glass?

SANIYA RIVERS: I think we run enough in practice, Coach Moore says if you don't crash the boards, then you are either gonna run or you're not gonna play. I know me personally, I got subbed out first half, because I wasn't crashing the boards. It just shows that he has high standards for us. He expects us to crash the boards, because he knows that we can.

We're longer, we're aggressive when we go in there, so if we go in there, he just hopes it will fall into our hands, so even if we have just one going back and board crashing, his hope is that somebody gets it. Just to see that we have multiple players down there crashing the O board, it just shows that we can, and we have to continue to do so.

ZOE BROOKS: She hit it on the spot.

WES MOORE: That's the way to defer, just like a guard!

Q. Saniya, now that y'all are in the round of 32, Monday will officially be your last game in Reynolds Coliseum. Can you just speak on what NC State and what it has meant to you?



SANIYA RIVERS: I said it before the game, this will not be our last game. The last game is going to be on Monday, because I wasn't ready to be done yet. So Monday, the last one, it's bittersweet. I have had a great three years here. If I could have another one, I definitely would.

I'm surrounded by great family, great fans, great teammates, great coaches, and I'm blessed that they gave me a second opportunity to come here. Coach Moore always makes the joke that I should have come here the first time, but anyway I'm here and now, so I'm thankful and blessed that he allowed me the opportunity --

WES MOORE: It's not me. It's Coach Nikki. When you passed the first time, Coach Nikki, she don't believe in going back. I had to make that happen.

SANIYA RIVERS: So you had to set that up?

WES MOORE: I had to make that happen.

SANIYA RIVERS: I appreciate you. Appreciate you.

Q. I want to ask you about a couple of the freshmen who made big plays today. First of all, Devyn Quigley especially in the second half was making pivotal plays to secure this win. Your overall impressions on how she played today?

SANIYA RIVERS: Definitely proud of Devyn. Obviously she is a freshman, so she isn't getting all the minutes in the world, but when her number is called, she is ready, she comes in and grabs -- she averages like one rebound a game, probably, on the O board. Just proud she came in ready. Looks like she hit some free throws and hit a couple shots, so we're just proud of her just being ready to step up when her number is called.

ZOE BROOKS: Devyn is a Jersey girl, so I expect that from her. She is a great rebounding guard, and I am proud of all the progress she has made this year.

Q. Following up on that, Lorena Awou also made some big plays in the post, came in and not only got second-chance points, like we were saying earlier, but got some defensive stops against Vermont's Bigs. How pivotal was she?

ZOE BROOKS: Lorena has come a long way, too, a lot of progress. When she comes in off the bench she definitely helps us a lot rebounding, put-backs and just her energy.

SANIYA RIVERS: It's crazy she still has three years left. She is as strong as an ox, and she hasn't even scratched

the surface yet. I'm just excited for her. Obviously she came in, gave us great minutes on offense and defense and we are just hoping she continues to do that throughout the rest of the tournament.

Q. Both of you, start with you Saniya. The scrap plays that you were able to put together in the second and third quarter, a lot of them were made by Madison Hayes. Talk about the value of Madison Hayes to the team.

SANIYA RIVERS: Madison is a big piece for us, and I think I was asked who is a player that deserves more attention and credit, and I said Madison Hayes, for sure. She gets attention here at NC State, but nationwide I think she deserves a little more credit. She is big minutes for us, hitting big-time shots, diving on the floor and getting offensive boards. Obviously she is playing out of position for us this year, guarding the 4 player, sometimes even the 5, but it just shows her character, and she's going to do whatever it takes to win. She has done a phenomenal job for us this year, and I just hope she continues that through the rest of the tournament.

ZOE BROOKS: People like to call her the glue and I agree. I don't think we would be the team we are today without her. Like Saniya said, she'll hit an open three, she'll get some offensive rebounds, defensive rebounds, she can get stops on defense, so we definitely wouldn't be where we are without her.

Q. Coach talked at the beginning of the season how Tilda was thrown into the fire and how she has all the talent in the world, but it seemed like a confidence issue and she doesn't like to play in the post a whole lot. But in this game and especially in the ACC Tournament she seemed to be a lot more comfortable in the paint. Can you speak on her development?

ZOE BROOKS: Yeah, her confidence definitely has come along. She is definitely more comfortable now. Like you said maybe she doesn't like playing the post as much because she is a great outside shooter. She can hit the three. You don't see that very much a 6-6 girl that can hit threes, but she has definitely come a long ways, and I'm very proud of her.

SANIYA RIVERS: She hit it on the head.

THE MODERATOR: Zoe, Saniya, thanks very much. Questions for Coach.

Q. Coach, how did you assess the effectiveness of the full-court press?

WES MOORE: Of the press? Just trying to show them a different look, try to speed the game up a little bit, because they were comfortable accident obviously, and we haven't been really a pressing team, but we felt like it would be good to throw it out there. I don't know that we got a whole lot out of it; they did a great job of handling it. But they were shooting, what, 8 for 19 from three? So, again, try to do something to change kinda them being so comfortable and knocking down shots.

Q. Circle back to the freshmen, talking about Devyn, one of those five players with multiple offensive boards, making plays in the second half. How important was she coming in and stepping up big when her name was called?

WES MOORE: Yeah, I just -- really after the ACC Tournament, just trying to evaluate where we were, and I felt like she probably deserved to get some minutes, so we had planned on getting her in there some.

Then just presented the opportunity. She does a great job of, as we mentioned, getting to the offensive boards, she has the length to defend, she can really shoot the ball. She can give us a spark off the bench. We have so many veteran guards, it's hard sometimes to pull them off the court, but we gotta do that, especially if we need to send a message. Somebody that's not going to the board, somebody is not doing what they're supposed to do defensively, like I said, feel like we need to have accountability, and Devyn has done a good job when we've called on her.

Q. Talking about the offensive glass, whether it's Devyn or Lorena came up big with second-chance points. When Vermont is making all those threes, how big is it to come up with those second-chance points and not come up with empty possessions?

WES MOORE: There is no doubt, we were 4 for 20 from three today, struggled, and struggled to shoot from the field, even, some, and when you can get those extra possessions -- and that's something after the ACC Tournament we came back and said we're going to commit more to offensive boards. You have to decide how many you want to send. It's going to affect your transition D, obviously, if you have people going, crashing.

But we just felt like we needed a spark there, and on a day like today when you are struggling to shoot the ball, that can make all the difference in the world. I gotta say, Madison Hayes also had 12 boards, her and Saniya, so both of them together, two veterans did a great job of going and getting us extra possessions.

Q. With Madison Hayes, Vermont playing two bigs in there, how big was she playing out of position and still getting 12 boards?

WES MOORE: Again, that was the tough part, and we knew coming in it was going to be a tough match-up. They have two true post players down there, and we are kind of going with four guards. We actually put Saniya down there some with her length, thinking she could make it tough to get the feed in there. When you are outsized like that, you gotta play really hard, and I thought Madison did that, and especially the second half I thought everybody stepped it up, and we had more pressure and got in the passing lanes, things like that.

Q. Wes, I think you called it yesterday talking about the early scout player coming off the bench on their side, 40% shooter, Hanson today coming off the bench for UVM, 21 points. She created problems for you guys. How tough was that to help your players understand what they needed to do and bottom line is execution, but it looks like it was quite a challenge today.

WES MOORE: Yeah, again, sometimes it's hard to get the point across, I guess, but we knew -- she was shooting 44% from three coming in. So you know she's a great shooter, coming in off the bench. Somebody that's going to give them some energy, give them a lift, and you gotta try to stick with her and we were supposed to be getting an overall pick on the ball. Couple times we went under, couple of times we helped a little bit; you can't help off somebody like that.

Again, we subbed a time or two because of it, just trying to have accountability, but no doubt she is a great player, and we definitely knew coming in we needed to try to slow her down. We just didn't quite get it done.

Q. Coach, Vermont had 33 points at halftime. You have been preaching defense all season. What did you tell your team in the locker room? After that they ended up scored 22 in the second half.

WES MOORE: I said we wouldn't be having dinner tonight if we didn't step it up. No! Again, we just talked about we knew they could score the ball, we knew we had to apply more pressure, get up to 'em. Again, sometimes it's got to happen to you for you to believe things, you know? Even though we've watched a lot of film, we didn't quite have the urgency, or we weren't locked in enough when things happened.

It's tough, you know, obviously we go over their plays, they ran a play where Hanson goes down to the block and you

know she is coming back up off a down pick, and we're screaming over there, but it's pretty loud in this place, so we didn't quite get the communication part through. You can't relax.

You've got to stay on edge when you're playing somebody that can score the ball. Thing is, you let 'em get happy -- we talk about that. Don't let 'em get happy. They get happy, they get confident, now you're in trouble.

Q. Aziaha James shot 4 of 15 from the field. What is it like to have Zoe Brooks as a scoring option. I believe she had two "and ones" in that quarter that y'all rallied behind to go on the run?

WES MOORE: I thought especially early in the game Zoe was keeping us in it. We didn't have anybody else hitting shots, really, and we weren't creating like we needed to. Again, we were settling for threes, and there comes a point where you gotta recognize, you know what, this isn't working right now. I need to get to the foul line, get to the rim, be the aggressor. But I thought Zoe did a great job of picking up the scoring slack in the first half and really carried us.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thanks for your time.

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