

# Atlantic Coast Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Wednesday, March 10, 2021  
Greensboro, North Carolina, USA

## Syracuse Orange

## Jim Boeheim

### Postgame Press Conference



Syracuse 89, NC State 68

JIM BOEHEIM: You know, the first half, we just couldn't stop them, and they couldn't stop us. Everybody was looking for Buddy. Buddy got the hot hand early, and they were just looking for him, and he knocked them down. Robert did a great job. Quincy got in foul trouble early. Robert did a great job in there. Marek needed to come out for a few minutes. And I thought Jesse was really solid in the middle. Joe was really good the whole game, hit a couple big threes in the second half.

We started out second half, really moved the ball well. We got four good looks from the three-point line. I think we made all four. Buddy made the four-point play, Joe made one, and Alan made one, and then Quincy made one.

They made none, then we made four, and that really was the difference in the game. We rebounded better than we had been. Our defense has been pretty good the last three games. The second half, the first 10, 15 minutes, our defense was really good. I thought that was a big difference in the game. We got some stops and they couldn't stop us.

Again, it was a really good offensive game, one of our best all year.

**Q. You've touched on it before over the last couple of games. When Buddy is rolling like that, how does that help the offense space out the floor when they're sending so many guys at him?**

JIM BOEHEIM: You know, today he got a lot of open looks. His teammates did a great job of setting him up, finding him. And they pressed a little bit, and we got an open look or two when they pressed us. Marek was really good, Joe was really good against the pressure.

I thought, again, they pressed a lot, and we handled the press. We just made maybe one turnover against it. It was a really good job of attacking their press, getting him open shots, and he was hot. He got it going, and they'd look for him.

It was just a really good balance in the second half. We came out, and everybody hit one. Marek made a lot of those plays. He got a lot of those plays to people. I thought he was really good on defense, kept their big guys away. It was, again, a really good defensive effort.

**Q. During the telecast Sean McDonough was saying that in a conversation yesterday, you felt like your team might already be in the NCAA Tournament. I was wondering what you felt like after getting this win today?**

JIM BOEHEIM: You know, I felt all along -- I don't think it's been taken into consideration. We played -- the seven quadrant 1 games we played were all on the road. You look at most teams that have got two or three quadrant 1 games, they won at home. We didn't get an opportunity to play a quadrant 1 game at home this year. The Big Ten game, Rutgers was on the road, and then all the games in the league were on the road.

So you look at quadrant 2, and there's a big difference between a 30, 40 and a 60, 70 quadrant 2 win. Clemson, Virginia Tech, North Carolina, they're all 30s to early 40s. I mean, those are good quadrant 2 wins. We were today 11-2 in quadrant 2 and 3, and I think now we move to 12-2 in quadrant 2 and 3.

Some of those are top-50 games, so there's a lot of wins in there, and if you look at some teams, they've had like five wins in quadrant 2 and 3. They've got a lot of wins in quadrant 4.

But I think when you look at the profile overall, I think we've got a lot of good wins against good teams. I think we beat a team today that could have been in the tournament. They've won five straight games. They could have beaten us and had a chance to go to the tournament.

Again, I think we did what we needed to do this year, but we'll see what happens.

**Q. You took Buddy out and he was two shy of a career high. I noticed you guys both kind of laughing a little bit as he came to the bench. Just wondering if either of you guys thought anything about that --**

JIM BOEHEIM: He looked a little tired. I want to get him out and get Kadary back in the game. I don't think about how many points he's got. He had enough.

**Q. I want to talk about the rebounding, especially early. NC State had the advantage and you made some moves and the rest of the way defensively inside and on the defensive glass, you guys played so much better. What was the change you put in there?**

JIM BOEHEIM: Not much. We were a little bit tighter than normal, and I thought Marek was really good down there and really battled. I thought Robert came in and battled. We just played better inside the whole -- really it started the second half. Our defense -- we scored, obviously, to get ahead, but our defense was just better in the second half. That was the difference in the game.

**Q. I wanted to ask you about the contributions of Robert and Jesse in particular. He got 17 points off the bench today, and other guys contributed defensively, as well. What did you see from them?**

JIM BOEHEIM: I thought both Robert and Jesse were great. I knew we were going to win when Robert (indiscernible) where I don't know how he even got the ball up on the rim. So I knew we were (indiscernible) when that thing went in. But Jesse was good early. He had a couple balls slip through his hands again that they got lay-ups on, but again, he's getting better. He's worked hard this year. I think he's shown some real dramatic improvement, and I think he still has got a huge upside. I mean, a huge. I think he can put on 15, 20 pounds this summer. All he needs to do is get stronger. He understands the game. He's moving well. He's just got to get stronger, and I believe he'll do that.

But both those guys were really good today. Rob was really good today. He's been on the verge. He's had some really good practice days. Again, he's been right on the verge of playing well.

**Q. Kind of following up on that and how this team really over the last three games has seemed to come together, you're getting contributions from all over the place. How do you feel about the way this team has**

**kind of gelled over the last three games?**

JIM BOEHEIM: I think we've played pretty well all year. I really do. I think when we had the struggle, we struggled on the road. We came home and we beat Miami and Virginia Tech, we really played well in those games. So I think we've done that. I think we've had times where we've done that.

When you look at losing -- North Carolina, we played a great game down there. That's a tough game, tough place to play. Virginia is really tough. Clemson is really a hard place to play. When we played Pittsburgh early in the year, they had everybody and they were playing great. The games we lost, Rutgers -- I mean, they're all tough games.

Rutgers, Clemson, Virginia, Duke, they're tournament teams, they're all tournament teams. You can lose those games. But we've won the games we've had to win at home, and we've picked up a couple good road wins and the neutral site game today.

We beat a good team today. This is a really good team. It's not a 10th place -- they won five games in a row. They won at Virginia, they won at Notre Dame. Notre Dame just beat Florida State at home, and they won another road game -- two home games, so five games in a row. So they came in with a lot of confidence and playing well, and we played very well. Played very well against Clemson. We had them 17 points down, and North Carolina we had down 10 with a minute to go. We just made a couple enforced errors.

But this team has played really well. They've come together. A lot of people gave up on them early in the year. We just kept plugging away, kept going. As everyone knows, it's been a hard year. Buddy was out, that hurt us. Losing Bourama for the year certainly hurt us. The last couple games Marek has been playing with a bad finger. They've overcome all that. Very proud of this team, what they've done. I think it's just incredible what they've done. I really do.

**Q. I was wondering if you could expand on Joseph Girard's really steady performance today.**

JIM BOEHEIM: I thought he was really good. I have a lot of confidence in Joe. I know he's had his struggles this year, but he proved himself last year and coming into a really tough situation where we had to have him play well, and he did it. He got us to 18 wins last year. Without him, we would have never got there.

I have a lot of loyalty to players in our program who have



done stuff for us, but I believe he's good. I believe he's a really good player. He made a couple big shots to start the second half tonight. The three-point shot is important in this game. He's our best three-point shooting point guard. He's a very good three-point shooter. I have a lot of confidence in him.

Now, Virginia tomorrow, if they take away the three, it might be a game Kadary plays better and can get to the basket. We'll try to use him in that situation. But this was definitely Joe's night. I could see from the beginning he was confident. He got to the basket. He just looked very confident tonight, and I thought he had a great game.

But as I've said all year, we need all three guards to play well if we're going to beat good teams and advance, and nothing has changed my mind on that at all.

**Q. The defense has been really good the last three games, really good today. You guys held them to 36 percent from the field. Do you think you guys have turned the corner in that aspect in that you've solved some of the issues that you had earlier in the year?**

JIM BOEHEIM: I think we're better. I think we're playing better defense. I think our rebounding has been better. But our offense has been there all year. We're a very good offensive team. When we make shots, we're really good. Today we made shots.

But our defense has gotten better. It'll be tested tomorrow. We're playing the best team in the league and a team that beat us up the first time we played. So we've got a great challenge tomorrow. Virginia is really good, and we have our hands -- we'll have our hands full tomorrow.

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