

Atlantic Coast Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Wednesday, March 10, 2021

Greensboro, North Carolina, USA

North Carolina Tar Heels

Roy Williams

Postgame Press Conference



North Carolina 101, Notre Dame 59

ROY WILLIAMS: First round of the ACC Tournament without Garrison. Found that out earlier today. Challenged our post guys, the other three guys yesterday, because we thought he would probably play but would be limited. So I challenged those other three guys yesterday to be focused and ready to play regardless of how many minutes we were going to give them.

I think it was no doubt in my mind it was a factor that Notre Dame played last night, and basically played seven or eight guys most of the minutes. And so we had more guys and we were fresher, and I thought that was a huge part of the game for us.

Our big guys hurt them early inside, and I think Caleb made a three early, and then after that, we didn't shoot it very well until the second half. And in the second half, we were 6 for 11 from three in the second half. We were very lucky to catch them where they played last night, but I loved the way all of our big guys played.

Q. Can you also give us an update on Garrison's availability tomorrow?

ROY WILLIAMS: I have no idea. I have no idea. I'd like to give an update because that would mean I have one. Again, we thought he was going to be able to play up until today. We didn't practice him yesterday except the warmup stuff, and I thought he would be able to go, but it was still bothering him. It's the same thing, the first play of the Duke game when he made the basket and came down on Matthew Hurt's foot.

Q. You said the Notre Dame played the other night and that was a factor, but how pleased were you with your team's energy, their activity, and their decisiveness out there?

ROY WILLIAMS: In the first half, I was pleased. The first four minutes of the second half, I was not pleased at all and jumped on them a little bit on that TV timeout. But after that, we got it inside two or three times in a row. We got some stops.

Andrew Platek made a three in front of our bench, and I knew we had a big run. I didn't look at the score, don't have any idea what it was, but I knew we were having a very significant run at that point. And then even to the next TV timeout, that four minutes there, we had continued to play unselfishly and we were getting some stops and making shots.

Everything you guys have heard me say a thousand times, when the ball goes in the basket, everything looks a lot better.

Q. You talked a year ago about Armando spinning and twirling and all that too much. What kind of a development have you seen in his game?

ROY WILLIAMS: Well, I think when he doesn't do that, he's a much better basketball player, there's no question about it. Because the more spinning around you do, the defense just tightens in on you and more people get involved, and you're not as fundamentally sound.

But I think that 20 and 13, that's pretty impressive. 7 out of 10. But there were times during this year that Armando was our most consistent player, and I think that that was extremely important to us all season. He and Day'Ron really dominated the game early in the first half, and they make a three and we turn it over in the last couple of minutes, and it still was whatever the score was at halftime. It was still 14 points.

And then we come out and make a three the first possession of the second half, too.

Q. You've already talked in recent weeks about Walker's development and how much those COVID quarantines back before the season started had set



him back. Recently what would you say has been the most important development about his actual game, something he's understanding on the floor that maybe he didn't more earlier in the season?

ROY WILLIAMS: Well, guys, you miss 14 days, up to two days before the first game starts, you miss a lot of stuff. That was very significant for him. He's understood the game more. He's gotten more confident. He's shooting the ball in in practice. All of his numbers in practice have gotten better and better, and this is a six or seven game stretch -- I don't know how many it is -- that he's just gotten better and better as he's gone along.

But it really is he's just continued to work hard and has gotten better, has gotten more confident. And I think one thing, his knees were bothering him for a quite a while even after 10 or 15 games in the season, and I think Doug has done a great job in helping him. He's done the treatment that he's needed to do and made it even better.

A lot of it's just his sweat and his work ethic, and it's really shown for him these last seven or eight games.

Q. Last season after you played that game against Syracuse, everything stopped, the world stopped essentially. What can you say about being back in this tournament and what the ACC and really college basketball did to make sure we could get back to this point and do it safely?

ROY WILLIAMS: Well, I think, knock on wood -- that means I'm hitting myself in the head -- we've been really good around the country. Yes, there's been blips here and there. Mike and I talked before the game. He lost a bunch of home games; we lost a bunch of home games. But I'm really stunned that we've been able to get as far as we have as safely as we have.

And I think you've got to really congratulate the young people. That's the bottom line. Us older guys like me or something, it's not as difficult, but I think you have to congratulate the young kids at every school around the country, the job that they have done. And yes, I do remember being here last year when all this stuff happened, and it was so sad.

I'm scared to death about the spikes that could be coming if we're opening up too soon and a couple of states out there are doing that. But for the whole, I think our kids should be congratulated for what they've done. And our league and the NCAA as a whole have been listening to the scientists and not the politicians, and I think that's been great.

Q. You get Virginia Tech tomorrow night, and obviously that was a game that dropped off your schedule. You didn't play them. Are they in any way sort of a mystery because of the pauses that they've had and the fact that you haven't seen them?

ROY WILLIAMS: Yeah, you know, it's strange because I haven't seen them nearly as much as I've seen some of the other teams in our league, and it's because we didn't play them at all. We played Clemson once, and we lost that home game. We played Miami once and lost that home game. And Boston College would be the other team that I hardly saw them play. That's Boston College and Virginia Tech both in that same category.

They're a little bit of a mystery. I have seen them play some but not nearly as much as I have the other teams. They'll be even more rested than we are, and we understand that, but Michael does a great job. I saw their game against Virginia and they were off the charts so good in that game.

I probably saw a few moments of some of the other games, but their game against Virginia, that stretch that they had in the second half was just off the charts.

Q. You've coached a lot of basketball, a lot of different places. Have you ever had a night where you don't have your best post player but you had three guys with double-doubles from the post and just as dominant as Bocat, Sharpe, and Walker was tonight?

ROY WILLIAMS: I don't know that I've ever had that. We've had three or four big guys on our team a lot when I was at Kansas and here, that they've been very good players. And I like to play big guys. I like to play two big guys. Mark Few and myself are about the only guys in the country that still play two big guys together.

But I don't know that I've had with those stats that you gave out. But at Kansas, I had Raef LaFrentz, Scot Pollard, T.J. Pew and Greg Ostertag, three near seven-footers. Then we had Nick Collison, Drew Gooden and Wayne Simien. So we've had really good players, but I don't know if we've ever had those kind of stats come up from that game. But it was good and they stepped up to the challenge. Garrison is our most experienced player, the most sound fundamentally defensively, and that was a part that I was worried about the most.

Before I get out of here, how about you guys writing an article about that we have players on our team that practice and play all year long to get to the ACC Tournament and can't dress out. My gosh. If the bowl game -- if a football team gets to go to the bowl game they can dress out

everybody in the world. But if we come to the ACC Tournament, which is traditionally part of the NCAA Tournament and these kids have practiced all year long -- and I had to have two guys tonight that couldn't dress out, and to me that's not right.

It's not anything about too many suits and ties on the bench because nobody is wearing a suit and tie, and you can separate 17 guys just as much as you can 15. We need to do something about that rule. Thank you, guys.

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