

# Atlantic Coast Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Thursday, March 11, 2021

Greensboro, North Carolina, USA

## North Carolina Tar Heels

## Roy Williams

### Postgame Press Conference



North Carolina 81, Virginia Tech 73

ROY WILLIAMS: I haven't had much chance to look at the stat sheet, but it's pretty evident in the first half their sense of urgency was much greater than ours. They played harder than we did. They drove us to the basket. Their reactions were quicker, more aggressive, more focused.

At halftime to be honest with you, I felt very lucky that we were just down three and told them that if they would change that and get a greater sense of urgency in the second half, stop turning the ball over, that we'd be there at the end and have a chance to win.

I think that Kerr said we only had three turnovers in the second half and one of them was RJ's drive in there that I don't know what he was going to do. I think that was big for us but also think we competed better on the defensive end of the floor, got a couple blocked shots.

And then on the offense, I think of all people, Leaky last night scores one lay-up, it's his only basket. But tonight he hit three big jump shots for us in the second half. I know one of them was three and maybe two of them was for three but I thought that was big for us. RJ made some baskets. We went with a smaller lineup a lot with Caleb and RJ in there together. I think they gave us another ball handler because their defense was pretty aggressive and we were turning it over.

The bottom line is Garrison tried to play tonight, tried to do some great things for us and did some great things for us, but he was still a little hampered. But I thought that Armando and Day'Ron particularly gave us some big plays up front, as well. But I'd say RJ and Leaky were the ones that were the stars in the second half.

**Q. What did you learn about your team's growth tonight after they didn't fold when things weren't going**

**perfectly in the first half?**

ROY WILLIAMS: Well, we've done that a few other times. I mean, a couple of weeks ago, we played Florida State and they had kicked us in the first half and we came back. We didn't do it nearly as well as we wanted to at Syracuse. But last night, they made a run at us and we'd had a 14- or 15-point lead at half, whatever it was, and then we made a three to start the second half. And so now it's 17 or 18, and then they made a run at us, so we bounced back.

But I think this was a tougher test on something like that, and I thought we handled it pretty doggone well. But we still have to make some shots. You can't keep shooting 44 percent for the game. And our big guys made a lot of shots. Armando 7 for 9 -- I'm trying to find Day'Ron, 4 for 7, so they're shooting over 50 percent. So we've got to get some perimeter guys to either make some shots or stop taking bad ones.

**Q. You've talked a lot about how it starts doesn't matter, it matters how it ends. But you mentioned Garrison was still a little hampered. Looking ahead to tomorrow, have you given any thought to the Day'Ron and Armando starting front court?**

ROY WILLIAMS: If Garrison is healthy enough to do the job defensively, the answer would be no. He's a senior, he's played his buns off for years and years, and I do believe in being loyal. We decided to sit him down last night because he couldn't do it. And I don't think that Day'Ron and Walker and Armando did the good things tonight that they did last night even though we had some good moments.

So the answer to your question: If he's fully healthy and can go, he's going to play. I mean, he's earned that. I'm not a guy that tries to change lineup every day or every time the wind blows.

**Q. They were effective keeping you guys off the offensive boards early on and even into the second half. What changed for you guys? Was it a matter of that sense of urgency you talked about or was it**



## something else?

ROY WILLIAMS: Well, we always feel like we're going to try to rebound the ball for 40 minutes. Virginia Tech is really good defensively, and they do a nice job of boxing out. At halftime we talked about we had to make an extra effort to get off the box-out and had to make an extra effort to get to the offensive board. And I think Armando did that better than anybody.

But we do talk about it. It's something that's part of our game. It's something that's been extremely important to us for our entire -- my staff, we've been together a long time. It's been important to us all the time. What I hope it is that we're just going to keep coming and keep coming and keep coming. And hopefully through the course of a 40-minute game, it'll be big for us.

**Q. You play Florida State tomorrow and I'm wondering in all your years of coaching, have you ever been in a situation where you're playing your third game in three nights and the team you're playing hasn't played in the tournament yet?**

ROY WILLIAMS: No, it's one of those things -- most of the time, when somebody says have you ever done this, I say yes, but I don't know that I've ever faced this situation here.

It makes no difference. We're still playing, and at the end of the game, the team that scores the most points is going to be declared the winner, whether it's your third game in a row or your first game. They play a lot of guys. We'll try to play a lot of guys, too. 18, 19, 20, 21-year-olds aren't supposed to get tired anyway.

**Q. Armando scored 10 straight points there late in the second half as Virginia Tech was trying to make a run. He's had several games in a row where he's been pretty efficient. Are you seeing a level of consistency that you need to see out of him?**

ROY WILLIAMS: Well, I think earlier in the year I said he was our most consistent player, there was no question about that, and he's been more up and down. But I think the majority of those 10 points were on offensive rebounds and put-backs. I think that he did a great job of getting to the boards and finishing plays. One time Day'Ron went in and missed a finger roll and one time Kerwin missed a lay-up right in front of it.

But Armando finished his plays and those things were huge for us to say the least. I look down there and I see 17 points, 13 rebounds, and that is really good. Armando -- I'm always asking Armando for more. I'll never stop asking Armando for more because I think there's more there, and

I'll never stop pushing him. But I thought he was huge in the second half along with Leaky and RJ.

**Q. I wanted to ask you about RJ. He hasn't always had the most consistent season this year, but what does it say about him, the ability to stick with it? And what was it about the way that Virginia Tech was defending you guys that enabled him to get in a little bit of a groove?**

ROY WILLIAMS: They're good defensively, guys, but the biggest thing I thought, we needed two ball handlers in there a little more to give us Caleb some help or RJ some help. And we went more with that lineup. And they were focused so much on trying to cut down on what Kerwin was getting that maybe they wouldn't guard RJ and Caleb as hard as they were guarding Kerwin. And it gave us, like I said, another ball handler because for us to have 11 turnovers but only three in the second half, that is huge for us.

But RJ is a tough kid. He's been a good player for us all year. Hasn't been as consistent, but neither has Caleb. So we've got to give guys a chance and hope that they play on game night, and I'm really happy for RJ.

**Q. The last four games of the regular season, you guys turned it over 80 times leading to 95 points for opponents, but here 22 turnovers leading to 20 points. What has been the difference for you guys?**

ROY WILLIAMS: Well, tonight in the second half, we didn't have the silly turnovers that ended up being open-court turnovers. But I will tell you something crazy. Caleb goes in there and throws up a terrible shot in the first half and gets knocked down, and then Kerwin doesn't get back, and then Leaky did get back. But I think it was Radford that beat him to the basket for a lay-up.

So a bad shot is the same thing as a turnover. I always say that bad shots and turnovers lead to run-outs, and I think that that was one right there that won't go down as a turnover, but it was the same thing.

But guys, it's mentally and physically impossible to emphasize taking care of the ball or don't turn it over. It depends on if you want to be one of those negative/positive guys or not, but it's impossible to emphasize that more than we have emphasized it. It didn't work the last four games when we had 80 turnovers, but perhaps it worked a little better the last two nights.

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