

Atlantic Coast Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Wednesday, March 8, 2023

Syracuse Orange

Greensboro, North Carolina, USA

Coach Jim Boeheim

Benny Williams

Jesse Edwards

Postgame Press Conference



Wake Forest 77, Syracuse 74

JIM BOEHEIM: I thought it was a great game. I thought Wake came out and double-teamed Jesse, which we thought they might do. He did a great job getting it out of there, passing it. But run defense was really good, broke down a little bit when we missed. We had a few-minute stretch in the second half where we couldn't score, and I think it affected our defense a little bit.

Down 12, these guys did an amazing job of just fighting back into the game, and even at the end when it was three and Judah got the drive and Benny got the three to get the lead, we just couldn't get the stop at the other end.

Again, credit Wake Forest. They played a tremendous game, and I think they're a really good basketball team.

Q. What was the play call on the last possession when Joe took the shot?

JIM BOEHEIM: We were going to go high-low. Benny couldn't get it to Jesse. He tried. That was the play, and then we got it to Joe and he had to make a play there. I would have liked to have seen him drive it, but he thought that was the shot.

Q. Jesse and Benny, this season obviously you guys have fought in a lot of close games within a couple possessions. What your takeaways are or maybe some positives from this season?

JESSE EDWARDS: First of all, I think outside of the fact that all of the ones that we came really close and we just couldn't finish it, outside of the fact that that's the toughest

feeling we had all season, every one of those hurt. We went home, and we came back and we played our own game, and we fought back every game. We got a couple really good ones, but it doesn't mean that these don't really sting a lot.

Yeah, it's a testament to the team, to how we fight. But yeah, it definitely hurts.

BENNY WILLIAMS: Yeah, I would just say tough games when it comes down to the end of the game. We've got to finish better. Just make defensive plays and get better shots up. But I would say this is not going to sit well for us. Credit to Wake Forest and how they played, but credit to our guys, too, especially Quadir coming in and giving us that energy. I don't think we would have been in the game without him.

Q. Coach, is there anything else that Wake Forest did differently other than just doubling Jesse?

JIM BOEHEIM: I thought they were more patient on offense. They didn't turn it over quite as much as they did in Syracuse. You know, I think they ended up shooting it a little better, but not a lot better. But I just thought that they were just a little bit better. They got a little bit more penetration. Hildreth hurt us getting into the lane a little bit. But I thought both teams actually played better, shot better. Offensively Judah had a tough game. He usually make those shots. But he came back at the end and made the lay-up and the three and then the lay-up and then made two really good plays at the end.

But he struggled a little bit. I think he got to where he usually gets and just wasn't able to convert.

Q. Now that the season is over, people are going to naturally wonder about your plans. Have you thought about what you're going to do next year?

JIM BOEHEIM: You know, it's a university. As I've said from day one when I started working here, the university hired me, and it's their choice what they want to do. I always have the choice of retirement, but it's their decision as to whether I coach or not. It always has been.



Again, I've been very lucky to be able to coach my college team, to play and then be an assistant coach and then a head coach, never having to leave Syracuse. It's a great university. The city has embraced our team.

I am amazed that we've been able to draw the fans that we've been able to draw over the years. Steve told me before the game, we were just talking, he said it was amazing, the fans. Last home game, nothing to play for, and there's almost 25,000 people there. I've been just so lucky to be able to coach at Syracuse, a place I love, I place I love to live. People keep wondering about that, but maybe that's a flaw I have.

But I've lived in Syracuse my whole life, and I'll live there hopefully a long time into the future. I think it's a great place. I think sometimes the negativity of people comes to the forefront, and that's life. That's there.

But I've been just unbelievably fortunate to keep this job. Mike Brey is thrilled that he was at Notre Dame 23 years; he's a puppy. I've had 47 years. I got to coach my sons. Two years ago we were in the Sweet 16, and last year I got to coach my sons. I had a great team. I loved that team. Jesse hadn't gotten hurt, would have done obviously better, but that happens.

Then in the fall of that year, we recruited five kids, and it ended up being six. And I made the decision that based on telling them I would recruit them, I would coach them. I don't know if I wasn't going to come back or not prior to that. I hadn't really decided. But when we recruited those kids, and I knew Jesse and Benny and Joe were coming back, and those kids I knew, we'd have a chance to have a good team this year. We were close. I'm happy with what we did. It's not that easy. There's some teams that were picked very high in the country and in the league that didn't fare so well.

I think this team always can do a little better, but we won at Notre Dame by one and we came back against Notre Dame at home to win by a couple, win by one at Louisville. There was a lot of games we did close and we learned. I think we closed this game on the offensive end, we made three really good plays at the end of this game to get there. We just couldn't get a stop at the end.

But I wanted to come back and coach these guys, and that's what I was able to do. The university hasn't offered me anything, whether to work or do anything at the university. That's their choice.

It was great to see Mike Krzyzewski at Duke, and Roy Williams at North Carolina and Mike Brey is going to work

for Notre Dame. That's great. I haven't had any conversations about that. I hope that we will. But I've just been lucky to be able to coach this long.

I think you missed it, I gave my retirement speech on the court last Saturday, and I gave it in the press conference afterwards, and nobody except William Payne figured it out.

Q. Are you saying right now that you're going to retire?

JIM BOEHEIM: This is up to the university.

Q. You want to come back?

JIM BOEHEIM: I didn't say that.

Q. So what are you saying? You're not saying you're retiring --

JIM BOEHEIM: I just said it. I don't know.

Q. So you don't know?

JIM BOEHEIM: I said this is up to the university.

Q. You're not sure whether -- how will you make a determination about when you will come back?

JIM BOEHEIM: You're talking to the wrong guy.

Q. Jesse and Benny, what are some lessons you learned from Coach Boeheim in your careers here?

JESSE WILLIAMS: I mean, obviously I'm here for four years, so I've learned a lot of them. But coming here was just mostly learning how to play basketball mentally because I was still -- I was pretty skilled, I would say. I could shoot a little bit, do that stuff, but it was more about playing hard, playing through tough times, playing against guys that are bigger than you.

It was the mental side that I really learned a lot from Coach, especially to just keep going whatever happens. Whenever it's hard, whenever you go through something, just keep going, keep practicing, and one day you will get your chance if you do your job, then seize it.

JIM BOEHEIM: Jesse has improved more than any player that I think I've coached. I really believe that. What game did they play in -- you told me, what's the game over there?

JESSE EDWARDS: We play some soccer over there.

JIM BOEHEIM: And field hockey.

JESSE EDWARDS: Everything but basketball.

JIM BOEHEIM: He said field hockey and soccer, he said nothing about basketball. He had so much to learn, and he's listened. He came in at I'd say 190, he's about 225 or 230 now, and he easily has improved as much or more than any other player than I've ever coached. He's worked hard, and he's just scratching the surface. He really is. He's just learning how to play basketball.

BENNY WILLIAMS: First of all, it's an honor to play for Coach Boeheim. Ever since I can remember I've been watching Syracuse basketball from Jeremi Grant to Dion Waiters and those guys. The biggest lesson I will take away from Coach Boeheim is just going about my business every day and being a man. I'm not going to sit here and lie and say that I've perfected that yet but --

JIM BOEHEIM: You're moving along the line.

BENNY WILLIAMS: He trusts me just to be a man. And as far as being a man, it's taking care of what you've got to take care of as far as being where you've got to be and doing what you've got to do, so I would say that for sure.

JIM BOEHEIM: Benny is a case -- obviously, as everyone knows, I've been his biggest fan. I want to see a player play to the best of his ability, and to do that you've got to work at it and you've got to go hard. I think he is learning that. I think it's not there yet.

But today he showed a little bit -- and this was a big stage, this was a big game, and I think he showed some of the things that he's capable of.

Again, he's better than that. He had a big game today. He had 18 points and 11 rebounds and five steals, blocked a shot, and he can do that every night. He can do that every night.

Q. I'm just a little confused. Do you want to come back, or did you just announce your retirement without actually announcing your retirement?

JIM BOEHEIM: No, I said it's up to the university. They have to make their decision, and it's up to them. I hope we can come to a good agreement. I mean, that remains to be seen.

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