

Atlantic Coast Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Wednesday, March 8, 2023

Pittsburgh Panthers

Greensboro, North Carolina, USA

Coach Jeff Capel

Federiko Federiko

Jamarius Burton

Postgame Press Conference



Pittsburgh 89, Georgia Tech 81

JEFF CAPEL: First of all, we're grateful to survive and be able to play another day. This was a huge win for our guys, and I'm really proud of how we fought. We did a really good job in the first half, and we built a lead of 13 at the half. I thought we defended well. Obviously we scored the basketball.

But we did not get off to a good start in the second half, and credit them, because they made plays. They were a little bit more aggressive in their ball screen coverages. They were more aggressive in their contests, and we didn't adjust to it right away, which led to some live ball turnovers, which led to lay-ups and easy baskets for them.

They grabbed some momentum. But I'm really proud, man, because we fought. We could have easily given in and put our heads down and things like that. But these guys showed who they have been all year, which is resilient, tough and together, and we were able to make some huge plays down the stretch.

Everyone did it. Certainly these two guys up here beside me. But Guillermo came in and made some huge plays, Greg obviously shooting the basketball, Nike with his defense and his drives, Nelly stepped up and made some huge plays.

Really, really proud of my team, and really grateful to be able to play again tomorrow.

Q. Feddy, there was a lot of feeds to you down low in this game to get the game going. You didn't shoot as many three-pointers early. Was that something they

told you ahead of time, we're kicking it to you a lot?

FEDERIKO FEDERIKO: No, we just looked at the scout, and they're smaller than us, so we just wanted to use our size.

Q. Jamarius, what were you talking about in your huddles in that second half when you were trying to turn things around?

JAMARIUS BURTON: Yeah, for us to just continue fighting. We understand it's 10 rounds, we understand the game is not over. We started off the half not playing up to our standard, and we wanted to continue to make corrections, continue to take care of the basketball, and just continue to fight. We understand it's survive and advance.

Q. Nelly was struggling from the field at one point shooting 1 of 8, but he came back and made some really big lay-ups. What did you see from him?

JAMARIUS BURTON: Yeah, he's a competitor and regardless if he's making or missing, he's going to compete while he's on the floor, and he was able to do that down the stretch, and we needed everything that he gave us out there on the floor.

Q. Coach, y'all played Duke earlier this year. They're not the same team. They're playing a lot better. Talk about tomorrow's matchup now.

JEFF CAPEL: Yeah, it seemed like forever ago. They're really good. They're probably the hottest team in the league. I think they've won six in a row. Those freshmen have grown up. Obviously we know that they're very, very talented. It'll be a heck of a game.

I think we've gotten better since we played them, too, so we're excited about the challenge.

Q. What were some of the issues defensively that you think the team needs to clean up in their next game?

JEFF CAPEL: I thought we did a really good job



defensively in the first half. Second half they just got breakouts. I thought that was one of the things that happened. They were able to get out and transition off of our turnovers. We had four turnovers, I think, in the first half. We finished with nine. I think we had four in the first three minutes of the half, so that just led to them getting easy baskets. When you get easy baskets like that, your percentage is probably going to be a little bit higher.

We had a difficult time when Federiko went out with our ball screen coverage and we made one adjustment late and Guillermo did a heck of a job. They are a tough team to guard with the way they run their stuff, since they've gone smaller, they get out in transition. They normally have four guys out there that can shoot the basketball, and it's something about when you have a freedom. They know they can't come out. They have no subs. Normally when you have that, you have a freedom, and they're a good basketball team. Coming into this game, besides Duke, they were the hottest team. They won four in a row.

Josh and his staff have done an unbelievable job of dealing with adversity, and to keep these guys to continue to fight, that's a big-time testament to him, his staff, and the players in his program.

Q. Coach, in the off-season putting this team together and then seeing the team this season come together, what can you say about as you were finding those pieces and watching these pieces to go to work the way they have?

JEFF CAPEL: Yeah, I'm proud of our team, I'm proud of our group, I'm proud of what we've been able to accomplish. I think we've gotten better throughout the season.

We've had unbelievable leadership with J.B., with Nelly, with Greg, with Nike. Those guys have been the leaders of our basketball team. J.B. has been the voice of our team. They've just come together. They've fought. We've been through adversity. It didn't start the way we thought it would. But we kept fighting.

The main thing is that we stayed together. It's a really good example of when you do that, good things can happen for you.

Q. Jamarius, you guys were so close against Duke in that game. What do you think you guys have improved on since then, and what did you learn from that game that you can potentially apply tomorrow?

JAMARIUS BURTON: Yeah, I think some things that we've gotten better since that matchup is just

understanding switch attacks a little bit better, understanding defensive schemes, and understanding where to attack.

I feel like that first time playing against them, we were just getting our feet wet in that area, and ever since then we've been able to grow and get better as a team.

Q. Jeff, Greg had a hard time shooting the last two games, but he went 4 for 4 from deep in this one. What went into that? Was he hurt in that stretch and is he fresh now? How did he pick himself up?

JEFF CAPEL: He was not hurt. Look, when you can shoot the basketball, you're going to have some time when you maybe go through a cold streak. The really good shooters they always realize it's something else. Something is wrong with the ball, something is wrong with the rim. It's not them.

We want Greg to shoot the basketball. When he has good looks, we want him -- we have all the confidence in the world in him, and he made some huge ones today. He made one, I think it was 65-62, clock running down and he stepped up and made a big-time three for us so give us a little bit more separation.

Q. Coach, I just want to hear your thoughts on the dynamic of you and Scheyer going up against each other, both former Duke players, and he's in his first year coaching for Duke after replacing K and just the storylines behind that and how much you're looking forward to that.

JEFF CAPEL: Well, Jon has done a heck of a job, and I'm not surprised. When he joined the staff at Duke, I could see right away -- and I knew Jon. I had met him, but I didn't really know him. I could see right away why he was a really good player, because he had a great feel. You could see he had a great feel for the game but also a really good feel for people.

I think we worked together for I think it was five years, and you just saw him become more confident and to grow and to get better. He's a guy that wants to be really good. He's passionate about what he does.

When you look at the circumstances, you're taking over for -- look, I think he's the greatest coach ever. There's no more pressure than that. I think he's handled everything in an unbelievable fashion. Those guys have gotten better.

There's a lot of expectations and pressure on Jon, on the guys in that program, and I think he and his staff have done a really good job of managing that, managing

expectations and helping them just get better week by week.

They're playing with a lot of confidence. Obviously they're really talented. They've always been talented, but they've grown up because they've taken some lumps and they've stayed together.

Q. Since you played in this tournament, I wonder, do you recall were you nervous before your first ACC Tournament game, because Feddy just played in his and had his best game against any opponent all season, which doesn't sound easy.

JEFF CAPEL: Yes, I was nervous. I don't think I played well. I don't think I ever played well in the ACC Tournament, so I'm glad these guys didn't get that from me.

Q. Jeff, you guys had a 14-3 disadvantage in offensive rebounds against Miami, and it was 12-6 today. Now you're facing the top offensive rebounding team in the conference tomorrow. What do you have to do to fix that and make that not as much of a liability?

JEFF CAPEL: Yeah, well, there's nothing physically we can do right now. Look, that's why they beat us at their place. They dominated the glass. If you go back, and I haven't looked at the stat sheet yet, I think there were some, I think they were in the 30s shooting the basketball, and that's with 20-plus offensive rebounds. We have to be better there if we want to have a chance against them.

Q. Federiko, could you talk about playing Ja'von Franklin, No. 4, and Jamarius, your thoughts about Tech and the way they fought back into the game in the second half?

FEDERIKO FEDERIKO: Super athletic dude, fast, can jump. Kind of hard to guard.

JAMARIUS BURTON: Yeah, I feel like when they made a run, it was off of our mistakes, like Coach said, early turnovers got them going. They got some transition threes that they didn't really get in the first half, and it kind of gave them a great level of confidence.

That's what contributed to their run, but we were able to stay the course, continue to fight throughout the second half.

Q. Federiko, we've talked about this all year, about this team's age. How was it, though, in the second half when Georgia Tech is making that run, you see the experience really come into play with those four

guards you guys have. What's it like to see them lead and keep everyone else composed and allow you guys to battle back?

FEDERIKO FEDERIKO: It's great. We've got great leaders. It's not just one. It's four.

It's great. It's great.

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