

Atlantic Coast Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Wednesday, March 8, 2023

NC State Wolfpack

Greensboro, North Carolina, USA

Coach Kevin Keatts Ebenezer Dowuona Jarkel Joiner

Postgame Press Conference



NC State 97, Virginia Tech 77

KEVIN KEATTS: Well, I thought we played against a very good Virginia Tech team, and coming in, I'll be honest with you, the way I watched their last home game against Florida State and they made 16 threes and Florida State switches on ball screens and everything else, so that was our major concern.

I thought we did a really good job in the first half defending the three-point line. They were 1 for 8. I thought we played with grit. When we defend like we did tonight, we're a really good basketball team. I thought we did a great job getting out in transition. Our guys fought.

We played like we wanted to win the game. So good win for us. We get to survive and advance and get to move on to our next game tomorrow.

Q. Kevin, any update on Greg? Obviously it didn't look good. Is there any news yet?

KEVIN KEATTS: Yeah, I don't have anything. I don't know what his situation is. I know he had ice on his knee when I just left the locker room, but I didn't get an update from the trainer.

Q. If you guys do have to go forward without him or he's out for any length of time, you've used several guys in that role. Does it change a lot, or can you kind of use the guys you've been using in bigger roles?

KEVIN KEATTS: Well, I think Ernest Ross and Jack Clark would obviously have to step up. Greg is not the offensive guy that they are, but he does a tremendous job on the

defensive end. Two of those guys would definitely have to step up.

If there's some reason he can't go, there's a possibility we may have to go four guards at a time.

Q. Kevin, also the players, how much did the week off since your last game help, because you looked a lot fresher.

KEVIN KEATTS: Yeah, you know, that's a great question. You don't know until you play the game, so it looked like it worked in our favor. We kind of split the week up, went a couple days, off a couple days, were in the gym about an hour, never really over an hour and 15. I thought our guys looked fresh. It's a concern because you go into these games and you wonder if the week off, you know if you're sluggish, if you don't play well.

But I thought our first half was one of the best first halves we played offensively, and then we did a good job defensively.

EBENEZER DOWUONA: I mean, like Coach said, you never know until you play the game. But when we played, you could tell everybody felt fresh. We needed that. We came back from back to back games, and I felt like it was much needed for sure.

JARREL JOINER: I agree.

Q. You guys did a really good job kind of containing Cattoor especially off the ball. How big of a point of emphasis was that from Coach and the staff.

JARREL JOINER: We watched film on him. Like Coach said, they made a lot of threes at home against Florida State. And especially him, he's a really good player. So man, we tried to contain him, tried to make things difficult for him, and it worked out tonight.

Q. Did you do anything different offensively versus the first time you played Tech, or was it just hot shooting today?

KEVIN KEATTS: Well, I thought we shared the ball. I told these guys at halftime, I thought it was only two possessions where I thought we dribble dribble dribble, but I thought for the most part we shared the ball. I thought EB, career high in scoring today did a good job, because he rim ran. He did a great job setting great screens. Give him credit.

I thought our guards played great. When you look at T, T had great numbers and Jarkel was really good. I thought EB did a good job of getting those guys easy shot by his screens. We had more ball and player movement I thought than we did in the first game that we played.

Q. Coach, you mentioned how well you enjoyed the defense you guys played against the three-point against Virginia Tech tonight. Do you think that's going to be the key for you guys to kind of get back against Clemson tomorrow night?

KEVIN KEATTS: Yeah, you know, it seemed to be we're playing a lot of teams that can shoot the three, and that must mean our league has got a bunch of three-point shooting teams. The key to any of our teams or any of our defenses, we've been really good and selfish, defensively guarding the three-point line, so in order to advance we would have to continue to do that.

Q. Players, how much are you looking forward to getting another chance against Clemson, especially with the way the last meeting went in your home finale?

JARREL JONES: It's motivation for sure.

EBENEZER DOWUONA: I agree it's motivation for sure. We don't want to lose three times, so be ready. Be ready to hoop.

Q. I know you've seen all the things about bubbles and metrics. Do you think you made a statement tonight by winning the way you did?

JARREL JOINER: Most definitely I feel like we're a team that can go far in March into the NCAA Tournament, but like you said, Coach told us to focus on the next game, so that's what we're doing.

Q. Kevin, Terquavion had kind of an uneven February. How much do you feel like the week off did him some good, and what did you see from him that let him have such a great game tonight?

KEVIN KEATTS: Yeah, I thought everybody in the country worried about Terquavion Smith except for me. I didn't

bring him in my office, we didn't talk about anything. Obviously the great thing about him is he's got short-term memory, and he can miss 10 shots and then make 12. He's just that type of player.

These guys know that they have freedom, and I let them play. So I knew at some point he would have a breakout game.

Q. Your backcourt combined for 50 points tonight. How important is performances like this from the leaders on your team?

KEVIN KEATTS: Yeah, they were tremendous. Guard play takes you a long ways, and I thought those guys were really special tonight, Jarkel and T, they complemented each other. We haven't had a game probably like this where they both were on in the same game. They've had good games, and then one guy was okay, and then another guy would have a big game. As we talk about all the time, I tell them to see what you're capable of. When those two guys are playing great together, then they're really tough to stop.

Q. Jarkel, for you, like Coach just mentioned you and Terquavion going really well tonight. How much fun is that when you can play off of each other in the backcourt?

JARREL JOINER: It's really fun. Terquavion is a superstar. I love playing with him, his energy, his unselfish. Probably one of the most unselfish superstars I've ever been around. We love each other. We're always talking on the court, off the court, seeing what we're doing, and man, it's fun.

Q. Kevin, D.J. only played 15 minutes I think today. I know that's not what you wanted, but in the great scheme of things if you have to play four games in four days, how much does that help in keeping him fresh?

KEVIN KEATTS: Well, you know, the fortunate thing or unfortunate thing about when you're playing a tournament and every situation, some of your better players are not going to play well all the time. Sometimes that can be a blessing. I thought EB did a great job when D.J. didn't have the best game, but we're going to need everybody in this tournament, and that's why I wanted to play the best as much as I could just because it's a long week. And in order to move on and advance to the next game, you've got to have everybody ready to play, and we talked about -- I've talked to EB about staying ready, and I thought he did a good job.

I didn't realize this until I'm just looking at this, Jarkel, I didn't know he had 20 points and 10 assists. That's pretty doggone good. Starting to play like me a lot. With the 20 points, not the 10 assists.

JARREL JOINER: I knew I had nine assists in the game. I was trying to get that 10 assists.

KEVIN KEATTS: I don't mind when a guy is chasing a stat if it's assists. I would have had problems if he told me he wanted to get 21 points.

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