

Atlantic Coast Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Thursday, March 9, 2023

North Carolina Tar Heels

Greensboro, North Carolina, USA

Coach Hubert Davis

R.J. Davis

Postgame Press Conference

Virginia 68, North Carolina 59

Q. R.J. and Coach, just how surprised are you that this is the position you guys find yourselves in at the end of the ACC Tournament, likely to miss out on the NAAs?

R.J. DAVIS: I mean, it's not a great feeling. Not the expectations that we had coming into the year. It was definitely frustrating and disappointing, but one thing I can say about this group is we fight to the end. We're a resilient group. We may get kicked down, but we always get back up, and that's something that has been a major theme for this whole team.

HUBERT DAVIS: Yeah, just never and never will be disappointed in these kids. I'm so proud and honored and thankful and appreciative to be one of their coaches and to be around them every day. I'm sad and disappointed for them that we're in this position.

Just very sad for them.

Q. Coach Davis, what did you tell your guys in the locker room to kind of pick their heads up and keep a positive attitude for what was a tough end to the season?

HUBERT DAVIS: Didn't say very much at all. One of the things that I try to do, very rarely do I say very much after a game. I just got that from Coach Smith after a game. He just wanted to let emotions calm down and be able to give time to gather your thoughts. I told the team that I'd talk to them when we get back to the hotel tonight.

Q. Coach, you guys were within two and they ran off nine unanswered, mostly at the foul line. You guys



were right there and just couldn't quite get over the hump. Was there anything in that final sequence where you just weren't able to get ahead when you had the chance?

HUBERT DAVIS: Well, we missed five free throws. That's huge. We missed five free throws -- I'm not saying we make all of them, but we had a number of opportunities to tie the ball game or make it a one-possession game.

I think in the middle of missing those five free throws, I think we turned the ball over twice, as well.

Again, down the stretch, the discipline and the details, the little things, free throws, taking care of the basketball. I think we missed a couple lay-ups. Just didn't make the plays that you needed to down the stretch.

Q. If you do have a chance to extend your season, be it in the NIT or some other way, would you like to continue playing? Would you accept a bid? R.J., how do you think you and the team feels about playing in maybe a different tournament?

HUBERT DAVIS: I'm not thinking about that at all right now. We just lost a game, and I'm thinking about them and thinking about this team, and that's the only thing on my mind right now.

Q. Hubert, you talked a lot about outside noise when we started the season. Do you think that that got to your team this year at all, and if so, to what extent?

HUBERT DAVIS: I do at times. I do. I've said that, that when you -- the reality is when you're speaking to a group in the locker room, and I've communicated to them that I'm talking to more than 18 guys in the locker room. I'm talking to roughly 35 to 40 people, and so yes, there's at times the noise, whether it's from the phone, the family, the friends, the fans, the agents, the workout guys. I think at times it really hurt us.

Q. With Armando not really getting any minutes in the late second half, was his ankle just not working?



HUBERT DAVIS: Well, I mean, it wasn't working the entire game. It was really difficult for him to get position or hold position down low in the post, very difficult for him to make any moves. When he set screens, it appeared and looked difficult for him to get out of the screens.

Then I can't remember when he came out, I think it was like the 15-minute mark, he said he couldn't go back in for the rest of the game. That's why we went with that lineup.

Q. You mentioned a little bit about Bacot not being a factor, but can you talk about how they were able to take away your inside game and force you into a lot of perimeter play?

HUBERT DAVIS: Well, he is our inside game, and you really have to compliment Clark and Beekman. They're really good on-ball defenders. But I felt like in the first half, their physicality on the ball and the physicality in regards to Armando kept us out of the lane.

In the second half I thought we did a really good job of that. We got into the penalty early, we got to the free-throw line, and when you work that hard to get fouled and get to the free-throw line, you can't miss those five free throws.

So I felt like in the second half, we did a better job of getting off those screens and attacking the paint, and we just didn't make enough plays.

Q. R.J., how do you personally sort of process the way last season was going at this time and the run you guys were able to go on until now? Looks like you're on the outside looking in to the NCAA Tournament. What's that like to try to process?

R.J. DAVIS: It's a lot of emotions just to see from last year, the type of run we made. Like you said, looking from the outside in this year, it's tough. It's a tough position to be in.

For myself, I'm a competitor. I'm going to compete until the horn blows. For me, it's just frustrating. It's not the way I wanted -- the way I wanted the outcome to be today. I felt like there was plays we could have made, like Coach Davis said, the missed free throws, turning the ball over, just the little things. It's been like that the whole year, just attention to details, little things that we just need to perfect and that we didn't do in today's game.

Q. Hubert, 12 days ago when you played Virginia, really good three-point shooting effort by your guys. Did Virginia defend you differently today on the ball screens to limit the open three looks?

HUBERT DAVIS: No, they didn't. They generally are very

aggressive on ball screens. One of the things that we talked about was when coming off those ball screens, you've got to get the ball out of your hands, and you've got to be able to get the ball to an open guy, whether it's a pop or a roll and be able to attack and get to the basket.

At the end of the day, I felt like we had some really good looks from three. It's always one of the things that has gone back to us is our inconsistencies and our inability to shoot the ball from the outside.

At the end of the day, statistically we're the last in the ACC in three-point shooting percentage. How to loosen things up to get a little more space on the offensive end is to be able to knock down some jump shots. We just weren't able to make enough.

Q. Hubert, if you were making a pitch to the selection committee on why this is an NCAA Tournament team, what would your case be?

HUBERT DAVIS: I don't know. You know, again, I'm not -- I know it's hard for you guys to think that I'm not thinking about that. Our record is our record, and I know that -- I think regardless of our record, I think we have shown throughout the entire year that we can compete and play and beat anybody in the country.

But I know that we played a really tough non-conference schedule. I know that the ACC for whatever reason is undervalued as one of the elite if not the elite conferences in college basketball, and still trying to understand -- I understand the Quad -- it could be a Quad 1 win in November, but in March it's not. But at the end of the day, we had chances.

For eight or nine of the 13 losses that we had, we were up in the second half. So we had our chances.

Q. R.J., at the two-minute mark you guys were down by two. In those final two minutes what was the offensive game plan?

R.J. DAVIS: Leave the ball on the side, attack the weakest defender. I felt like the last two-minute stretch we was able to get what we wanted offensively, was able to get to the free-throw line, was able to either penetrate, hit the open guys for threes, and just from a defensive standpoint, just trying to speed them up a little bit. We went to like a diamond pressure press, kind of got a little bit of turnovers on their end, but they was able to break it.

I just felt like doing a little bit more earlier in the second half, and it might have been a different outcome.

