

Atlantic Coast Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Friday, March 10, 2023

Duke Blue Devils

Greensboro, North Carolina, USA

Coach Jon Scheyer

Jeremy Roach

Dariq Whitehead

Postgame Press Conference



Duke 85, Miami 78

JON SCHEYER: Well, first of all, I thought it was as high of a level of game as we've played. Miami, they're a really good team. They have a high-powered offense. They're experienced. I thought for us, we actually came out and threw some haymakers at them and gave them a great shot. For them, they're just so steady. They keep coming at you.

Both these guys to my left made some big-time plays, especially the guy -- both guys, but for Dariq, just to come off in that situation, I thought he had timely baskets for us, the three into the half, the three free throws when there's a one-point game. He even had the steal at the end, which we'll talk about what happened after the steal, but he got the steal.

Anyway, really proud of our team. I think it shows our growth to be in a big-time battle like this where there's not that separation. We weren't going to be able to pull away.

Really proud, and happy to answer any questions, and these guys, too.

Q. You guys have shot 49 percent from the floor or better in five of your last seven games, made 50 percent from three-point range today. What has been the biggest factor in that offensive growth over this past few weeks, and where do you still see growth potential?

JON SCHEYER: Well, I'll be curious to see what these guys say. I think for us it's the consistency and continuity. I would point to that. But also, just making the right plays,

whatever that means.

I give all these guys so much credit. They all have professional aspirations. There's a lot at stake. They want to play this game for a long time, and it's easy to think that's going to be impacted by numbers.

For us, I think we've seen the best, the most attention we've gotten is when we win, and our guys have been all in with that the whole year. They've done a great job, and tonight was no exception to that, especially as of late, like you've mentioned the last couple weeks.

JEREMY ROACH: I just think early in the year we were kind of like letting the ball stick and it was sticking in one guy's hand and that's been a big thing this whole season. He's been telling us all five guys got to touch it, and when all five guys are touching it, everybody has got confidence. And when you're making the right play, you're probably going to make your shot.

So I just think making the right play. These last five, seven games we've been making the right play, and I think that's why our shooting percentage is like that.

DARIQ WHITEHEAD: For me, Coach hit it on the nose. I feel like the main was just making the extra pass. For the past five or seven games we've been making the extra pass, and we've really seen a jump in our shooting percentage from three. And I feel like that was just the main thing, making the extra pass and believing in our guys, and that's been the change right there.

Q. Jeremy, you made the three-pointer about a minute and a half to go to put you guys up seven. What were you thinking on that play when you got the ball? How did you feel when you saw the ball go through the net?

JEREMY ROACH: I felt good. Just on that last play -- the last three I shot, it felt good so I really was trying to get another three up because I knew the next one was probably going to go in. Stick my follow-through and stick to the work and have that confidence that I've always had.

Q. Question for the players. You had eight turnovers

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in the first half. Second half Miami pressed at every opportunity, fresh, athletic defenders, got their turnovers to four. How were you guys able to figure out how to adjust to that in real time?

DARIQ WHITEHEAD: I feel like the main think is we had to settle down. Coming into halftime, Coach got on us. He knew we had eight turnovers at the half, and that was his biggest thing coming into half, making sure we took care of the ball, and in the second half we did that. We came in and we was poised, we took care of the double-teams in the second half with Miami being long and athletic like you said.

And like you said, it changed in the second half, and we took care of the ball a lot better.

Q. Jon, you've had a stretch of games where they're complete opposites from where you were at the beginning of the season. The NC State game, you took out NC State. This Miami game, where you were when you went down there. Has this been a focus? Has it been a rerun it back, we're going to get you now, as a build to where you've been? These games have kind of been like a payback, if you will.

JON SCHEYER: Well, one, I think it's always how -- for our program, it's important to respond as a competitor, right? I don't care who it is, when they beat you, that's -- I'm not going to sit up here and say you don't want to beat them that much more. But for us it's more about advancing in this tournament and winning the next game.

I just credit these guys so much with the growth and with the mentality to be able to do that.

For a minute there, we were playing much different. But the way we were turning it over, to only have four in the second half when they're pressing us the whole time, that just to me showed everything about the development of this group.

Q. Coach Scheyer, in regards to Dariq, is this the most confident that you have seen him play tonight throughout the entire season? The second part of that question is how good is it to have that type of talent coming off your bench and being able to have that in your rotation as we head into March?

JON SCHEYER: Well, you know what, one, I'm so proud of him, but two, we really have six starters with Dariq. And especially down the stretch, we were just rotating and keeping fresh bodies with those six guys. Our bench has been a huge thing for us all year, Jacob, Ryan and those guys, they didn't play as much tonight, but they played key

minutes.

But for Dariq, I don't know, it's hard to understand the injuries when you have those, how difficult that is to overcome. I think it says a lot about -- forget his game. If you guys can't see his game and his ability and all that, that's obvious to me. But what I'm most proud of with him is how he's just battled adversity. He's battled, man. He comes back. He was playing really well, gets hurt in the Virginia Tech game, and then has to do it all over again.

For him to have the success against this good of a team, I'm not surprised, but I'm also proud of how he just stuck with it. And his teammates love him, we love him, and we've got more to do.

Q. You led 66-61 with a little over eight minutes left and then went three minutes without a field goal. You made the decision to bring Dariq back into the game but you took out Tyrese at a time when Miami was pressing. Was there a debate in your mind weighing the two, offensive power versus having just one primary ball handler against the press?

JON SCHEYER: You know, to be honest with you, we feel we still have great ball handling. That's the thing with our group, with Jeremy on the floor, Dariq, Mark, Flip, and then we had Dereck, we have four guys that can all handle. Dariq can handle, Jeremy can handle.

We did a great job of handling that, and I think we are such a versatile team. We have multiple guys that can -- with that lineup, for example, when we're defending, really we're very switchable on defense. Offensively I mentioned the ball handling and the passing. That wasn't an issue for me at all.

I thought we did a great job handling that in that situation.

Q. Dariq, you missed that last game against Miami. A lot of the guys yesterday in the locker room referenced kind of a beat-down that you guys took in Coral Gables. How important was it to come in and establish yourself with you missing that last game?

DARIQ WHITEHEAD: The main thing for this game was to come in and be aggressive. Before the game, I told you guys earlier, Jeremy -- him being our captain, he always tells me before every game to come out and be aggressive, and that's what I did this game. And really was just doing whatever I needed to do to win. So if that was guarding Miller, who is a phenomenal player on Miami, that's what it was going to take. But really just coming out to do whatever the team needed to win.

Q. The first half was a game of runs, you guys would go on a run, they'd come back. How much confidence did that give you in the second half when you basically had the lead most all the second half, but they kept making runs at you?

JEREMY ROACH: That's been a big focus with us pretty much the whole way. But this last month that's been a huge focus when guys make runs. We know everybody in the ACC is good, especially Miami is a top team in the ACC. We know they're going to make runs but we've got to stick together, stick together and have confidence. That's the biggest thing. Come together when they're making their runs, talk to each other, tell them what we need to be doing, and keep going from there. But you can't hang your heads if they have a run because they're a good team.

Q. It's no secret that Greensboro has been a special place to Duke. I think Coach K won six times here, you won in 2010, Jon, and you have a first chance to get your first as a coach tomorrow. How special is it, this place, especially when you consider how much blue was in the stands tonight.

JON SCHEYER: Well, Greensboro is a special place. For me I thought the crowd was incredible. When the chants started let's go Duke, for me, that was everything to me. I don't know how you guys felt with that, but that's a pretty special feeling.

I'm not really reminiscing right now. The whole year I've tried to be in the moment. If I start talking about 2009, 2010, these guys are going to start rolling their eyes, so I'm not going to start that at all. I'm not going to bring that up tonight.

In 2020 we were here, and obviously that ended -- we're not going to talk about it. I'm bringing up something nobody wants to hear.

But the main thing is that it's a big-time opportunity to play in the championship game for the ACC Tourney, and we're going to savor it and give it our all tomorrow night.

Q. How did you adjust when Norchad sprained his ankle in the first few minutes?

JON SCHEYER: Well, one, I hope he's okay. He's a big-time player. He's had a great year for them, and it was really unfortunate. You hate to see that happen. When it happens in the game, though, they have other really good players, too. Walker, he's been there for four years, and we know what he's capable of. He brings a different dimension from his athleticism, and Casey stepped up in a

big way.

So there's really no -- you can't let up, and they're a great team. Obviously you wish he was playing and you hope he's okay because they're going to be a team you wouldn't want to see in the tournament.

For us, it was really just the focus of what we had to do, and defending Wong, defending Miller, defending all these guys.

Q. Jon, Dereck has been a consistent rim protector for you all year, but it seems he's getting more assertive on the offensive end. How much of a weapon does that give you and what kind of element does that add to your package?

JON SCHEYER: It adds a lot. I mean, he's as disruptive as any defensive player in the country. I think these guys would second that on offense. I love seeing his confidence grow. And the thing that these guys have done, they've all developed their individual routines. So Dereck every day is in there with Coach Jefferson working on his threes, working on his touch shots, his finishing, and it's paid off. It's paid off in a big way, and we need him to continue to be aggressive on that end.

Q. Jon, going back to Tuesday in Durham you were projecting that the large number of close games Duke has played in would pay benefits moving forward. Now that you've seen that prediction come true, talk a little bit about the ability of a team whose top six players are one junior and five freshmen to close out a close game like this.

JON SCHEYER: Yeah, I didn't think of it that way when you say that. These guys are -- I love their approach to these games. They have their own film sessions, they do, before the game. We don't even say anything as coaches. They're the ones talking, and Jeremy is running in with the whole team. And you'll see everybody speaking up, everybody on the team, not just the guys that are playing, other guys, whether it's our walk-ons or anybody just about the game plan.

I think it's the belief that they instill in each other. It's the ownership they've taken. That's what happens. When you're on the floor -- I can only do so much. They have to be the ones out there doing it, and this guy to my left has done it. He's grown in a big-time way being our leader, and these five freshmen that you mentioned have come along and done an incredible job in a big-time environment tonight.

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