

Atlantic Coast Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Tuesday, March 12, 2024

Washington, D.C., USA

Capital One Arena

Louisville Cardinals Coach Kenny Payne Skyy Clark

Postgame Press Conference



NC State 94, Louisville 85.

KENNY PAYNE: What I said to my guys after this game is that I'm proud of them. I'm proud of the way they handled adversity. I'm proud of the way they fought through all year. I'm proud of the fact that through adversity when it's easy to say, I quit, they didn't quit. At times their words may have said I quit. They did not quit. That's hard to do.

The natural instinct when things don't go your way is to give up on it. They didn't do that. The natural instinct is when you don't feel like practicing and you're losing most of your games is to let go, to not believe. They didn't do that.

So I'm proud of that fact. I'm proud of the fact that we played a very good team.

In this game, they shot 40 free throws, we shot 11. In this game, we shot 55 percent from the field, 55 percent from the three and 100 from the free-throw line. We did enough things to win the game.

Again, I'm proud of my guys, and I'm proud of the way they fought to get this win, but they came up a little short. We all did.

Questions?

Q. Kenny, with the season now over, have you been told anything about your future as head coach with the program?

KENNY PAYNE: No, I have not.

Q. Kenny, in what ways do you feel like the program

moved forward this season?

KENNY PAYNE: Great question. One reason is this guy sitting over here to my left. When I walked in here, I didn't have guys like him. A guy that's super, super talented, a guy that works his heart out, a guy with his kind of character.

In order to build a program, it starts with character. You've got to have young men that are willing to work, willing to grind, willing to learn, that don't have all the answers. He came in here, and he worked hard every single day, and at times it became a little too much because he worked really, really hard.

But he never gave up. He never shied away from it. He never pointed the finger. He just came in and worked every day, which is evident by the way he played today. He shot the ball as well as I've seen him shoot it all year. And that's a testament to him because the way he finished is the way he got to live his life. That kind of game.

Q. Kenny, when you factor in the results, the attendance, all of these things, how do you make a case to be brought back for a year three?

KENNY PAYNE: For me, I go back to day one. It's unfortunate that we're talking about this right now. When I walked into the program as the new head coach, I talked about I needed everybody on the same page. We sort of forgot that.

I talked about how I'm not going to let you blame me. I'm not standing up here by myself. I need all of Louisville with me. We sort of forgot that.

I talked about it's going to take time, and I'm going to watch and see who jumped on and off the Titanic. We sort of forgot that.

We talked about I gave a specific time. I said three or four years. And I'm good with it. That's what I believed at that time, and that's what I still believe it takes to fix this program.



Like I said, with guys like this, you have a foundation. Brandon Hatfield, Mike James, JJ Traynor, the young guys we have, we have a foundation. Whether I'm the coach or not, I can look in the mirror and say I gave it everything I had to help this program.

I love Louisville. I played here. I won a National Championship here. This is not a job for me. Contrary to those who criticize, I don't sleep at night thinking about my brothers, the former players that played here who had no access to the program. Should not be talking about this right now, but I have to say this.

These young men, to play in a program where there's so much scrutiny is unfair to them. They deserve to play in a program where people are uplifting them to be better, not fighting and tearing them down to make them question how good they are. Then you make my job impossible.

That's enough about that from me. You should be talking to this young man about the game he just played. Was that your career high?

SKYY CLARK: Yes, sir.

KENNY PAYNE: Come on, guys.

Q. Skyy, was there something defensively that they were doing that you saw you could exploit, or was it just one of those nights where it was going in the hole?

SKYY CLARK: It was one of those nights. NC State, they're a great defensive team. They pick you up full court. They just try to tire you out. But yeah, my teammates were finding me, and yeah, it was just one of those nights.

Q. Kenny, in terms of Kevin got up and talked about the starting lineup kind of throwing NC State on its heels a bit. What went into putting Ty-Laur in there and taking Glenn out? How come we didn't see much of that starting lineup during the season?

KENNY PAYNE: To me, when I looked at the way we play, when we were getting hurt during the season, we were getting hurt on the boards. So it's unfair to have Mike James at 6'4", 6'5" playing the 4 all the time, having to fight bigger bodies.

To this game, most likely I knew they would start four perimeter players, but they did not play Horne. So he ended up keeping the other kid in, and I stuck with what I believed is our best chance to get out there and create havoc on the floor with the spacing of the floor, attacking them.

And we did a great job to start the game of getting the ball in the lane and just moving the ball and sharing it, and Ty-Laur was really good at it.

But at the end of the day, Kaleb Glenn gives us better rebounding at times, and I have to make that judgment, and that's the reason why I didn't live with this smaller group.

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