

# Atlantic Coast Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Thursday, March 14, 2024

Washington, D.C., USA

Capital One Arena

## Wake Forest Demon Deacons Coach Steve Forbes Hunter Sallis Cameron Hildreth

Postgame Press Conference

Pitt 81, Wake Forest 69.

STEVE FORBES: I thought it was a really hard-fought game between two really good teams, two teams that deserve to play in the NCAA Tournament. Just tough, hard-nosed teams.

In the three games that we played, we had a really hard time guarding Leggett and obviously today. It's a tough matchup for our team because we have to guard Hinson with Cameron. Cameron can't guard the whole team, and so he has to guard Hinson putting our 4 man on Leggett, and that's a problem. He exposed us today.

Then finally in the second half we just had to go ahead and switch Cam back to him, and that took Efton off the floor or Andrew, because we couldn't play them both together. That was hard.

And credit to Hinson and Leggett for playing outstanding basketball.

When we switched Andrew back on Hinson, I think he made a couple plays right away. We just had a hard time with him.

Gave up 10 offensive rebounds that were killers and 15 turnovers. It's just a hard way to win. I thought when we got it back to three, unbelievable fight in our team. We just didn't get any crunch-time stops. They just bullied their way to the rim with either shot lay-ups or fouls, and we had a critical turnover, a air ball, and then I think it was just a six-point game with a little under two to go, and Hunter drove the ball; obvious foul. They didn't call it, so they go



down -- now we should be shooting two to make a four, they go up eight, that's pretty tough from there.

I'm proud of my team. They got down 19, cut it to three. We set a goal with was it eight or ten to get it under ten? Ten under 10 they did it and battled all the way there.

Questions?

**Q. Steve, what made the offense so tough to come by for the first 27 minutes?**

STEVE FORBES: Yeah, I don't know. We just didn't move a lot. When we drove it, we didn't come off of it. We got ripped. We turned it over. I just thought we were sluggish offensively.

I thought defensively we were okay. That was kind of what kept us in the game. But offensively, yeah, in the first half we were poor. I don't know, man. I thought we just -- I thought we were standing and surprise like they were in the gaps when they were going to be in the gaps, and that's when you've got to punch it in there and kick it.

You'll have to tell me, I thought we missed a lot of shots around the basket, too. Andrew got one blocked, Efton, maybe Hunt missed one. I thought we got there some, too, and didn't finish. It was probably a combination of both.

**Q. For either of the players, Wake needed a giant second half offensively just to have a chance, and you had just that offensively. Cutting into the rebounding deficit and putting up points. What did either of you see yourself needing to do coming out of the half?**

HUNTER SALLIS: I felt like down the stretch we had to get stops. That was the biggest thing we were talking about, especially at halftime. Just knowing our offense will come, just on the defensive end just making sure we get stops.

CAMERON HILDRETH: Yeah, I think all starts with our defense. It transitions to offense. I think we just had a couple miscommunications a few times with veering back on No. 25 in the pick-and-roll. He had a couple threes.



But yeah, we just have to be executing for 40 minutes. But we fought, so I'm proud of the team.

STEVE FORBES: The other thing with Leggett is you've got to understand, if we stay in the drop, then we give Lowe and Carrington easy shots.

So we came up to touch, which means the ball came out hot against the ball screen, which means they just skipped it lane line to Leggett. You have to pull in on the roll when you're up to touch.

So then we've got to come close out, and Leggett was driving us off the close-out. That was another area where he exposed us.

Then like he said, we had a couple miscommunications on veer-backs where 25 should have never got a three and he got wide open looks. Add those things up, they become a problem.

**Q. Hunter, you transferred in this season obviously alongside Efton. Coach Forbes has almost formed this persona around the NCAA as being the transfer whisperer recently. What makes Wake such a special program to come play for?**

HUNTER SALLIS: Wake Forest is my family, definitely my second home away from Omaha. Coming here and being able to be here is real easy for me. I've definitely enjoyed my time here, and I'm looking forward to continuing my time here.

**Q. You said you wanted to continue your time here. What's next for everyone? You've got Selection Sunday on Sunday, portal opens on Monday --**

STEVE FORBES: Yeah, we've got more to play for. It'll be with an N. It won't be the CIT or the CBI. I know that, if those even exist anymore.

It'll be the NCAA or the NIT.

The one thing we have to remember is we don't know how the committee will look at us when it comes to Efton not playing six games, so who knows where we're at right now. I don't know.

Obviously it'll be down to the wire, but it won't be down to the wire for the NIT, which we should have been in last year but didn't. So we'll play. We'll get together -- we'll go back tomorrow, take Saturday off, get together Sunday, figure it out and then play from there.

The portal opens Monday. Big whoop. We've got more to

play. We won't be talking about that until we're done playing.

**Q. Coach and also the players, what are the next three days waiting until Selection Sunday going to be like?**

CAMERON HILDRETH: I mean, Coach already touched on it. We're not done, so we want to still focus on us as a team and not separating from each other. We're a great team, a great group of guys. Our chemistry is really good, and I think that's why we're able to play the way we do. But I think just over the next few days, rest up and get together and see what happens.

But we're not going to give up on ourselves, and we're going to continue until the end of the season.

STEVE FORBES: I think there's another episode of Masters of the Air coming out. I'll be watching that. Kind of going from there.

**Q. Hunter, after that under 12:00 time-out there's a 9-0 run. Seemed like there was an energy shift with the team. What came out of that time-out to make that happen?**

HUNTER SALLIS: I'd say it kind of looked like we woke up a little bit. We knew that we had to get something going with the time. We were fighting against time at that point. Just players trying to make plays, and I feel like my team did a great job down the stretch, just a couple things here and there at the end of the game that really ended up costing us.

But ultimately I'm proud of my team.

STEVE FORBES: I think we finally put score pressure on them, and I knew this would happen if we could get it under 10, it would get a little tight or the shots wouldn't go as easy, and that's what happened.

To their credit, we fought back, and then they regrouped and made plays like a good team does.

**Q. Steve, have you talked to anybody involved with the committee about how they'll view the Efton situation?**

STEVE FORBES: No, I just had some conversations with Bubba Cunningham before he went into the bunker. You ever see that movie Downfall about Hitler? It's pretty good. It's all about the bunker. That's a real bunker, by the way.

But I think we'll see. How much they weigh that -- it'll be talked about because I think it's pretty obvious that one of

the committee members already said a couple days ago that they were going to look at the young man from Indiana State who was ill or didn't play in a couple games they played in.

We've got a guy that didn't play in six, and then we have a football player that cost Florida State going to the Bowls -- what do they call that thing, the Playoffs -- because he wasn't going to be on the team, so why wouldn't it be vice versa. So we'll see.

Now it's different people, a different deal, but we have a good team, and I firmly believe, and everybody that's watched us play all year long, we get in the tournament, we can win. It's not going to be charity now. Nobody is going to play us if we get in there.

It'll be like if it's the NIT, too, we'll probably be at home, which will be a hard place for somebody to come win in my opinion.

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