

Atlantic Coast Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Saturday, March 16, 2024

Washington, D.C., USA

Capital One Arena

NC State Wolfpack

Coach Kevin Keatts

DJ Burns, Jr.

DJ Horne

Postgame Press Conference



Our players deserve this. We've got a tight group that sticks together with everything, and we've been through some adversity. We've fought a little bit. We've argued a little bit. At the end of the day we found a way to come together for a common goal. This means a lot.

We never listen to anybody outside of our locker room because our locker room is the most important thing, and these guys will have memories for the rest of their life that they can always know that they were ACC champions and won the tournament.

I know that's a long statement, but I feel like it was necessary, and I appreciate everybody that helped us get here. And obviously one of the things we talked about is on the bench, the coach said -- one of the coaches said, hey, can we score more because we've got to worry about the NET. I said, I ain't worried about the NET. We're in the tournament. Don't worry about that.

I'm blessed. We played a very good Carolina team. Hubert has done a very good job. Every program we played, and somebody can fact check me, I think we beat five teams that have all won a National Championship within the 2000s. That says a lot, and they're historical programs.

Very grateful and just I'm blessed and happy.

Q. How desperate were you all for this championship win?

DJ HORNE: I think we were really desperate. You kind of felt that energy with just like every time-out we had coming back to the huddle. Everybody was locked in, on their P's and Q's and everything, and that's what you need if you're going to win championships like this.

I said it yesterday, there's no better time to be playing your best basketball than March, and I'm just glad that we figured it out now.

Q. Coach, sometimes when you see a double-digit seed make a run, they'll have gotten some help in other areas of the bracket here. You guys beat the top

NC State 84, North Carolina 76

KEVIN KEATTS: You know, what a day, what a tournament, what a great opportunity that the guys in that locker room took advantage of.

When we got on the plane to come to D.C., we talked about winning one game at a time, and there would be a big picture, would be a prize at the end of it.

You could tell our guys were getting a lot stronger every game that we played. It's weird because we're the team that played, and we were the one who played every game, but it seemed like every second half we got a little bit stronger than the other team.

Thank God for our opportunity, believing in our faith. Thank all of the family. My wife is here who has supported me, Georgia, and the parents of all of our players and everybody that has poured into our program. It means a lot.

When you think about NC State, the couple things that really stand out to you is the '74 championship and the '83 championships, and if we could make any of those guys proud, and hopefully they are, by what we did here in the ACC, that's a great thing.

For all of the players that came before us that were so close to winning a championship, it's not just our championship, it's everybody's championship.

I'm proud, man. I'm emotional. I'm proud. I'm excited.



three seeds in this conference on three straight days. What does having that experience and knowing you can beat the best, does that give you an extra level of confidence going into the tournament?

KEVIN KEATTS: It does. I mean, you think about it, we will look back one day, and it may even be tomorrow, and just be in awe at the teams that we beat. They're great programs, great coaches who have done a really good job.

I just think the difference where we were locked in. We went through our conference, and we saw every team, we played every team, and we felt like if we played our best game, we had an opportunity to beat everybody.

Now, I didn't know it was going to happen five days in a row, but we've done it.

Listen, these guys and the other guys in the locker room, they do all the heavy lifting. I just try to orchestrate stuff, put them in the right spots, but they have done a great job.

This says a lot. We've been getting crushed -- when I say we, NC State -- by not delivering any championship in 37 years. Well, they can't say that now because we got one tonight.

Q. You missed the first game of this tournament, you were a game-time decision for the second one. What was this week like for you emotionally, mentally, and how great does this feel after all you've been through?

DJ HORNE: Yeah, I can't even really think straight right now, but to try to give you an answer, to not play the first game and see my guys go out there and fight to the end, to give me an opportunity to go out there and play the next day, that meant everything.

And even sitting here now after we just won the whole thing, looking back at just that little moment right there really shows me how connected we were, because you lose your leading scorer on the team, that could be somewhat a downer maybe, but next-man-up mentality. My guys came in and got the job done for me.

Q. Coach, you said for the last game that you had each player bring something lucky with them. Do you plan on doing that for the next tournament?

KEVIN KEATTS: It worked, and here's the crazy thing. I don't even know if they actually bought it. I told them before we got on the plane. I said, hey, bring something lucky, something special with you.

Whatever we did this week, you guys got to know, I love

D.C. This is my favorite place in the world right now. Whatever we did this week, we will try to do the same thing following.

Q. For the players, there was a time-out. It wasn't the last TV time-out but I think it was the one right before that. DJ, you were bent over, trying to catch your breath. Casey was getting treatment for I think a cramp. How close did all of you come to emptying the tank here?

DJ BURNS JR: I will say my legs hurt right now. It's been five days in a (audio/video glitch)

Q. DJ Horne, you had the fourth foul with 12 and a half to go. How were you able to compose yourself and walk that tight rope for so long before you eventually fouled out?

DJ HORNE: I would just say give credit to my teammates and this guy right here, Coach Keatts.

As he said in the beginning, we may bump heads sometimes but in the end it's all love, and after we do something like this, it's all love. My teammates did a good job on the court keeping my head in the game and everything, even though emotions can get running all crazy at times.

But that's what basketball is about, and unfortunately I did foul out, but my guys, like I said, next-man-up mentality, stepped in and finished the job.

Q. You win five games in five days; what does it take to be able to do that when it's something you normally don't see obviously during the regular season? What kind of intestinal fortitude does it take to do that?

DJ HORNE: Yeah, I think you've just got to have discipline. We came into this tournament knowing that our season was on the line, so there was no room for mistakes. I think everybody really took heed to that and took it personally.

Like I said, this is the most connected I've ever seen this basketball team, and I just love that we get to carry this over into March.

Q. We've seen an inordinate number of the top-seeded teams lose in these conference tournaments all over the country. Did you guys take any inspiration from that, and what do you make of that chaos that we've seen this week?

KEVIN KEATTS: I've got to be really honest with you, we



just focus on NC State. We literally -- my nights were all watching tape. I had no idea who was playing.

We were trying to be the best version of ourselves, and obviously preparing these guys the same thing. I did the same exact thing every single day. I ate at the same place every single day. We had the shootaround at the same high school every day. We did everything right.

It says a lot about our guys to be able to focus in -- like I don't think anybody really understands that we won five games in five days against some really good programs. Like these are not -- these are great programs. I'll take a moment -- I know that was the last question, but our league is really good.

We should have seven or eight teams in our league. It's very unfortunate that when you get down to it that people are reporting that we may get four or five. That's just not right.

What I would always say to anybody is take some of those teams that's in those other leagues and have to come to our venues and play, and they would understand how good it is. We've got good coaches. We've got good players. So it's a really good situation.

Back to us, these guys focus -- it's been great. I'm in awe every time I watch them. I had a chance to become a fan this week and just watch the growth and how everybody got better and understood what was important and kind of putting the egos aside and kind of was more about what can I do to help my brother be successful, and at the end of the day, we all become successful.

It's a great story. It'll be a great story for a long time. I have no idea if anybody will ever win five games in a row to win a championship, but if they do, I'll be there to celebrate with them, too, also.

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