

Atlantic Coast Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Wednesday, March 12, 2025

Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

Spectrum Center

North Carolina Tar Heels

Hubert Davis

RJ Davis

Ven-Allen Lubin

Postgame Press Conference



North Carolina 76, Notre Dame 56

Q. Obviously, Jae'lyn Withers has his seven threes and he's been able to space the floor as of late, but for him to hit those three early ones, how much did that open things up for you guys?

HUBERT DAVIS: Well, it does. Initially I thought we had really good spacing, a combination of ball and player movement, and one of the things that us as a group, as a team have talked about is generating good threes and coming off of dribble drive, attacking the paint through post penetration, even offensive rebounding. That's really helped our three-point shooting over the last month, month and a half, and especially today.

I felt like not just J-Wit's threes, everyone's threes. They were good threes generated by good offense, unselfishness, and as a result I thought we shot a really good percentage.

Q. What is your pitch after the win for why you guys should be in the tournament?

HUBERT DAVIS: The pitch is we are focused -- we were very fortunate to be successful against a really good Notre Dame team that was a one-point game earlier in the year in South Bend. Our eyes and our preparation is on what is real, and what is real is our preparation in regards to our play tomorrow against a very good Wake Forest team.

Q. You guys had 19 assists on 28 made shots today. Do you feel like ball movement was sort of a big component for you guys ?

RJ DAVIS: Yeah, it was huge component in today's win. We did a good job of kind of just like Coach Davis said penetrating and finding open guys and that's how we were able to shoot a good percentage from three. When you have that type of basketball, especially like in the first half, as an example, there was a close-out drive, hit J-Wit, J-Wit hits Seth, Seth hits me, and I hit Ven, that type of ball movement is winning basketball. At the same time we're having fun with it.

When you have 19 assists as a team, that's huge. We're going to continue to share the ball and move forward into tomorrow.

Q. Ven-Allen, you had an all around game today with offensive rebounds, assists, stuffs, jump shots. Tomorrow you go against a Wake Forest team that is a little bit bigger in the interior. Talk about the challenge of going against Efton Reid and his mates?

VEN-ALLEN LUBIN: Yeah, with his size and his athleticism, I think it'll be very challenging for me to get some shots around the rim. I know my teammates are going to continue to find me and just trust me in those areas of our offense and just to continue to build confidence in just knowing I can score around the rim.

Q. RJ and Ven, this will be the first time you've played back to back since Maui. What are the differences in the recovery process versus a normal schedule?

RJ DAVIS: It's a quick turnaround so we'll get out of here after we finish interviews, get something to eat and then recover because we play tomorrow and we've got to make sure our bodies are healthy and full of energy. But that's the great thing about the tournament, to have these quick turnarounds and be able to play the next game.

VEN-ALLEN LUBIN: Yeah, it's against a good team tomorrow so we're really just trying to fuel ourselves with the right food and the right rest for tonight and just get ready for tomorrow.

Q. RJ, you've been in a lot of different situations

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coming into this tournament, being a No. 1 seed, being on the bubble, knowing you're going to the tournament. What have you told your teammates before this event about what you guys need to accomplish and what it's like to play in this event?

RJ DAVIS: Just have the one-game-at-a-time approach, and that's the mentality we have to have. You can't look too far ahead into the quarterfinals or semifinals, you just have to take it one game at a time, and I think we're doing a good job being present moment with that.

Obviously you hear the noise, you hear being a bubble team, and me experiencing being the No. 1 seed and not making the tournament. It's really just about staying present and understanding that anything is possible, so just be smart and enjoy it.

I think sometimes we can get caught up in the negative comments and negative opinions, but this team is doing a good job of having fun and staying in the present moment, and it's been carrying over to wins, so that's really just the main message for the team.

Q. Coach Davis, initially to me it seemed like you had Drake on Burton and it seemed like that really bothered him during the game. Seemed like it set the tempo defensively for the Tar Heels. Talk about that.

HUBERT DAVIS: Yeah, Drake is a gifted defensive player. He has -- obviously he's very athletic but he's got tremendous length. He's at 6'7".

I think one of the things that is most difficult against a scorer and especially Markus who leads the ACC in scoring is going up against length. So we just felt like starting the game off with Drake would make it even more difficult for him to be able to score.

Markus is a great scorer because he can score from all three levels. He can get fouled, get to the free-throw line. He can go either direction.

But I thought Drake's length bothered him and made him work a little bit harder than usual.

Q. Coach, has there been anything specific you've done in crafting Jae'lyn's shot since he's come in from Louisville, specifically his three-point shot?

HUBERT DAVIS: No. I mean, last year he was coming off of his first year with Carolina, he was coming off a thumb injury where he was out pretty much most of the summer. But J-Wit, he's his most, in terms of being comfortable out there on the floor and being settled in his role in regards to

what he needs to do out there. His shot selection is great, and I talked about generating good threes.

It's not just that; I thought his activity defensively was elite. He was rebounding, blocking shots, running the floor, just giving us that veteran experience that this team has needed all season.

Q. Coach, since you settled on the lineup changes for the Syracuse game, adding J-Wit and adding Ven-Allen and Drake, your shooting percentages are up. Back in mid-February you were shooting 44 percent in conference-only games, now it's 48 and half, second only to Duke.

The three-point percentage, which was a woeful 32 percent in mid-February is up to 37. It's not No. 2 but it's seeded like 6 or 7. How have the lineup changes improved your field goal accuracy?

HUBERT DAVIS: I wouldn't attribute it to the lineup change. I would attribute it to the type of shots that we're generating.

One of the things that we always talk is dominating points in the paint through post, penetration and offensive rebounding. I think our rebounding numbers have grown a lot over the last month, month and a half. We're driving, and I think you saw in this game we're not settling for the good shot. We're making the extra pass to the great shot.

So I just think overall, our ability to create good threes, whether it's through post penetration or offensive rebounding, sharing the basketball, has been the No. 1 factor in our percentage from three rising over the last month, month and a half.

Q. Elliot had 10 assists today. How important is his facilitating to kind of unlocking how great your offense can be at this time of the year?

HUBERT DAVIS: No, it's huge. Elliot is gifted in regards to being able to find open teammates. He's our best penetrator where he can break down a defense anytime he wants to, not only create for himself but create for his teammates.

When he's making the simple easy play, for him -- for everyone else it's elite. And I thought he did that for the most part, so I thought there was a couple lobs that he threw up, but when he keeps it simple, I think he's one of the best distributors in the country.

Q. Looking ahead to Wake Forest tomorrow, you had a tough battle with them in Winston-Salem. What makes



their defense challenging to attack?

HUBERT DAVIS: Well, I think one of the things is they're really good individual defenders. They can guard the ball. They take pride in their individual one-on-one matchups. They have clearly as a team identified for them to be successful, they have to be good on the defensive end, and they've got athleticism and length. They do.

So they make it tough to be able to get consistent good shots, high-percentage shots on the offensive end.

We're looking forward to the challenge tomorrow afternoon and understand Wake Forest is a very good basketball team.

Q. You guys got 38 points out of your starting pair in the front court. I was just wondering what that does for your offense, especially considering you guys start three guards, but what that do for your offense when you're able to get that production from your front court?

HUBERT DAVIS: That's huge. I know J-Wit hit seven threes, but Ven was dominating points in the paint. Notre Dame went to a switch attack where they were switching everything, so we were able to take advantage of smaller guys guarding our big guys down low in the post.

But to Ven's point and J-Wash's, just their ability to hold off, to be able to be strong around the basket and to be able to finish. When you can have that versatility offensively being able to score beyond the three and also points in the paint and be able to get to the free-throw line, that makes you really efficient on the offensive end.

And then to go along we had less than 10 assists, and that's something that's always been a goal for us, to have less than 10 assists each game.

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