

Atlantic Coast Conference Men's Basketball Championship

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Spectrum Center

North Carolina Tar Heels

Hubert Davis

RJ Davis

Postgame Press Conference



trajectory of our whole season, the way we dealt with adversity, perseverance, and especially these last couple of weeks, we overcame all of that. You couldn't ask for a better team than that, that goes through that type of adversity, goes through that type of criticism and still perseveres through it all and comes out on top. I think that's a tournament team for you right there, because that's what March is about.

Duke 74, North Carolina 71

Q. In your four-year coaching career, have you ever been part of a game where a lane violation was called?

HUBERT DAVIS: I played four years here, 12 years in the NBA, nine years as an assistant, and now four years as a head coach, and I can't be more proud of a team than I am right now. Just love these guys to death. I love their fight. I love their togetherness. I love how close they are.

As I said before, I told them after the game, I didn't think that I could be more proud of a group than I am right now, but I am even more proud.

I thank Jesus every day that I get to be their head coach.

Q. And the shock clock violation?

HUBERT DAVIS: I'm not answering that. We lost 74-71.

Q. We saw how emotional Jae'Lyn was coming off the court. What did you tell him after the game to lift the spirits?

HUBERT DAVIS: Well, it's all of our spirits because we are a team. This is not individuals. This is University of North Carolina basketball team, so when we win together -- when we win, we win together. When we lose, we lose together.

Q. Do you think you've done enough to get in, especially after taking the No. 1 team to the wire like this?

RJ DAVIS: I think we've saw in the past couple weeks that we are a tournament team. I think if you look at the

Q. Defensively it looked like in the second half you guys were getting stops which led you guys to get some transition opportunities to cut into that deficit. What was different for you guys in the second half defensively in order to chip away at that lead?

HUBERT DAVIS: The competitive fight. I felt like in the first half one of the things that I talk to the team all the time is be competitive and compete in your individual one-on-one matchups. I felt like in the first half they had the better of us, whether it was on the perimeter, in the post. In the second half I felt like we were more physical. Our competitive fight, we were defending without fouling, we were getting loose balls, we were getting rebounds, we were contesting shots, we were making second and third efforts. You're right, that allowed us to get stops, it allowed us to get out in transition, and that was the number one determining factor of us being able to come back and out-score them by 18 in the second half. It was all defense and rebound.

Q. In your time here at North Carolina, what do you think makes this rivalry unique from the other ones in college basketball?

RJ DAVIS: I think anytime you put on this jersey and you're going against Duke, it's an opportunity to be part of history. I've been fortunate and grateful enough to play in a lot of games that I'll cherish and remember for the rest of my life.

I just think with this team and this year's group of guys, I think to be down 20 the first half and then fight our way back all the way down to the minute and a half, I don't think a rivalry gets better than that. It was a gritty game, and I'm just proud of the way we -- not just only against Duke, but



this whole tournament all year. We consistently battled and competed at an all-time level.

It just happened that we happened to play Duke and be part of a rivalry.

Q. RJ, the last side out of bounds with 2.9 seconds to go, what did you draw up in the huddle? You were trying to get off some screens there and they switched on you. How did you see it all unfold?

RJ DAVIS: Yeah, we had Seth take the ball out, and then they had their big man using his height and length guarding Seth, and they switched 1 through 5. Just tried my best to get the ball in. It was obviously difficult for Seth to make the pass, set up for the over the top, and yeah, that was basically the play.

Q. RJ, in the first half, it was a six-point game and they finished on a 15-0 run. In the second half, even though you didn't make many threes, Elliott was the only one who hit threes, you guys came all the way back. What was different in the second half?

RJ DAVIS: Like Coach Davis said, our overall competitive spirit was there, and everyone contributed. We had four guys in double figures and a lot of guys made a lot of plays that allowed us to get back into the game. It was a team effort. That's all you can ask for when you're trying to claw back into the game.

I'm just proud of the way we -- every time we came in the huddle, we said just take it possession by possession, just keep chipping away. It was a 12-point game. Next thing you know, it was a four-point game. So that's just team basketball right there. So yeah.

Q. Coach, yesterday, some of your players talked about yesterday's game is one that maybe they wouldn't expect or didn't think they would have won in November. How do you think this team reacted differently kind of since the Clemson loss to a deficit at half today versus how they might have reacted earlier in the season when they were struggling a little bit more?

HUBERT DAVIS: Well, I mean, actually at halftime, we talked about examples earlier in the season. Michigan State, Dayton, Kansas, where we were down double digits, 20 points, and we were able to come back.

I said, unfortunately, we have experience in this and experience being able -- and fortunate that we have experience of being able to come back.

Going into the second half 20 minutes, there's so much that can happen. So I break it up in four-minute parts. I said, let's win the first four minutes. At the 12-minute mark, let's cut this thing down to 15 or 12. Eight-minute mark, let's cut it to single digits, and four-minute mark, we're right there and it's a two-possession game. At the four-minute mark, it was six points, and I said, guys, look at the score. I said, is it a two-possession game? They said, yeah. I said, we're right there. I said, we're building, we're getting stronger.

I think unfortunately, or fortunately, being in that experience earlier in the year, we were able to draw upon that and understand that there was a lot of basketball to be played in the second half.

Q. Hubert, what can you say about what Ven did for you guys today, 20 points, 10 rebounds? His I believe fourth double-double in the last five games. He obviously helped you guys immensely in the paint.

HUBERT DAVIS: Well, he did. Not just his scoring, his defense, his rebounding, keeping the ball alive, running the floor. It's been consistently at a high level for a while. And giving us that inside presence alongside our ability to score from outside has really helped us out offensively.

I just thought, again, Ven's activity -- Duke, even without Maliq and Cooper, they still have tremendous length, and so for Ven to be able to do what he did against a long and athletic team was exactly what we needed to be able to get back into the game.

Q. To build on that a little bit, this is now the third time you've played Duke but the first time Cooper has not been on the court. How much different was the matchups than you were anticipating based on your past games against them, and did that throw in the wrenches in the first half in terms of what you were expecting versus what reality was without him on the court?

HUBERT DAVIS: Well, Cooper, there's a very good chance he's going to be national Player of the Year, so the impact that Maliq Brown has out there on the floor, his ability to defend and rebound, he's an excellent passer. He hit two threes against us a week ago at our place. So as I said before, Duke is the No. 1 team in the country because they are a team. It's not just one or two guys. It's a number of guys that are really impactful and really good on both ends of the floor.

Even without those two, yeah, they had different lineups, but the way that they played on both ends of the floor was the same way that they played the previous two times we

played them.

Q. So much of this sport is defined by whether you make the NCAA Tournament and what you do there. How do you view that part of your job when it comes to success or falling short of that?

HUBERT DAVIS: I don't look at it that way at all. I'm on assignment. I know that Jesus has put in place and planned and purposed me to be here. My job is to walk with Him. My job is to abide in Him and to serve these kids and give them everything that I've got every day.

It's a blessing and an honor to do that and to have these experiences with these kids every day and for the rest of my life. That's even more than success. That's a blessing.

It's something that is with me for the rest of my life.

Q. Your team seemed to think that they had done enough to get into the tournament. How will you spend these next couple days waiting for official word, and do you think you have done enough to get into the tournament?

HUBERT DAVIS: We're going to go back home (chuckling).

The most thing that I've been proud of this group is -- and they're good questions in regards to the NCAA Tournament, and those are questions that have been asked over a month. For our guys to stay focused on what is real, and that was being the best team that we could become, continue to prepare, practice and play. Whomever we're playing, keep our eyes focused on the competition right in front of us and be the best that we can be. And for a month and a half, we basically played must-win games.

In that situation, our team played the best. That's pretty cool from a bunch of kids.

You want to talk about success or proud, I can go a number of different directions on that one.

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