

Atlantic Coast Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Saturday, March 5, 2022
Greensboro, North Carolina, USA

Virginia Tech Hokies Kenny Brooks Kayana Traylor Georgia Amoore

Postgame Press Conference

NC State 70, Virginia Tech 55

KENNY BROOKS: First and foremost, I don't think I've ever been more proud of a group of kids, the way they came out in the face of adversity and just really, really fought. We really didn't understand -- we didn't know what was going to happen today, who was going to be available, who wasn't. Elizabeth came out and she gave it a go and wanted to play, and it's kind of one of those things where these are my girls, these are my kids, and it's not just about the game that's at hand and what's going to happen in the future.

We felt like it was probably in her best interest to sit her today just so that she could rest and maybe not have a setback.

She wanted to play. It's probably the first little argument that she and I got into, and I said no, you can't play. And it was twofold, protecting her against herself, but also I had the utmost confidence in this group right here that we would go out and we would compete.

Again, proud of our kids. We didn't always play great today, but we never squandered -- we didn't play soft. We went out and we played hard. Very, very proud of them.

I told them at the end of the game in the locker room, we didn't just lose a game to a team, we lost a game to the third-ranked team in the country, and we fought. We fought. I'm extremely proud. It just goes to show you the character of these kids, and we've come a long way, and I'm excited to see what's going to happen in the near future.



Q. Kenny, to follow up on what you were saying, we saw both Liz and Cayla putting up shots before the game. At what point today did you decide not to play them, and what's your sense of whether you'll have them for the NCAA Tournament?

KENNY BROOKS: You know, the fact that both of them actually warmed up, I was ecstatic. Again, err on the side of caution. I'm never going to put these kids in harm's way, not for a game, not for anything.

I probably -- it was all my decision. My training staff did a tremendous job, the medical staff did a tremendous job of doing whatever they could to get them ready and then for it to be my decision.

I kind of pretended like it was their decision, and they went out, and I think that builds character. I think it builds toughness that both of them went out there and were trying to give it a go. But I knew it was going to take a minor miracle for me to make them available for the game.

But the fact that they went out there, I think it shows a lot of character, so I made the ultimate decision for both of them that they weren't going to play and that they needed to be the best assistant coaches in the country. And I thought both of them did a good job of just staying engaged and offering up -- Cayla actually offered up a suggestion that we used at halftime.

And so both of those kids -- they're two of our smartest players, and not having them definitely hurt, but the fact that they stayed engaged just shows you how much they love being Hokies.

Q. (No microphone)

KENNY BROOKS: Again, anything could happen, but I think they'll be fine. I think they'll be fine, especially with the timing, and we get rest. And they actually get to go home a little bit because we're on spring break, so they'll be able to really rest.

I think it's going to be, what, 10, 11 days before we play, maybe 12, so that's perfect timing for us.



And if this were the NCAA championship game, maybe -- and there was no games left, maybe Elizabeth could have played, but no need, and especially when you know you have games left to be played to have any setbacks.

Q. Kenny, you guys have played NC State now tight, really tough, three straight times now. I know today probably stings, but doing that three times this season and today doing it shorthanded, does that give you confidence going into these next couple weeks?

KENNY BROOKS: Yeah. And Wes does a tremendous job, and he's got the blueprint. If you look at our teams, we're extremely similar, very similar in the way we play, especially when we're at full complement.

He says it all the time, he hates playing against us but he loves playing against us. I hate playing against him but I love playing against him. We've played against them six times in the last two years, three times each year. The familiarity, it's good basketball. It's hard fought. It's a healthy rivalry. We respect them, they respect us. As a matter of fact after the game, I went into his locker room and talked to his kids, and he went into my locker room and talked to our kids. And just congratulating each other on what's going on.

You don't do that if it's not a healthy respect for both programs. And these kids obviously with the connection of Elizabeth and Elissa and Cayla, I think they've crossed and they kind of know each other a little bit but they respect each other.

On the court, like I said, we went out there and we were shorthanded and we took the No. 3 ranked team in the country -- not the No. 3 ranked team in the conference but the country -- and we gave them everything we had for probably 32 minutes. And it kind of fell out at the end, but it definitely gives us confidence knowing that we can play with one of the best teams in the country, and we know we can play with any team in the country as long as we play well.

Q. Coach and Georgia, I noticed at the end of the first quarter, you were walking back to where the players are sitting and you kind of called her back to where the coaches were. I was wondering what was that about and if you could talk about your relationship when you're on the court in terms of her seeing things on the court.

KENNY BROOKS: Yeah, both of these young ladies, it's a connection that we have that has started to grow, and it's something that's desperately needed for me and my

system, in order to be able to understand.

Both of them have done a tremendous job. Georgia is young, and I say that, she's played a year and a half, two seasons, but just trying to get adjusted to not only our style, but the American-style game. And the more and more conversations we have, the more connected that we are. Kayana has done a tremendous job coming in with her knowledge and being able to almost help tutor, mentor Georgia in that sense, and they feed off of each other.

Their relationship is wonderful because KT came from Purdue where she was the point guard and ultimately knew coming here that Georgia was a really good point guard, as well, and is understanding and willing and able to help tutor and mentor.

Whenever me and Georgia are talking, it's probably about something in the game. Sometimes she has to say it twice because when she gets really excited, her Australian accent gets going strong, and I don't understand everything she's saying, but we're working on that.

But it's a connection, it's a relationship that's built -- the day she walked on campus, I knew she was our point guard, and I knew she was a point guard of the future and that she was going to take us places that we haven't been before, and rightfully so. This is the first time we were in the semifinals, and I think she has -- with KT by her side and helping mentor, it's like a big sister, big sister situation. I think it's going to be a really good dynamic between those two and myself.

GEORGIA AMOORE: I think everything he said was right. I have immense respect for both KT and Coach Brooks, so I'm never too entitled. I'm always open to learn and they're great people to learn from.

Q. For the players, obviously you're only down three late in the third quarter and then they go on that big run there and take control. With this being your first game in three days, were the shooting legs kind of gone by the fourth quarter there?

KAYANA TRAYLOR: Yeah, obviously being tired I guess took a toll, but I don't think we were really thinking about that in the game. We were just trying to at least leave everything that we had on the floor. And I think we did a good job of that even though we have played three games in a row. It's March, and kind of whenever you get your adrenaline going, that stuff really doesn't matter. So yeah, it took a toll, but I think we did a good job of fighting through it.

GEORGIA AMOORE: I mean, I think I took shots that I

take in every game and usually I would make them and they just didn't fall. I don't think any of us really was out of character. I think we were more aggressive. But sometimes stuff just doesn't go our way.

Q. Defensively, especially when you switched to the zone that you played, what did you like most about the way D'asia and Azana doubled Cunane down low?

KENNY BROOKS: I thought everyone did a really good job of executing the game plan on the fly. We had to have two game plans, one with Liz, one without Liz. Obviously Liz being an all-defensive player inside, it allows us to really go one-on-one in the paint and really take away that three-point shot.

I think the last time we played them last weekend they were 1 for 9 from the three because we decided to take that away.

Today we had to on the fly come up with a different game plan, and I thought the kids did a really good job of executing it and doubling. The only problem when you're playing zone and you're doubling, you're going to give up rebounds. When they're already bigger than we were, we were already at a disadvantage, and I knew it was a massive discrepancy between rebounding in the first half. And as I'm looking at it here in the second half, they just killed us on the boards 49-23.

I don't know how many of those were second chance, but you get beat by 26 on the boards and you're still within earshot of them and it's a 15-point game, you did something right.

But it's just you had to take away something, and they were able to offensive rebound off of that.

Q. Kenny, Taylor came in and played some really big minutes for you guys. I know she's dealt with a lot this season, but she hits a three, gets a couple rebounds, flying all over the floor. How nice was it to see Taylor Geiman again?

KENNY BROOKS: You see the smile on my face, don't you? I think everybody feels that way about Taylor because she's just been struck with some bad luck, with injuries. Seems like as soon as she gets back -- this year I think she was starting to get her legs underneath her and ready for me to put her into rotations and then she had to enter the health and safety protocols, and it kind of hit her hard. She lost a little bit of weight. We had to make sure she got built back up before she could play the way she's capable of playing.

That kid, man, it doesn't matter what the situation is, she comes to practice every day with a smile on her face and she's going to work hard. She's a Hokie, and she just wants to do whatever she can to help and never pout, nothing, always the biggest cheerleader for these kids. And her number was called today, and me, I'm watching to see her movements, see how she's handling herself, and she's come a long way since probably the midway through the season or beginning.

She's a kid who I think can help us in the NCAA Tournament but also is going to be able to help us in the future, and I'm excited for where she's going. I was very happy for her today when she knocked down that three. That was big for us.

Q. Just to build off that, you had a lot of players play more minutes than they usually do. What did you like about some of the players that maybe played more minutes than they're used to and what do you think it says about your team?

KENNY BROOKS: Yeah, very proud of all of them. Elizabeth Kitley is a special talent, and I think we all recognize that. We feel like that when you have a dominating center like that, she can take you a long way.

Obviously we're going to play off of that. We throw the ball inside, she's gets doubled, it's going to be an easier opportunity for them. But the rest of my kids are good, too. This kid right here to my left was one of the best point guards in the Big Ten. She was an all-Big Ten performer. The one to her left is one of the best in our conference in the ACC. Two of them are two of the best in the ACC.

Cayla King is probably one of the smartest players I've ever coached. She understands everything. She's a good player. She didn't play today, but then everyone else -- Aisha Sheppard, she's the all-time leading scorer in Virginia Tech history, all time three-point maker in ACC history. Azana Baines is a really good player. D'asia Gregg is a very smart player, Emily Lytle. Everyone is capable. They just understand their roles, and everyone is playing into that role. Kayana came here because she said I want to be a part of a winning program.

Will this be the first time you go to the NCAA Tournament?

KAYANA TRAYLOR: Yes.

KENNY BROOKS: So we're really good, but they're also willing to sacrifice. They understand what it's about, team, and they love each other. They play for each other, and that's why we are where we are right now. And so Elizabeth is tremendous, we love her, and she is dynamic

and does so many things for us, but it's not a one-man show. This is a good team.

When one person goes down, we're willing and able to step up in her absence or anybody's absence.

Q. For the players, what's your mindset going into the NCAAs, especially seeing Liz and Cayla both out there shooting before the game I'm sure gave you some good feelings there?

KAYANA TRAYLOR: Yeah, I think the most important thing right now is just resting and getting healthy, so we're just going to focus on that this next week and obviously get back together and work hard and make a deep run in the tournament.

GEORGIA AMOORE: Just keep the confidence up and keep rolling. I think we're working really well together right now and we're doing it at the right time, so just continue that.

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