

Atlantic Coast Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Friday, March 7, 2025

Greensboro, North Carolina, USA

NC State Wolfpack

Coach Wes Moore

Aziaha James

Zoe Brooks

Postgame Press Conference



Just keeping our heads up high and just keep going every play because every play counts.

ZOE BROOKS: We really want to win the tournament. Obviously we were in the championship last year and fell short to Notre Dame, and we want to get our get-back, and we're just going to keep fighting until we get there.

Q. For both players, Zam and Tilda played critical minutes. Could you speak to the trust level y'all have for your freshmen? And I know you're picking Tilda on the pick-and-roll a lot, and Zam scored some big shots.

AZIAHA JAMES: Definitely. Whoever steps on the court, we trust everybody that steps on the court. As long as you bring energy, as long as you're bringing the heat, aggression, everything like that, we're trusting you.

You've got to trust yourself first, so when we see you trusting yourself, we're going to trust you, as well.

ZOE BROOKS: Z and Tilda had a very great game. They both stepped up big time when we needed them. Like I said, in the first half my shots weren't falling, but I think Z did a great job hitting shots and staying confident.

Q. Coach, can you talk to us a little bit about that clutch three that Jones had with a minute and a half left and how that kind of changed the energy?

WES MOORE: Yeah. Z, she's used to big moments like that from her high school days, and I think they won a state championship -- I know they won a state championship her senior year here nearby at Winston-Salem. She's a very confident player, and that was a big, big shot, obviously.

I thought she stepped up at a time we really needed some scoring.

Q. Coach, as a top seed, you get the blessing with the other three of having a lot of time off. Could that have played a factor in your performance today, that you had pretty much a week to get ready to play this?

NC State 73, Georgia Tech 72.

WES MOORE: First of all, you've got to tip your hat to Georgia Tech. What an unbelievable game they played. It just came down to a possession or two. Obviously these two beside me made some big-time plays when we were having trouble scoring, and they just stepped up and kind of took over.

Again, excited to be advancing, moving on, and looking forward to another opportunity tomorrow.

Again, thought it was a great game for the fans. Probably not for the coaches.

Q. Zoe, 2 of 11 in the first three quarters, 4 of 5 in the fourth. What changed for you? Just getting more open looks or just shots falling?

ZOE BROOKS: My shots just started falling at the end. I really wanted to win and I just stayed confident, kept shooting.

Q. You guys combined for just 16 points through the first three quarters, then scored 14 in the fourth. What does that say about your perseverance and your ability to keep putting shots up?

AZIAHA JAMES: Yeah, we don't give up. We both got in the huddle, got each other's butts. We couldn't lose this game. We had to fight for every possession. Every possession counted. I think Zoe handled that well in the beginning of the third quarter -- well, the third quarter she put up a lot of shots. Me, as well, knocking down those two good free throws at the end.



WES MOORE: Well, again, first of all, I think Georgia Tech had a lot to do with it. Again, they're very well-coached and they've got a lot of great players over there, so they had a big part of it.

I do think that's the one disadvantage of being -- getting a double bye is the team you're playing, first of all, is going to be really, really good, a really talented team in your first game. You're not going to play a 15 seed or something. It's going to be somebody really good.

Then they've got a game under their belt and have gotten a chance to kind of get the tournament jitters out of the way, get used to the depth perception in the arena and all that.

It does make a difference, but you hope if you're in it for the long run, trying to win three games in three days, having that extra time off definitely helps.

Q. You survive and advance so now you get North Carolina on Saturday. Speak to the Tar Heels and the next 24 hours, how you're going to prepare for that matchup.

AZIAHA JAMES: Just staying focused, locking in, looking at the film, connecting with each other, making sure we're on the same page and playing well.

ZOE BROOKS: Like Aziaha said, watching the film from the last game, fix is the mistakes that we made, and trying to improve for tomorrow.

Q. That was the last game you guys lost and one of only two games that you lost in ACC play. Obviously that one is always going to be more important, facing UNC, but is there an extra incentive trying to get that one back, as well?

WES MOORE: Well, this time of year you've got enough incentive. This tournament, survive and advance, if you lose, you go home, and then obviously setting up for the big one here in a couple of weeks.

But yeah, I mean, again, you'd like another opportunity, that sort of thing. Again, great team. They've had a great season. They're getting healthy now, getting people back. Again, I think it's the best defensive team they've had over there that I can remember. It's going to be a big challenge.

We're going to have to hopefully clean things up and play our best basketball to be successful.

Q. Wes, what do you take from the first meeting with them in that you only saw Ustby for about two minutes and it's a lot of different lineups North Carolina usually

has?

WES MOORE: Yeah, again, we've seen Ustby for a few years and obviously we watch a lot of film. Great player. It's going to be a big challenge trying to keep her off the offensive boards.

First of all, she's an unbelievable rebounder. I think she had 15 today maybe. She's had some big games, and she's strong, plays hard, runs the floor hard, transition. Yeah, she brings another challenge.

Again, but their whole team -- I think having Kelly back today gives them a big lift. I think she's been great this year. I think she's really stepped her game up. Then you've got the normal Donarski and all that. Again, they've got a lot of talent, and again, we'll have to figure out a way to hope we can slow it down a little bit.

Q. Wes, this is the last ride for your seniors. It almost seemed like it was epitomized between Aziaha's four straight points in the fourth quarter, and then Saniya's lock-down defense at the end. What does that say about your ability to lean on your veterans when you need them most?

WES MOORE: Yeah, I definitely lean on them. I'll tell you, Saniya has had the flu all week. I didn't know until this morning she was going to play, going to try to play. She has been really sick.

For her to come out there and gut it up the way she did -- Aziaha, again, following her in high school, four state championships --

AZIAHA JAMES: Yeah.

WES MOORE: Yeah. That girl is used to winning. I've seen her win championships, and obviously she's done some of that here, too. Yeah, that's the kind of people you want to lean on.

Zoe stepping up in a big way today, what, 14 points, but she also had nine rebounds, and all of them defensive boards. Those are critical. She did a lot of things well.

They had four assists, zero turnovers, but I remember at least one turnover, so I'm not going to let you get off clean.

Yeah, we lean on those guards. They're playing great, and our freshmen are coming along. Madison Hayes, probably my biggest disappointment she didn't make all-ACC, and I get it. There's some great players that got left off.

But talk about a glue player in conference, I think

averaging 13 points, eight boards. We get another senior graduate student that we lean on, so no doubt. I like to have those veterans out there at crunch time.

Q. You've talked all season about how when your team locks in defensively they're really good, but at the same time they let some defensive possessions go. At the same time, Dunn and Morgan scored 42. You also kind of held them to some good scoreless droughts. Is it good that you can show them look what happens when you lock in versus when you let it go?

WES MOORE: Yeah, it's real important, scout it. For every game we're watching five or six films, games of our opponent, and trying to find tendencies and things that we want to take away and things that we want to make them have to do. So it's frustrating when we don't get that done.

They hurt us with a pick on the ball up top, hurt us a couple of times with Saniya. Well, Saniya hasn't been out here going over what we wanted to do. So that's our fault. We've got to make sure when something like that happens we're up to speed and fill them in.

Again, they're getting much better at it. Trying to take away strengths, and like I said, trying to make the offense do what we want it to do. But we've still got a couple of weeks to try to improve and hopefully be at our best in March, end of March.

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