

Atlantic Coast Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Friday, March 7, 2025

Greensboro, North Carolina, USA

Louisville Cardinals

Coach Jeff Walz

Mackenley Randolph

Postgame Press Conference



Duke 61, Louisville 48

JEFF WALZ: I just want to start by saying how proud of this group I am. Being down a few kids obviously coming into this made it a little bit more difficult. But the fight they showed -- our freshmen really stepped up and were put in situations that were new to them, and I was proud of them.

Obviously we did not shoot the ball very well today, and Duke had a lot to do with that. I was really proud of the fact that we continued to fight. Got down 22 and then cut it to 8 and had the ball, and just couldn't get one to go. I was hoping we could get to the free-throw line on the put-back by O, but unfortunately we weren't able to, and then that turned into an and-1. So that right there was a big sequence for us.

Just proud of them. They're a group of kids that really overcame a lot of adversity this weekend just with the fact of not having our full depth. When you don't have your leading scorer and one of your leading ball handlers out there -- probably I think she's leading us in three-point shots made over the past month, it makes it a little bit more challenging for us.

But just really, really proud of them.

Q. You obviously mentioned missing Jayda, but was there anything you felt like Duke was doing defensively where you couldn't get in that shooting rhythm?

JEFF WALZ: No. I thought they played very aggressive and physical at the defensive end, so you've got to give them credit for that. You've got to -- as I told them in the locker room after the game, you've just got to adjust to how the game is being called. Some nights a lot of the hand

action that was not called tonight is called, and then you've just got to adjust to it.

It's the challenge of being able to step on to a court game in and game out and how the game is being called, you have to adjust. Now, I've got no problem with how the game is called and I wish it was called like this all year long.

I've said it for about 18 years now. As soon as you get into the tournament, things start changing, and I like it. It's a physical game. It's more physical. I just wish it was like this the entire year.

Q. Mackenly, seemed like you really grew a lot this tournament, the past two games kind of stepping up, playing a season high in minutes. What was this tournament like for you and what will you take away from this going into the NCAA Tournament?

MACKENLY RANDOLPH: This was my first one so I was really excited just to play and come out with my team, and know Jayda down 'Riss is down I know someone had to step up, so I been talking to coach and I really been working these past couple weeks, and I just knew I had to step up this weekend.

Q. Where do you feel like you've grown the most this season as a freshman? You started the year and then now kind of coming off the bench.

MACKENLY RANDOLPH: I feel like this year has been a lot of up and down for me. Beginning of the year was a little rough. Coach just -- we had a good talk, and he told me to trust my process and stay on my path and keep working.

Overall I grew just being able to watch the game and see, slow myself down and not turn the ball over as much and get my teammates involved. Just like an overall growth in my game.

Q. You'll obviously still have basketball to play. What are you going to work on with these two weeks off?



JEFF WALZ: Well, we're going to try and get healthy first. That's obvious that's the most important thing for us is to get hopefully Jayda and 'Riss back to get back to full strength.

We'll give the kids a few days here to rest some, to get into the cold tub and regen and just make sure that they're back to where they need to be physically, and then we'll just get back in the gym, work on offense, work on defense, work on everything.

It's a fun time of the year right now. I've said it since I've been here; the best team doesn't always win now. You get into March, everybody is pretty darned good. Then it's whoever plays the best that night, whoever plays the hardest.

I really believe in the NCAA Tournament you especially have to be able to adjust to how the game is being called because you've got to be tough. You've got to be able to handle it. It's going to be a physical game. You've got to be able to get off of screens, know how to create space. So we'll definitely work on those things.

But overall I'm really proud of this group. We've had a hell of a schedule. It started off as tough as anybody. I think we finished the NET, our non-conference was top 10. Our overall I think is like 12th or 13th. A lot of last night's game and today's game, we've got three and four freshmen on the floor at the same time. So I'm really proud of them. If they'll stick with it and continue to fight and continue to work, they're only going to get better and better.

But as I've always said, everybody comes into college thinking this s--- is easy. They truly do. It's like, oh, it's going to be simple, I kicked ass in high school, I'll kick ass in college. It's just not like that. You go from being the oldest one on the court. You go from an 18 year old playing against 15 year olds, to now you're playing against grown women who, s--- now you can be 26 and still playing. It's crazy.

But the development of these young ladies from when they come in as an 18 year old to when they graduate at 22 is remarkable. Just how their body changes, how they change, how much stronger they get. Now all of a sudden as a freshman you're going out there and you're the little kid on the block.

They've learned a ton from this year, and we've got basketball left. But I'm excited to see what they decide to do this spring and summer because this is a group that has a chance to be really, really special.

Q. It's been a while since you've had a team this

young. I think the last time was Shoni's group. Obviously a lot has changed basketball-wise since then, but what do you take from that group to help this group in terms of that youth?

JEFF WALZ: You know, with that group, Shoni was a special player. It's one of those kids that she's a generation alkyd when it comes to just the courage she plays with, the freeness she played with and the confidence she played with. It's one of the things that I've talked to these kids about. You've got to step out on the court believing in yourself, and she understood the game, too.

God, she was one of the most enjoyable players I've ever coached for the fact of knowing the game and studying the game. She'd make passes her freshman year at times that I'd be like, babe, I know it's the right pass but you haven't played with your teammates long enough for them to know it's the right pass. So just give it a chance.

She trusted the process and had an unbelievable career here.

We'll actually show them a game or two. One I like to show them is our second-round game when we played at Xavier. I think we're down one or two with about two and a half minutes to go, and she get a defensive rebound and brings the ball down the floor, and it's one on four, and she's the one.

My staff is like, slow it up. I said, that's not what we recruited her for, and she pulled from about 28 feet and made it, and then hit back to back the same way. Just stuff you can't coach.

But she had that -- she was fearless, and that's what I loved about the kid.

Today when people ask me, she's one of the best players we've ever had here.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

