

Atlantic Coast Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Sunday, March 9, 2025

Greensboro, North Carolina, USA

NC State Wolfpack

Coach Wes Moore

Saniya Rivers

Madison Hayes

Postgame Press Conference

Duke 76, NC State 62

WES MOORE: Just got to give all the credit in the world to Duke. I think, again, they're a great defensive team. They're a great rebounding team. Those things are what wins championships.

I just thought in the third quarter they came out with really the mindset of being tough and competing, and they hit shots today, too. When they do that, they can beat anybody in the country.

Today they were 8 for 17 from three, and then again, we got out-rebounded by 16. Got to give them credit. I hope we can learn from it. We were in this same position a year ago, and it stinks.

But we've got to try to hope it's a wake-up call and we can bounce back and start a new season with the NCAAs.

Q. You were all in this position last year. How much can you take from those lessons learned last year to the run that you had, to use that this year, as well?

SANIYA RIVERS: I think it shows that obviously we can get here. Credit to us for getting back here. But I think it just sucks because we worked so hard to get here and then it just sucks that we don't get to celebrate in the end.

Obviously it doesn't take away from us. We fought, like Coach said. It's a hardworking team. They rebound. They shot the heck out of the ball today, unfortunately for us.

But it sucks when you work that hard and it doesn't result in a win.



But it's not over for us. We still have a long season ahead of us in our mind. We're just going to take this break and get our minds back right and obviously fix what we can correct and then move on from there.

Q. You guys started off the season 4-3, a lot of adversity in the beginning. You finished the season with only five losses, over 20 wins. Is there any consolation in knowing that every time y'all get knocked down, you get back up immediately and keep going?

MADISON HAYES: Yeah, that's just fighting through the adversity. I mean, we obviously not even had a hard time in the beginning of the season just because we have new players, and seeing where everybody fits just because we lost Mimi and River last year.

But I felt like Tilda, Lorena, all of them, all the freshmen have done a pretty good job. Like 'Niya said, we've still got the NCAA Tournament, and this didn't define us last year, so it shouldn't define us this year.

Q. All-triangle final, all three teams hosting. I know it's hard after a loss like this, but to have a battle with two teams basically 20 minutes apart, what's that like?

WES MOORE: Yeah, again, like I mentioned yesterday, it's great. Says a lot about our area and women's basketball and the talent and the support and all those things. Like you said, right now it's a little raw.

But yeah, it's a great accomplishment to be able to host. Only 16 teams out of, I don't know, 360, get to host. So it's a great honor, and to have three within a 30-minute radius is pretty cool.

Q. Coach, obviously Aziaha was able to return this game, but what was the injury that she went through, and how different was she in the second half after coming back?

WES MOORE: Yeah, I think it was more of a stinger, hip stinger, landing on it. Tough kid, wanted to come back and



try and play, and obviously the doctors were comfortable with it. We had two doctors here, and they felt like it was fine, and she obviously felt good, wanted to play.

But yeah, hopefully -- we're going to have a little bit of time off here, so hopefully she'll have plenty of time to rest and recover.

Q. Now what do you guys have to work on do you feel like to be a champion-winning team, a National Championship-winning team?

WES MOORE: Yeah, again, we need to be a little bit more like Duke is on the defensive end and on the boards. Need to have a little more dog in us and compete. When things are going wrong and momentum shifts, you have to fight that much harder to turn that momentum back around.

Again, we've done that at times during the year, and today it was disappointing. Like I said, that third quarter, it snowballed pretty fast and they came out ready to play and got after us.

But we'll look at the film. But like I told them in a time-out, at some point all the cute scheming and all that doesn't matter. At some point, it's about competing. Again, we got outscored 7-0 fast break points. They were better in transition than we were. Outscored us 13-8 second-chance points, and we knew that was the game.

We knew that was where the game had to be won, and we just didn't get it done.

Q. For both of you guys, going back to this game, how much do you feel like as seniors, as leaders of this group, you have to be able to -- what do you say to the younger players to kind of get them to bounce back from this one, as well?

SANIYA RIVERS: That's a good question. I think right now at this point, like Coach said, we are going to really take pride in these next couple of days off. No academics, no basketball, just really recovering mentally, physically, emotionally, whatever the case is.

They've never been on a stage like this before. They didn't play like it and we're proud of them for coming in ready when their number was called. We are proud of Tilda for the whole season and just being here with us and rebounding her heart out, running her heart out. Lorena coming in when her number is called. It all matters.

Now just rest and recover, and they're about to be on another stage they've never on before, and hopefully we can end up cutting the nets with them so they can

experience something else.

Q. Recently in your losses, it seems like you play a good 30 minutes, three quarters, but there's always one quarter in particular that always kills you. Second quarter against UNC, third quarter against Carolina in the Final Four. Today it was that third quarter. How do you coach after that, and what do you tell your team?

WES MOORE: Yeah, that's what I told them in the locker room, third quarter kind of reminded me of the third quarter against South Carolina last year. I thought both today and last year in that game, we really were locked in defensively the first half.

I think the South Carolina score may have been 31 to 32, something like that. We were down one. Obviously today we had a lead and they had 29 points, which is right where we want to be defensively.

But then the third quarter for whatever reason we kind of lost -- again, I'll take part of the blame, too. We knew Jackson could go off, and she did. We were really trying to take the three away from her, but she was able to make that happen.

But Okananwa, she had a great day. So got to give her credit. Hit three out of four threes and scored 33 points.

That's what I'm saying, some days I've got to probably take the blame for that. We probably weren't prepared to take that away, as well.

Yeah, I don't know. If I knew that answer, we wouldn't be here first of the session.

Q. At the beginning of the season you were talking about how your two freshmen bigs, Lorena and Tilda were going to get thrown into the fire. Today you really struggled on the boards. What do you tell them before you head into the NCAA Tournament?

WES MOORE: Yeah, I don't know. Again, we all struggled today. Like I said, we got out-rebounded 44-28. We got outscored fast break 11-0. So now I'm not putting it on those two. But we've all got to do better, including the coach.

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