

Atlantic Coast Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Friday March 15, 2019



Mike Krzyzewski RJ Barrett Tre Jones Zion Williamson Duke

Duke - 84, Syracuse - 72

MIKE KRZYZEWSKI: We're obviously really pleased to advance. Getting, we still don't have our full team back, but getting Zion back after missing almost a month is huge. I thought we played great defense for about 12, 14 minutes in the first half and then when we had some transition, we had about three in a row where we didn't get, we made mistakes, we had a 15, 17 point lead and that gave them some momentum and then they can shoot. They put a lot of game pressure on us, our guys responded in the second half. Goldwire was a big spark for us and because we had foul trouble. And Boeheim -- Buddy was really shooting well and Goldwire, once he went in it was hard for him to get the ball in a shooting position. So that helped. And these guys did a good job of responding under pressure. So any questions that y'all might have, of them, right.

Q. Zion, elephant in the room, how are the shoes this game? How are the shoes this game?

ZION WILLIAMSON: The shoes were incredible this game.

Q. Zion, give me a sense for just how badly you wanted to be out there the last couple of weeks?

MIKE KRZYZEWSKI: Forget about him. How badly I wanted him out there. Why is it always about you?

ZION WILLIAMSON: I don't know, ask them.

Q. Just how much lobbying has there been between you and Coach K trying to get back out there?

MIKE KRZYZEWSKI: I've been holding him back. Go ahead. I promise I won't interrupt you any more.

ZION WILLIAMSON: Yeah, you're doing it right now. I

mean I wanted to be out there every game. You see me, I see my brothers out there battling and I just wanted to go to war with them.

Q. Zion, looking ahead to tomorrow night, what are your thoughts on hopefully significantly being a part of the UNC-Duke rivalry finally?

ZION WILLIAMSON: I'm very excited just to be a part of the game and looking at going to compete.

Q. Zion, how much obviously we have, after you got hurt, there was all this talk among other people about what you should do. Did you give any thought to anything or was this sort of the moment in time that you always envisioned you were going to be back, there was no question about it.

ZION WILLIAMSON: There was no question about it, I knew I was going to be back. Everybody has their right to their own opinion, but I knew I was coming back the whole time.

Q. I'm going to continue the theme and ask Zion a question. Zion, it took all of two minutes and seven seconds for you to dunk the hell out of the ball. What statement did you want to make early in this game?

ZION WILLIAMSON: I just wanted to play defense, get out in passing lanes and just apply pressure.

Q. Zion, about the shoes, I understand they were modified a little bit for you. What was the modification to, for you to wear tonight?

ZION WILLIAMSON: I couldn't really specifically tell you if I wanted to. I just know they're a little stronger than the regular Kyrie 4's, so I want to thank Nike for making these, but, yeah, they felt very comfortable.

MIKE KRZYZEWSKI: Also he alternates the shoes quicker, so you're not wearing them too many games because the wear and tear, I think contributed to that blow out.

Q. You're going to face Carolina for the third time this season. What can you take from the past two games that you played them, other than having Zion back, what are the areas that you need to clean up against this team tomorrow night?

MIKE KRZYZEWSKI: Yeah, well let's get our head

around it -- we'll get our head around it tonight. We just finished a very intense game, so we'll come up with a game plan tomorrow, tonight and tomorrow, and try to do a good job against them.

Q. RJ, how excited were you to get out there and just get back on the court after the showing against Carolina and just kind of prove that you have that game that you people talk about?

MIKE KRZYZEWSKI: You guys are really something. He doesn't have to prove anything. These guys are really good players, it's not, it's about being in the moment. I'm sorry, I just, come on. Come on. You can answer. Whatever you want.

RJ BARRETT: No. I was excited to get back out there with my team. We have Zion back so it was just a lot of fun.

Q. For all three players. This is your first time getting in the March Madness with the ACC tournament, the big tournament. Talk a little bit about your feelings and your thoughts of the opportunity of playing here in post-season play.

TRE JONES: There's some nerves that come into ACC tournament tonight. Obviously it's our first time. It's a win-or-go-home situation. But we were able to come out with a lot of energy, play the way we like to play at the start of the game and it just fell off our main game, but it's a lot of fun playing games like these.

RJ BARRETT: For sure, we grew up watching March Madness and these games as kids, so to be a part of it is a great experience.

ZION WILLIAMSON: What they said. Been watching it since we were kids and we're very excited to be a part of it, because it's real now, like just living in the moment because from now on it's win or go home.

Q. Tre, as the point guard, the quarterback back of the team, how did it change and how was it that you had this extra weapon to use in your offense?

TRE JONES: Right it was back to, almost back to normal with Marques still being out, but we were able to get Zion back and he was able to affect the game so many different ways. Not only when he has the ball but when he's away from the ball or on defense, he's able to affect the game as well, so it's great having him back and we're able to feed off him a lot.

Q. Tre, you had a quiet first half. Syracuse defense kind of shut you down but you stepped up in the second half, so what changed. You came out with 15 points, so what changed?

TRE JONES: My teammates kept believing in me, coaches kept believing in me as well, kept telling me to

take my shot when it comes, keep being aggressive. I knew that I was going to have to step up in the second half for us to get back to playing how we want to play. So I just want to thank my teammates and coaches for still believing in me and I was able to step up for us.

Q. Any of the players here, you guys have played against the two-three zone of Syracuse a couple times now, gotten a feel of it after the first time at Cameron. What is has changed after that first game and that loss?

TRE JONES: I mean with their zone, not a lot has changed, they ran it for many years now. We've played against it three times. I mean we were able to do almost the same thing against it every single time.

Q. I know because Zion can't necessarily speak specifically to the shoe and obviously because of your and the university's close ties with Nike, what can you tell us specifically about the conversations that the team and that the program has had with Nike over the past month?

MIKE KRZYZEWSKI: Yeah, well we have a very close relationship with them. We think it's the best shoe or else we wouldn't be with them. And right after the event they sent their top people out here to figure out what went wrong, the next day. And then those people went to China to actually look at the making of a shoe that would be very supportive and then they came back within a week with different alternatives to make sure that it was done right. So their immediate, great response was appreciated and it was something that we have grown to expect from our relationship with them.

Q. Zion, when did you start feeling like you were ready to play again and could this return have gone any better? You were 13-13 from the field and pretty much a perfect night.

ZION WILLIAMSON: I wouldn't say perfect night. Like couldn't really throw a tennis ball into the ocean with my free throws, so I don't consider that perfect. But I know I was ready to come back a few days ago. I got some reps in with the team. But I would like to say this, there was never any pressure for me to rush back when I wasn't ready. So I thank coach, the assistant coaches and my teammates for that, they always told me come back when I'm ready and I felt ready a few days ago and I mean it was good to get back.

Q. Tre, your family, your brother is no stranger to the ACC tournament. What are some advice that he gave to you concerning the tournament and how to win it all?

TRE JONES: Right. I mean he just told me to keep playing my game. I know when he came to the ACC tournament I don't think, they didn't go very far, but

obviously with the NCAA tournament they were able to win it all, so I mean he just told me be myself in these moments and then keep playing my game, try to lead these guys.

Q. Coach Boeheim was in here earlier and said he's never seen anybody quite like Zion and somebody mentioned 13-13. That is the greatest shooting performance in the 66-year history of this event. Are you running out of comparisons and superlatives, because Boeheim called him a bigger, stronger Charles Barkley.

MIKE KRZYZEWSKI: Well, I wouldn't, I wouldn't, first of all, I know Charles and he's one of the greatest players ever. But all these kids, they need to be themselves and they're forming their own identity. And I know the game and sports is played that way, like who is he like, and for all three of these guys, they're becoming. So I don't want them to be like anybody, I want them to be them and become who they're supposed to be. They're still, they're teenagers and they got a lot of, they've got a lot ahead of them. The beautiful thing about them is they're the easiest group that I've had to coach. And they love one another, they listen, and that's why I don't like to say they're like somebody. Nothing against Jim. He, you know, in that regard.

Q. I know you always live in the moment, but I couldn't help but think of Ryan Kelly's return game watching Zion out there. I don't know if that crossed your mind at all?

MIKE KRZYZEWSKI: The difference in athletic ability maybe caused me not to think of that, but nothing against Ryan. But his were threes and but it's, I get it, you know, it was neat to have him back for that Miami game and, but it's even a little bit better having him back for post-season.

Q. To David's point, Zion had a historic evening tonight. So quite simply how would you describe what you saw from him this evening?

MIKE KRZYZEWSKI: Well he was himself, so let him be himself not like anyone else, and just like all these kids. And then take advantage of the moment you get a chance to see them as they're developing into the players that they're supposed, that they're going to be. For me, I love the fact of being part of that process for a short period of time and that's why I never try to make them like somebody else. They didn't come to Duke to be a four or a three or like Jason Tatum or Brandon Ingram, they came to see who they were going to become and let's see what happens.