

Atlantic Coast Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Saturday March 16, 2019



Mike Krzyzewski RJ Barrett Zion Williamson Duke

Duke - 74, North Carolina - 73

MIKE KRZYZEWSKI: This was obviously a great game. I mean vintage ACC, Duke-North Carolina, you know, both teams played so hard and well. I thought in the second half it was tough for either team to score. The defense of both teams was outstanding and I'm really proud of our guys. We had to put some lineups in, guys coming off the bench, J-Gold played 28 minutes and was a significant factor defensively. Not just on Johnson, but getting back. His athletic ability, he was the first guy back all the time to help stop their break. And he came up with that one bucket, I don't know how he got it, but it was a huge -- well every bucket was huge. And these two guys are terrific and really amazed at how many minutes they play. RJ the whole season and still plays at the level that he does. And Zion coming off of the injury to put two games like this together is, their will to win, these two guys have an amazing will to win and it makes us coaches look a lot better. So any questions, I think you want the players first, right?

Q. Zion, I know it was tough, you had to sit and watch the first two North Carolina games, but can you talk about finally getting a chance to play against them and ending up being the one to make the winning basket for Duke.

ZION WILLIAMSON: I mean it was tough watching the first two games. I watched my brothers out there battling and I wished I could go to war with them but it was very exciting to get out there and play. I mean the rivalry lived up to what I expected it to be. And I mean to make the game winning shot, honestly I got to give credit to RJ because the read was for him to fake the ball and take it to the basket, but he read the defense and he gave me the ball and my teammates trust me to make the shot.

Q. RJ, Zion, you guys have been rating the dunks all season long. The reverse, the windmill.

Starting with you, RJ, how would you rate it 1 to 10?

RJ BARRETT: Which one?

MIKE KRZYZEWSKI: It's two points.

RJ BARRETT: The one he had today where he took off outside the key on the fast break, I give that one a 10. I didn't know he was going to dunk that one. It was tough.

MIKE KRZYZEWSKI: Let's not talk about rating dunks. Let's talk about the game.

Q. Zion, you were down 13, you hit a three, a couple other buckets, Jordan came in and really, along with Tre really stepped up the defensive pressure --

MIKE KRZYZEWSKI: And Antonio also.

Q. Correct. The defensive pressure seemed to change noticeably. Could you feel a difference in the energy level among your teammates after all that happened?

ZION WILLIAMSON: Definitely. I think we were just going too fast and we were playing at their tempo, but I think we just needed to calm down and play at our speed and we started to execute more.

Q. You called it vantage Duke-North Carolina. From our seat it was like watching a prize fight. This is for all three of you guys. What was it like playing in it for you two and coaching it for you?

MIKE KRZYZEWSKI: Well I've been in a lot of them, so I would rather have their impressions. It's, Roy and I both know how lucky we are to have the teams and the programs that get players and produce this level of performance. And he and I are good friends and we both know that this lived up to it. Obviously it didn't live up to how he would want it, but it certainly lived up to the expectations of a high intensity. But these guys can answer it.

RJ BARRETT: Yeah, you know, both historic programs going at it, and they kept coming at us and we kept going at them all game long. So it was definitely just a great environment and such a fun game to be in. Very thankful that I was able to be a part of it and that we got the win.

ZION WILLIAMSON: To keep it simple, it's a rivalry, and that's how rivalries go. So just got to play hard and execute.

Q. The question here is, when you were down 13 at the first half juncture there, what did you say to your guys to keep their heads up and to inspire them to go on and close the gap at halftime?

MIKE KRZYZEWSKI: Yeah, I don't know it's anything we said. It's a long game, and they're going to play fast and we'll play fairly fast, not as fast as them, and we just needed some stops. Cameron Johnson came out so hot and he's such a terrific player. And I thought J-Gold did a great job on him. But our bench really helped us. Our bench really helped us. They gave us J-Gold especially, and Antonio, who, he didn't, I'm sure he didn't think he was going to play tonight, but he did and he played very well. And both those kids gave energy and maybe that's one of the reasons RJ and Zion weren't as tired, because they were instead of giving energy to a teammate, they were getting energy from a teammate.

Q. My question is actually about the bench and all the adversity that this team has had to face throughout the season being without Zion, being without Tre. How do you feel about their development especially with the NCAA tournament coming up?

MIKE KRZYZEWSKI: Yeah, well, the fact that we would love to have Marques back. I mean tonight especially with the big guys, and we're hoping again maybe, maybe by next weekend but I can't, we're, we're hoping for that. The thing that we found against good man-to-man offense, Jordan Goldwire has just been sensational on defense. His athletic ability, and he and Tre out there they put such good pressure on the ball and that takes RJ and Cameron not having to do that. And then Antonio, that's a little bit of a surprise, but he's had a great attitude and if you find some guys like that, now they have confidence, that's good. And Javin played well, he gets tired, that's why the combination of Javin and Marques is the best one for us, but that's not what we have right now.

Q. Do you think maybe in a way the injuries could have been a blessing in disguise because some of these guys have had to play and get that experience where you can use them in the tournament the rest of the tournament here?

MIKE KRZYZEWSKI: Well I think you have to make every situation as positive as it can be for you. But I would rather have no one injured. All the teams we play have not had any injury adversity. The four teams here, three of them, they know who they are already, and I would rather have, I would rather have that. You

know, our kids have played a hell of a schedule. Tonight's game was like the seventh game against a potential one seed that we have played. I mean that's a lot. That's a lot. Three against Carolina, two against Virginia, Gonzaga and Kentucky. And two of them were with guys, not our full team. And that's a heck of a schedule for these kids. They have done a terrific job and hopefully we have enough in the tank tomorrow to play well against Leonard's team.

Q. Going back to when you were down early, putting that lineup in there, I'm not sure you've ever had that particular lineup on the floor --

MIKE KRZYZEWSKI: No, we haven't, no.

Q. What went through your mind? Was it a desperation, were you trying to save the game? But then you started them in the second half also.

MIKE KRZYZEWSKI: Well they deserved to start. They put us in a position to do that. I don't think it was desperation as much as who do we have in uniform? J-Gold has earned that. And Antonio, yeah, we didn't have -- Jack was too small to play against their bigs, I thought. And Antonio, for, what did he play? Eight, 10 minutes? I don't know. Yeah, he just gave us a physical presence inside there. So we did learn about that. I'm proud of our guys because they, we had a big meeting this morning about giving energy and anyone who is in the game, give the guys who have been in the game a long time, energy. Don't expect them to give energy to you. And I thought our bench did that tonight really well.

Q. Ordinarily this is the kind of a win that you the guys would celebrate for a day or two but you got a game tomorrow and you are starting four freshmen. How difficult is it anticipating any problems getting these guys to come down and focus on tomorrow?

MIKE KRZYZEWSKI: Yeah, I think it's more of getting them physically ready. Because it's two exhausting days in a row and if we want to win in the tournament, you have to win two big time games in three days. You have to do something after you've already done something. And so we had hoped that we could play three games here and we had hoped that we could win, but the main thing was to get the experience of playing with one another again with this level of competition. Because our league is as good as any, it's just, I think it's better, you know, and so this has been a heck of a thing for us. I watched a little bit of Florida State and their defense is outstanding today. Virginia's as good a team as there is in the country. We have some really good teams. We have some really good teams and players. So -- and Florida State is one of them. They're one of them.

Q. Roy and you both circled Jordan as a big factor in this game. It's unusual that a guy at the end of his sophomore year would have a career high in ACC semifinal. Do you go into a game like this thinking Antonio might play 10 and Jordan might play 28 or are you improvising the whole way?

MIKE KRZYZEWSKI: No, but you, I do have confidence in the guys and just ask them that, when their number's called to, you know, just be yourself and play your butt off. Jordan has done that. Jordan, though has given a level of enthusiasm that really helps our team, besides playing out standing defense. And he's a really good athlete. Really, if you watch, they get down so fast and I thought a big key for us in defending them once he got in was how fast he got down the court. He took away, he fanned out and they weren't able to pass ahead. Then they had to run more half court offense and he was really a big part of, it was the turning point of the game, really, his defense. Thank you.