

Atlantic Coast Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Saturday March 16, 2019



Mike Krzyzewski
Zion Williamson
Tre Jones
RJ Barrett
Duke

Duke - 73, Florida State - 63

MIKE KRZYZEWSKI: Apologize, that's the longest net cutting in the history of the ACC tournament, so I apologize. But it was a happy one.

Very first thing, we would like to thank the city of Charlotte. They put on a great tournament. I mean it was -- and we won, so no matter where it would be, it would be pretty good, but Charlotte did a great job and this arena did a great job. It's an honor for to us win. This is the best conference, especially this year, and I'm proud of my guys. They beat three outstanding opponents, and tonight was a physical, really hard-fought defensive game and our guys played good defense again. So proud of them and you can ask them questions.

Q. Zion, this feeling that you're feeling right now to win an ACC tournament, is this one of the reasons that you felt it was important to come back and win this with your teammates?

ZION WILLIAMSON: Yes, sir. Those six games I sat out, when you see your brothers going to war battling and there's nothing you can do but sit on the sideline and cheer, there's nothing wrong with that, but I'm not that type of person. I want to be out there with them, and I made a commitment to them, and I would be a bad person if I went back on my commitment.

Q. Tre, your brother had a knack for playing his best in big games, and tonight you kind of followed in the family tradition. Was there just a little bit more juice tonight especially when you were attacking the basket?

TRE JONES: I feel like it's just the will to win. All of us came here with one goal in mind and that's to win, so especially in a game like today, championship game, my brother's had my back. Even at the start of the

game I was struggling a little bit. They kept believing in me, coaches kept believing in me and kept telling me just keep going, keep taking my shot. So with them believing in me and trusting in me, those plays were able to be there and I was able to make them.

Q. Tre, again, your game, it looked like a different person in the tournament where you were more aggressive looking for your shot and all. What did you see in that? What's your thoughts on that?

TRE JONES: With Zion being back, I mean, even when he was out, teams were really doubling down on RJ when he was attacking things, so with Zion being back, they leave me even more now, and so I'll have to be able to step up and be able to make plays, even more scoring plays now so it can open up for them to play their games as well.

Q. RJ, Coach Hamilton said earlier that at a point in the second half where Duke got the separation that his team couldn't match Duke's energy and determination. You hardly substituted at all the second half. They're bringing in wave after wave of fresh players. How can your team be the team with more energy and more aggressiveness at that point in the game?

RJ BARRETT: We really emphasized at halftime to come out in the second half and really punch them first, so once we got that, we were able to kind of sustain it through out the rest of the half.

Q. When you look at that Florida State team, obviously they played you guys tough in January, but how good is that team and what do you expect them to do in March?

MIKE KRZYZEWSKI: Well, I expect them to be a very high seed. I would be shocked if they weren't a three or four seed. And Leonard and I are really good friends, you know, like he has a program there, he doesn't have a team. It's built on great kids, a lot of kids, and playing good defense. And a lot of tall kids.

But they accept their roles and they play so hard. And because they can really play defense, they will have a shot at anybody, and we had a very difficult time winning tonight. I think they're really good.

I think they're better -- we're better than when we played them and they're better, but there's so many

guys, not -- there are a number of guys who are deserving of Coach of the Year, and I'm not knocking Tony, because his team's so good, but you know what Leonard did was being 1-4, and what are they, 27-7? You got to be kidding me. I mean to keep his team together and go through the ACC, finish fourth, outstanding. Outstanding job.

Q. Tre, early in the second half you guys went on that big run, mostly fast break. I think it was 10 points in the fast break in that big run that kind of tilted the game. What was happening there that you were so successful to get out and run?

TRE JONES: Right, we were able to get stops. Like we said before, we emphasized at halftime to come out and deliver the first blow in the second half. So I mean, both teams were a little fatigued from the past few games, but we knew that if we were able to get stops and get out in transition we would be able to wear them out.

Q. Zion, you broke two very old scoring records tonight, the record held by Art Heyman of 80 points in the tournament; you scored 81, had stood for 58 years. The freshman scoring record of 78 points set by Phil Ford had stood for 44 years. That's 102 years of records. Considering that you're on the bench mending for a couple weeks, what's this tournament been like for you?

ZION WILLIAMSON: I mean, this tournament's been great. I mean we're ACC champions. I mean, I think that if we didn't win it then the tournament wouldn't have been great, so us winning this makes it great.

Q. There have been games certainly this year where you guys have made 3-pointers, but the season numbers, they are what they are. How do you think that has shaped who you guys are as a tournament team going into next week where you play a game like tonight?

MIKE KRZYZEWSKI: Yeah, well we believe in our, we believe that we're a good offensive team. Actually tonight I'm not sure how many games we have had where all four of the freshmen were in double figures. And not many turnovers, and it was very balanced. Usually like when Zion was out, RJ had to put up a lot, and he's put up a lot the whole year. And then the two of them put up a lot together, and then tonight, though, Cam hit a big three.

Earlier in the year Tre was just happy running the team and did a great job. He's still happy running the team, but he can score and we need that and he knows that better now. So we're just more balanced and we have a lot of confidence. They have a lot of confidence in one another.

Q. Could you just elaborate on how does it feel to have Jay Bilas present this award to you guys tonight and see this is basically the future of Duke right here?

MIKE KRZYZEWSKI: Well, it's not the future, it's the now. Unless you guys, did you tell them something? (Laughter.)

Well that's a nice surprise. You guys got together beforehand, right? I'm going to start crying. Tears of joy. Tears of joy.

Having Jay present it, they were the first team for me that won in '86, and we have tried to continue to recruit that level of young man. And these guys are not just terrific players, but they're really good guys and good students most of the time. And they're balanced, and you know what, they have great families. So they have been so easy to coach. Just like Jay and Johnny, Tommy Amaker, Mark Alarie, those kids, so that's why I've been here so long. 39 years. Because it's -- you get good kids, it's a great school, and good things have happened.

Q. Even over the past few years as the teams have gotten younger, there's usually been a Quinn, an Amile, Grayson. There are obviously veterans on your team, but I'm pretty sure there isn't a senior who's been playing lots of minutes, correct me if I'm wrong, and I'm just wondering if that first presents an extra challenge for you. And second, talking about that team from '86 then to now, I mean, how did you get from point A to point B?

MIKE KRZYZEWSKI: I've written a couple books on that, so this is going to be long -- but, no, all kidding aside, you have to adapt to how long you have the kids. We get to -- we have, we recruit them early, we get to know them very well. I really think the level of relationships that we have with this group exceeds most of the teams that have been young for us. Not that they were bad, but these guys give you an opportunity to do that. They're very secure in who they are and they only care about winning. They have fairly decent senses of humor, you know, most of the time, and so they're fun to be around and they're really smart and they get it.

I would say they're beyond their years as far as being savvy and they get it. And wherever they play in the future the people will be lucky to have them.

Q. Zion, you've said it several times that it's a dream of yours to play at a place like Duke. When you're cutting down nets and holding up a trophy at the end of a tournament, how does expectation meet reality for you?

ZION WILLIAMSON: It's even better in reality because

when you're a little kid watching Duke on TV cut down nets, championship nets, and you say you want to be a part of it, you say it as a little kid, but when you actually grow up and get to be a part of it, I mean that's why we come to Duke, win championships and try to get banners.

Q. My question is for Coach.

MIKE KRZYZEWSKI: Why don't we take one for the players.

Q. For either RJ or Zion, whoever wants to answer it. What does it mean when Tre scores the way he did tonight? What does it mean to the team? And given his performance, are either of you surprised he didn't make First Team all-tournament?

RJ BARRETT: When Tre's doing that, they're really playing off him, so when he's able to score like that, it definitely opens up the floor for everyone else, and he has that ability. So for him to showcase it on a big stage was huge.

Q. You guys gave a great account of yourselves here during the tournament. Do you feel like with the return of Zion to the lineup that you're playing at or near your full potential going into post-season play?

MIKE KRZYZEWSKI: You know, it's tough to determine what our potential is, and like I don't have -- I try not to do that. I just want to have us play as good as we possibly can play right now. Half the conference season we played without our full complement of players. So to play these three games was so important because we learned -- we remembered many of the things that we did when we played together before, but we learned some new things.

And if we can get Marques back, I hope sometime during this tournament, I hope we're in this tournament for a long time, that will make us even better. But they played and competed better and harder than I thought they would be capable of doing right now based on not having -- and we only practiced a couple times this week with Zion, and they pick it up. They pick it up.

Q. You played a national schedule this year and pretty much the league did too, the top teams. Have you ever seen a league or the ACC have a year like it did? And how do you think it's going to do nationally?

MIKE KRZYZEWSKI: Yeah, I would be surprised if we don't have three No. 1 seeds. You know, first of all, we played each other -- I know we played those two guys five times and they played four times, so like Carolina and us, we played seven games against No. 1 potential seeds and they played six, and you know, over the long run both our programs have played tough.

But this year to do that and for all these teams, these three teams especially to do so well, it's remarkable. And I hope that we're all rewarded -- I shouldn't say rewarded. I hope we get the due that we should get for that level of achievement and because the league has achieved a lot.

This team that we played should be a very, very high seed. Yeah, tough team to play against, man. And then Virginia Tech with the job Buzz did with his team, when Jimmy gets Tyus back, you know we're going to have some really, really good teams. I hope they don't put us all in one or two regions, you know, so we spread it out a little bit.

Q. To follow-up, Kentucky's losing today certainly opens the door for three No. 1 seeds in the ACC. You've watched this game many years, I think it's only been done once; what would it mean to the prestige of the ACC to have three No. 1s? And let me sneak in an NC State question; should NC State be in?

MIKE KRZYZEWSKI: Yeah, I would rather not say who would do that. That's what you get for being sneaky. You're not usually sneaky, Bob. And so, I think for the year, the race that was run, our three programs have been right there. We weren't in the background moving up or whatever, we were right there, all three programs. And we're finishing that way. I think these three programs deserve that.

That's not a knock on anybody, and they should talk about the Big Ten and SEC and all that, because obviously they're really good. But this has been unusual. It's unusual for this level, and I mentioned this, I don't know in the last week -- we have, I think, four 25-game winning programs, and Virginia Tech was just below. And in the conference 16-2, 16-2, 14-4, 13-5, and it made it look like the league may not have been as good, but that's wrong. It just made it harder for these teams to -- you bring up NC State; you're playing against those teams, it's different. It's different, and you know if you have to play -- like for us, if we're playing at Virginia, at Louisville, play State and Carolina, not many teams do that, and you can talk about other conferences, but it's grueling. It's grueling in our conference, and I think it makes us all better, but we should get rewarded for that.

Q. You mentioned the four freshmen starters all scored in double figures. I want to ask you about the one starter who isn't a freshmen and didn't score in double figures? It looked like Javin gave you a huge lift inside.

MIKE KRZYZEWSKI: I thought Javin had his best game tonight, especially against their big guys. He

rebounded well. He was talking on defense. He came up with some -- he finished. He's played well, but tonight I thought was one of his best games, if not his best game.

Q. On the topic of 1 seeds, given what happened last year with UMBC, do you expect 16 seeds to come into the tournament maybe with a little more confidence that they can beat the 1?

MIKE KRZYZEWSKI: I think teams come into the tournament, first of all, very happy that they're in the tournament. And then once you decide, are you only going to be happy? Or are you going to try to do something in the tournament? That will determine how far you go in it. And that's at each juncture. Are you happy to make it? Are you happy to go to the Sweet 16? Are you happy -- really you should, if you want to be a championship program, you should only be happy if you win it all. And that's so damned hard to do, but I don't think you're going to get there if you're happy along the way. You got to be -- you got to be proud of each win, but you got to maintain a level of hunger for the ultimate prize, and our conference has done a good job of that.

We have had, especially us and Carolina, National Championship programs, and that's what I've learned along the way is not to be satisfied, not to rationalize, that it's okay, because in these tough moments, rationalization can be the biggest opponent that you have at times.