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Duke Coach Mike Krzyzewski

COACH KRZYZEWSKI: We just opened up our locker room. So I don't think they're coming. If you want any questions, I'll take them back and get answers for you and then I don't know how we'll do that because I don't tweet. But I'll try to do whatever you can do.

Look, it was a bit it was a bruising game. Points were really hard to come by. There's oh, I know they're fighting for their NCAA lives. And they fought all year. I mean, Brad's done one of the great jobs in the country in coaching his team.

You know, we had them down by small double digits and then we couldn't put the darn thing in the basket. And to get like a 14, 16, and really take control, they never give up. And their kids played with a lot of heart and so did our kids. And when they took the lead and Rodney made that play, it's really one of the best plays for us that a player can make, to just take it down the court like that. And then get a one and one, not two shots and to hit those two free throws is just huge.

When I think back on our first ACC game against Notre Dame, Notre Dame had a similar situation with a little bit more time on the clock and he took it and he didn't go and attack. And we lost the game. And so déjà vu, and all of a sudden he's in that situation again. And this time he makes that happen. Like that's a heck of a thing for that kid. He was throwing up at the start of the game we had to take him out, he got sick. And so thank goodness he was okay.

It was a big win for us against a really gritty tough Clemson team. And I thought our team was tough too. It was just you know, the basketball tonight, both games were just great ACC games and we're thankful obviously that we came out on the winning side. Any questions?

Q. Coach, first of all, congratulations on the victory. Tonight and all throughout the season I'm amazed by Jefferson's ability to continue to come out of nowhere and grab a rebound. Then you look at the stat sheet and it turns out he has 13 of them. Where does that come from?

COACH KRZYZEWSKI: Well, one of the things with Amile is that when you're playing with Rodney and Jabari, a lot of times you're not focused on especially offensive rebounds. Somebody's coming over to double Rodney or double Jabari. And then you need to be alert enough to take advantage of that.

And Amile had a really good year. But when he's had his terrific game like tonight with 13 boards, he's very alert. He's very alert. And then he came up with a couple of buckets too, huge buckets for us. He doesn't weigh very much, about 210, so he's fighting those guys. That's why we're not a real big team. So when he's playing like that, we got a better chance of winning.

Q. Rodney also had the one play against Vermont early in the year with the drive. Is there a different mentality that he takes that he learns from that experience?

COACH KRZYZEWSKI: First of all, he wants to learn. He takes responsibility for the fact like this is what I should have done in that situation. Rodney is one of the great kids you like to coach. In some respects, he sometimes is too hard on himself and will pass up things if he misses instead of just playing through. I mean, I wish we had him for more than one year. And because he the growth that he's had in this year is terrific. And it's because he wants to be coached and he wants he takes responsibility.

Anybody who is willing to take responsibility for his or her actions usually does better. And that's what Rodney does.

Q. Coach, from the point where you guys got up by about 13, I think Clemson scored on a round of 15 out of 17 possessions. Do you write that up to Clemson just getting hot or was that something you were concerned about in the defense?

COACH KRZYZEWSKI: No. We were really concerned about it. And the personality and the heart of Clemson's team probably rose to its highest during that time because they're fighting for their lives, not just in this game but for the tournament. And we beat a team that put everything on the line against us.

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And I thought like when it was three points, we'd get a five point lead, we just could not get a stop. And I don't know if we were I know we were tired, both teams were tired. And it was really hot in there. I mean, that's the hottest. It was really hot. And I think that had an effect on both teams. The time of the game and, I mean, there's nothing you can do about it.

But the kids tonight really fought through a lot and gave us commentators say it wasn't a pretty game. Then don't commentate. To me it was a great game. You have both teams fighting until the end like that, it's terrific. It's not going to be pretty.

Q. Rasheed kind of had that feisty anger at the end of the game that the guys were looking for. Did that contribute to him getting the ball down the stretch?

COACH KRZYZEWSKI: That and I think Jabari and Rodney put an emphasis on not letting him get the ball. I really think we got tired, and they're a little bit more athletic than we are. Although we're athletic. They can wear you down.

Rasheed seemed to have a little spark there. Actually a couple of times going to the bucket we hoped that he couldn't finish. But he got by. We wouldn't have won the game tonight without Rasheed. Rasheed was very good. I don't know what his stat was, 14, which was great. But he was in they were big 14 points. And then his defense was very good too. Rasheed, especially in the second half was terrific.

Q. Mike, you get to come back in about 15 hours to play NC State. Are you surprised to see them in the semis? And talk about them.

COACH KRZYZEWSKI: Yeah. First of all, we would love to face anybody in the semis and I've coached a lot of games in this tournament. And every one is a huge game. And you're just happy to advance.

I'm not surprised at NC State. NC State is playing great basketball. And Mark's got his team at a real high level of belief. Warren is playing lights out basketball. I mean, he's had a great year, but the last few weeks, last couple of weeks, you know, phenomenal is not exaggerating. He's been unbelievable. And he never seems to get tired.

I was watching I watched the first half back at our hotel until the under four and then when I got here I was watching in our little coaches' area. First of all, I thought it was a great game. And Warren is at that elite level right now. Knowing the history of this tournament, sometimes a kid, they're really good, but then when you have a guy playing like that, you become even better. Because he gets points for his team. And he's very efficient.

Tomorrow will be a very difficult game for us. And again, I don't know where these bubbles are and all of that, where their team is right now with the NCAA, but tonight's win against Syracuse has to go a long way.

Again, you at this time of the year so many teams that are going to be pretty good seeds in the tournament get knocked off by teams that just are playing with great hunger and great sense of urgency, and in a lot of respects, this week, starting towards the end of last week, until Sunday, is some of the best basketball of the year.

And to see kids on all of these teams fighting like crazy for an opportunity to play in the NCAA Tournament, it's magnificent. We're in it. And so you have to beat teams like that. And that's difficult. It's really difficult. And tonight that was the case and tomorrow will be the case too.

Q. Coach, could you touch briefly on the effect the team had and your staff had on the new format? Was it a help to have the three days of sitting around or was it a hindrance for the chomping at the bit from your team?

COACH KRZYZEWSKI: Well, there's nothing you can do about it. That's what you have to do. I'd rather be a high seed. I do think, though, when you come into the tournament today and you haven't done anything in the arena and if you're the second game of the two games, you don't have much of a warmup.

So I think that's where Carolina and us were in today. The team you're playing against, they've won. They've just won the day before. They know the building. They have a good feel. And there's not that much separation, if any, from the teams. And all of a sudden that little bit I mean, it has an effect. There's no question about it.

But I don't know how you it's just the way it is. I mean, we talk to our team about it, warm up harder, you know all of that. Maybe we warmed up too hard, got ourselves tired or whatever. But that's part of the conference



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tournament that's different. It's different in the NCAA Tournament. Because everybody starts out 0-0. There are no byes.

Q. You mentioned the NCAA and the bubble and such. Today Pitt won and State won and Clemson played really well. Is that a testament to the depth of the ACC and do you believe the conference is getting much respect in regards to the bubble and stuff?

COACH KRZYZEWSKI: I really don't think the conference is getting the respect it should. Because Syracuse was the number one team in the country for a while. Virginia has been really good. Carolina in February was as good as anybody and they still might be as good as anybody.

And then we've been pretty darn good the whole year, I mean, where we're ranked and everyone talks about the Big 12, and they should. Then they say, "Well, when somebody beats one of those teams, boy, that makes them a tournament contender."

Well, we've gotten beat by Clemson had beaten us. Wake had beaten us. Notre Dame had beaten us. People say, "Well, they're not having a good" well, they beat us. So they have to be pretty good.

Same thing with Syracuse. Syracuse gets knocked off. Our league is a lot better. A lot better. When I see these things where they say certain conferences are getting six or seven and we might now like I can't even believe people now say, "Well, Pitt's earned it." Well, yeah, they have before today. Before today.

Again, I'm not trying to just be a cheerleader for the conference. I love our conference. I'm just trying to be realistic. We have a great conference this year. This year we have as many top ranked teams to match up against anybody. If you look at the top 15 and the RPI or whatever, I think we have more, as many or more than anyone else.

So that means these other teams are good that people are saying are on the bubble. I mean, it's frustrating. I'm frustrated for our guys. Because all of us can just because we're Duke or you still have to earn it. We could be in that position next year or the next three, four years, where we're the eighth place team in a strong conference and not getting the credit.

Q. Did Jabari Parker meet your expectations? Did you think he was capable of this all along or has he exceeded it?

COACH KRZYZEWSKI: No. I knew Jabari he didn't have a great night tonight. But he came up with some big plays for us. Jabari's really had a great year. And he's only going to get better.

And Jabari and Rodney are very similar and they accept coaching and they accept responsibility. If you had asked Jabari right now how he feels, he's happy about our win, but he's not happy about his play tonight. He expects higher. And then he would want to know why and then he would want to know how to correct that.

But he's a special kid. And a lot of pressure on him because we rely we're relying on a freshman to be our best player. And he's been a pretty darn good one.

Q. Rodney said on the last play when he got fouled with three seconds, he saw an opening and he felt like he could get to the basket and possibly get fouled. Was there ever a thought for calling a timeout or was that an opportunity to just let them create on that?

COACH KRZYZEWSKI: I just got eye contact with him when he got the ball and I said, "Go." So no. He actually did that in our Vermont game and scored. And then he wasn't able to score. Like I believe in Rodney. And you sink or swim with him. And we're still swimming. So thank goodness.

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Clemson Coach Brad Brownell
Rod Hall

COACH BROWNELL: Obviously this is a difficult defeat. Couldn't be prouder of my players. To show the resiliency we did throughout the game especially in the second half when we looked like we were dead again. Our guys just have a lot of fight. They just kept coming.

And, you know, we made it a one possession game and two bang bang plays right at the end at the basket. They got a call and made one and we didn't. That's not the end of the world, but it's painful right now. It's very painful for a group of guys that have put so much into it.

And obviously, you know, with a win today, we maybe would have still had a chance to make the NCAA Tournament. So I think that's what makes it so hard. But proud of my guys. Great effort and congratulate Duke on a good win.

Q. Hey, Coach, this is for Rod Hall too. Just talk about that last possession and your thoughts, foul, no foul, good call?

COACH BROWNELL: Yeah, I can't really make comments like that. I haven't seen it. I don't know. It's a bang bang play. We did exactly what we wanted. It's something we practiced and guys executed it beautifully. We got it to our guy who we want to have it drive into the rim. You know, there's contact. There's nothing there. That's part of what you're trying to do, you got four seconds or less, get it to the paint and make a play and we did that.

Q. Rod, just walk us through the possession.

ROD HALL: We drew up the play. We go through it in practice often. Coach knew he wanted to get me the ball and I tried to make something happen at the rim and the referee didn't call nothing. So I just had to deal with it.

Q. Brad, were there thoughts if we can win this one and another one, there would be an NCAA Tournament bid out there? This would have been a 21st win.

COACH BROWNELL: Certainly, if you win the tournament, you got a chance to go without anybody deliberating. And we played well enough tonight to feel like we could win again tomorrow. So that's one factor.

But certainly, you know, we've played good basketball here down the stretch and, you know, we've had a couple of controversial calls that have gone against us here late. That's part of basketball. Something guys got to learn from.

But the most important thing and what I told our team, is how proud I am of the way they compete. I don't think there's many people in the arena that felt like this game was going to get to a one possession game and Clemson would ever have the lead.

Q. Coach, I wanted you to take just a second and talk about your defense in the first half. And then in the start of the second half I thought you guys did a wonderful job of preventing Duke from getting the looks that they want and the fact that you held them to just six three point attempts in the first half, was that by design? Can you help me out on that one?

COACH BROWNELL: Yeah. We certainly were trying to guard the three. You know, they make over nine a game. They shoot terrific percentage and we played great defensively for 18 minutes and then had a couple of bad plays at the end. Duke made a couple of adjustments, got a couple of dunks. One was a steal. Two were good offensive possessions by them.

Certainly we felt by the way we played defensively in the first half we were going to have a chance. Duke came out after halftime and played well again and put us on our heels, but our guys dug in and fought and we've done that all year. And gave ourselves a chance to do some good things. Certainly they're a talented group.

Parker and Hood are really good players, hard to guard. We did about as good a job defensively as we could expect to do today.

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Q. Coach, you had that run in the second half. I think you scored on six of seven possessions and it got you back in the game. What were you guys getting done during that stretch that got you back in it?

COACH BROWNELL: I don't know. I mean, sometimes when you get down a little bit, I think guys almost play with a little more confidence. There's not as much to lose in your mind. So if you miss a shot, you know, you're already behind seven or eight or ten or whatever it is. There's quite you just shoot with a little more confidence, a little more carefree.

I think we executed some things well. We hadn't shot well most of the night. We usually have stretches where we don't score, but then we also have stretches where we'll look really good for 10 or 12 possessions and look like a great team. The problem is where we have ten possessions where we don't look very good. That's why we aren't better than we are.

We usually find 10, 12 stretches during games and we stream those together. And when we do, that's when we make our runs. It either puts us well ahead or it gets us back into a game. Tonight it got us back into a game.

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