

**ACC Women's Basketball Tournament
Greensboro, NC
#1 Duke 81; #6 North Carolina 66**

March 6, 2011

DUKE BLUE DEVILS

THE MODERATOR: We're joined now by Duke, Coach McCallie, Jasmine Thomas, Karima Christmas, Haley Peters, and Krystal Thomas. With that, we'll go to a brief opening statement from Coach and then go to questions.

COACH JOANNE P. McCALLIE: Obviously, I'm very, very proud of our team, our seniors, and the leadership exhibited out there throughout this tournament. We're very, very excited to represent Duke and to be able to be together and have so much fun out there today and through the weekend. It was a great basketball game. Our team played very, very well.

I want to mention that I actually thought we did a good job on Breland until I saw the stat line. I know that sounds silly, but in a game you're not really sure. And I want to make a statement about Jessica and her courage and what she did to fight back for her team and the way she played in this tournament. I thought Miami didn't do a good job on her, but I guess we didn't either, based on her production. So I mean that with affection for Jessica, certainly, when I say that.

About our team, again, I can't say enough about Jasmine Thomas. It's just really sort of poetic justice for her to be the most valuable player because she is somebody who exudes everything you'd want in a student-athlete, relative to her competitive spirit, her fire, and her focus, and all of those elements that you all know her so well. Those really leak off to our team and help our team a great deal.

I thought Karima was really courageous to come back like she did. She got hit really hard and didn't feel very good. She made the most of her time out there and was attacking always.

I thought Krystal really battled. She just wanted it and wanted to battle. Her energy alone was enough to lift the team up.

And we were just talking back there about Haley and her energy and confidence out there. I thought that was the greatest screen ever set at that play along the baseline where Jazz hit the three and she got the call. Sometimes when you focus on the right things, a lot of really good things happen.

We're excited about this, excited to learn from it, and to move forward.

Q. Question for Jasmine. Coach Hatchell said that, you know, she thought the two teams were even, and she praised your leadership. But in particular, she noted that one leaning shot where she said it looked like your body was about to split in half and then she couldn't believe the ball dropped in. Can you describe that play? Was it just kind of regular Jasmine sort of play for you when you were doing it?

JASMINE THOMAS: I mean, part of the reason that I took it in is because I realized that I was settling for some outside shots, and I thought, well, maybe I should take it into the basket and see what I can do. I can't remember if the shot clock was running down or not, but when it went up, I originally thought it was a foul, to be honest. And not having a call, to have the ball go in kind of was fate.

Q. Question for Coach P. Sylvia Hatchell said earlier that you can't put a price tag on the leadership that Jasmine Thomas brings to Duke. Can you elaborate on that.

COACH JOANNE P. McCALLIE: I just think it's just so important to empower other people. This is a team sport, and individual is very important. I mean, you've got to have great competitors. I really feel like I have the best players, to be honest with you, across the board. So you've got to have great players.

But then there's something that's got to separate a little bit, and I think Jasmine's been willing to do that, which is hard because you've got to put yourself out there. Ever since she's been at Duke, she's been like that. It's not a new thing. I thought Jazz was doing that as a first year student-athlete, and she's been building on it ever since.

But I also think too, though, that there's different ways to lead, and knowing how to, I think that's a specialty that Jazz knows. She knows how to lead by action and do some great things on the floor, and then also talking with people off the court. I think everybody around her has grown in that area. I know Karima has. Karima's not as vocal, but, boy, does she lead by action and focus out there.

Anyway, it's a little bit of everybody, and there's no question that Jasmine is our leader. That's why she's an All-American, that's why she's most valuable player, that's why she's player of the year to us in so many ways. I mean, she's our player of the year without question.

Q. Karima, this question is for you. You hit the court pretty hard there. What was your injury, and what was your thought process about coming back into the game?

KARIMA CHRISTMAS: I kind of just fell on my side, so this whole right side kind of got banged up. But I just wanted to get back out there and try to finish off the game, give it all to my team.

Q. This question is for both Krystal and Jasmine. Can you put in perspective what your team accomplished this week, this weekend in the scheme of the whole season and looking ahead to what's next?

JASMINE THOMAS: I mean, I think we accomplished a lot just as far as having people get some experience in a tournament type of atmosphere where you do have to win your game to advance. I think you get caught up in the regular season, yes, trying to win games but knowing that, whether you win or lose, you have another game after.

I think going into NCAA Tournament, it's more so important because it could end your season. So I just think that that experience was really important.

KRYSTAL THOMAS: I agree with Jazz 100 percent. I think also what we did this weekend is just another step. It's one of the things we talked about at the beginning of the season that we wanted to accomplish throughout the year. Going along throughout the season with the schedule we played with winning the prior ACC title and then this tournament title. It's just another step, and we have more steps to come with this NCAA Tournament.

As Jazz says, a lot of younger players got a lot of experience and what it's like to play in tournament games, and I think that really benefited the team.

Q. For Krystal. The front line that you just played, one of the biggest and strongest in the country, you've beaten them twice in the last week. What does that do to prepare you for the NCAA Tournament?

KRYSTAL THOMAS: It does a lot to prepare us for the NCAA Tournament. Carolina presents a great challenge with their size. They're very strong. They're very tall. They're very physical. That's a lot of what you'll see in the NCAA Tournament. So it's a great preparation for us to be able to play a variety of different post players in one team. And then within a week, it's even better.

Q. Coach, with about 9:30 left, you're down by one, and then for the next six minutes, I think it was a 15-0 run, 20-2 overall. Can you take us through that time and tell us what happened during that.

COACH JOANNE P. McCALLIE: I think we, the team on the court took charge. I know that at that time we limited them to one shot. They were not getting second shots of any sort. And then on the offensive end there was great patience and execution. I just remember the team patiently working the ball and finding all sorts of openings, using more of the shot clock and just kind of attacking in all different ways.

So just, again, the leadership on the floor, the determination of trying to really bring it up another level. You know, that's a big key in these games is to -- you know, there's always a higher level. At no point can you get satisfied. There's always something that you can do better and that you can chase after. I thought this team was chasing after better things by really pushing themselves to do well on the floor.

Q. Coach, those were almost your identical words before the season started about going to the next level and pursuing a Final Four. Has this team made the progress you wanted them to in terms of moving to that next level, the Final Four?

COACH JOANNE P. McCALLIE: We definitely are making great progress, and we're getting better every day with every game. As long as we stay focused and in the moment, anything's possible for us. But I love the experience we've gained. The situations, I mean, you just can't -- practice cannot provide this in any way, shape, or form.

So now we move on. I think it's important to come back really hungry. A lot of people think these types of things get teams complacent. I think totally the opposite. I think, when teams like this start cutting down nets and having fun and seeing balloons and enjoying their teammates, they want it more and more. I think it really builds the hunger.

Q. This question is for Krystal. Jessica Breland played a lot better this weekend than she did at the end of the season and last Sunday against you guys. What are your thoughts on the way she played out there today and what you saw from her this weekend?

KRYSTAL THOMAS: I felt that she played very well this tournament, especially to put two games back to back of, what, 28 and 27 points. That's a tremendous accomplishment for her. As Coach P. said, the courage she had to fight back for her team is very good and just to be there for her team.

Q. This is for Haley. When you came in, it seemed like you gave your team a little bit of a burst with your hustle and your attitude. Can you just talk about that stretch while you were in there?

HALEY PETERS: Yeah. I mean, I just think, when you sit on the bench, sometimes it's helpful because you can see what's going on out there and see what your team's attitude is like and how focused are people and what are they doing well and not so well. When I came in, I tried to be an energy player and to bring us to life a little bit and just crash the boards hard, just play hard down on the floor because that's what matters this time of year.

Q. This is for Haley. I think a lot of freshmen around the country are playing five garbage minutes for a lot of teams. Your class has been right in the middle of everything. What's that been like so far?

HALEY PETERS: I think, especially yesterday at end of the game, the experience I got there, I don't know if there's another freshman class getting that kind of experience. Today Chloe came in and Richa came in, and they were making big plays, and they were poised. I don't know if there's another freshman class with that going on right now.

Q. This question is about Jasmine and fatigue for Carolina. During that last stretch, Jasmine, as a player, did you see Carolina start to wear down? For Coach, you made some late game substitutions of completely fresh players. Did both of you kind of see what was going on and sort of look to finish them off while you had the chance?

JASMINE THOMAS: I mean, I can't speak for another team, whether they were fatigued or not or whether the four games played into it, but I know that, when you're strategizing, that's something we were thinking about, trying to run the ball, trying to push the ball. They're a competitive team with a lot of players capable of making big plays down the stretch.

So I think we were more so worried about just taking away Italee and making sure they weren't going to get open three-pointers at the end of the game rather than killing their legs. We were trying to make good plays and stop them from making great plays.

COACH JOANNE P. McCALLIE: Again, for me, I'm surrounded with very good players. I think I have the best players, I really do, especially in time and score situations. I had no problem putting Chloe in. I think Chloe, Richa, and some others, and it was exactly for some legs, like go out there and do what you can do. Sometimes you have to be patient.

Chloe could have played 20 minutes and I'm sure done fine. It's just a matter of learning and growing. I thought she was exceptional. I thought that was the best 8 minutes I had ever seen out of a young person off a bench in that kind of game. That was actually like she was out there 16 minutes. That was actually like double.

That's how I feel about our team. I think we can do a lot of great things, and I feel very confident in all the players.

Q. The voters are not putting you in the top four in the country. What's your case for a 1 seed in the NCAA Tournament?

COACH JOANNE P. McCALLIE: I know, we don't win the beauty pageant by the voters. I've never been interested in voters, but I will say this. It doesn't matter really to us. We just got to find our first opponent, and we'll be off and running, and we can't find that out for a little while.

What I will say, though, what I'm proud about is look at the RPI. Look closely at the NCAA RPI. Look at the strength of schedule. We know who we are. We know what we've done.

Seeds don't matter. I never make a big deal about seeds to our team. I never want them to think that that did anything for them because it really doesn't. But that's why they just need to remember the strength of schedule should be at 1 or 2 right now in the country, and our RPI was last at 3. So I guess we have to check and see.

That's just what we need is that objective reality that this team created. We don't need anyone to tell us what kind of seed we are. We'll just take our opponent and go with it.

Q. Coach, the lineup you had at the end, three seniors and two freshmen. This question is for Karima and for Haley. How easy was it, Karima, from your standpoint, to blend in and the freshmen taking your leadership? And from Haley's standpoint, how easy was it for you to take the leadership of these three ladies?

KARIMA CHRISTMAS: I think we just -- we try to lead by example. Having them come in the game and giving it all that they got is all we can ask for. Haley did a tremendous job staying on the boards. Chelsea finding open people at the right time. They're just good players, and they feed off of what we do, and we appreciate that.

HALEY PETERS: I think, from my point of view, they've been leading us all year. I mean, from the day we walked onto campus, these three have been just leaders, on the court, off the court, and every way you can imagine it. When you step on the court with them, you know they have your back, and you just have to give whatever you can give, and they'll be there for you.

I mean, it just -- it feels comfortable. It doesn't -- there's no, well, I haven't been here three years with you, so I don't know how you play. We know each other. So there's no problems at all.

Q. This question is for Jasmine. You guys sound so serious. Did you enjoy this weekend? You don't sound like you enjoyed it too much.

JASMINE THOMAS: We definitely enjoyed it. I mean, I think they can agree with me in saying that we didn't play the way we wanted to those first two games, and we knew there were some things we could have did better. But I think, when we got to that five-minute mark -- and we talk about it all the time. The last five minutes matters. Once we got to 5:36, there was a time-out. After that, you could pretty much feel who was going to win that game. We just came together as a team, and everything was going our way.

Q. Question for the three seniors. Coach Hatchell was up earlier talking about leaving her team on the floor to watch the victory celebration as a learning experience to see what happened to the winners, to see how important it was. You guys were in that situation earlier in your career watching somebody else have the balloons come down and cut the nets down and whatever. What did you learn from that, and how did you build on that to win these next titles?

JASMINE THOMAS: I know, going into our first one last year, that was something we talked about a lot once we hit the tournament is we want those balloons coming down for us. It's hard not to notice it. It's hard not to have that hurt to see a team come together and celebrate in front of you knowing that you just played as hard as you could and you came up short.

I think it's funny that our freshman year, for these seniors, our freshman year, we played Carolina, and the balloons were coming down for them. Finally, we got that matchup again as seniors, and we got the win.

KARIMA CHRISTMAS: I agree.

KRYSTAL THOMAS: I agree as well. I just remember we've been here four times, and the first two where the balloons fall on you and they're not for you, it's really, really disheartening.

Each year we go to spring break, and I go home to Florida, and driving that nine-hour drive without the trophy and the balloons is really sad. So I was just like, oh, I'm not driving home without the trophy tonight. Let's go get the win.

Q. Coach, can you talk about your schedule the next week. After a pretty physical tournament, are you looking forward to giving your players a little extra rest?

COACH JOANNE P. McCALLIE: Yeah, we're beat up pretty badly. We really are. We'll have the same rest that we generally have. It's break for us, as you know. So it will be a few days, four days or so, and we'll come back at practice, and we'll get after it very seriously.

I want the team -- the team needs to rest and heal. At the same time, they need to do a few things too to get themselves feeling just great, whatever that is, to make them feel great, and we're right back at it on Friday.

Q. Not to keep you guys, but, Jazz, it seemed to me, whenever I've seen you play, you always come up ready and fired up. Today I was watching you, and it seemed like you just had a little bit different level, maybe took it up just a little notch. Could you talk about that.

JASMINE THOMAS: I mean, I don't know. I felt -- like you said, I felt ready. I was excited about how my team was going to perform. I could feel -- for some reason, I could just feel that we were going to get a good game out of everybody, that everyone was going to come ready to play. Especially when we went in at halftime and we saw that we -- I mean, where we needed to improve. Coming out in the second half, I just could feel the team behind me the whole time. So I think maybe that's where you saw that extra energy because it's always great to have a win with your team.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations, ladies. Good luck.

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