

ACC Women's Basketball Tournament
Greensboro, NC
#4 North Carolina 74; #12 Clemson 55

March 6, 2009

NORTH CAROLINA TAR HEELS

THE MODERATOR: Coach Sylvia Hatchell and Jessica Breland and Rashanda McCants. Again we will start with an opening statement and go to questions for the players. Coach.

COACH SYLVIA HATCHELL: Well, when the game started it looked like Clemson had picked up where they left off yesterday, and they started really strong and running their offense and getting on the boards and everything, making some big shots.

Usually the team that played the day before, they are in more rhythm and sync, so I thought it might take us a little while to get going, but it was the first half. It was tough. Both teams were battling and competing. But we talked about some things at half time. The second half, I thought our pressure defense was much better in the second half. We took them out of some things we wanted to do. We were more aggressive doing what we wanted to do and our decision making was a little bit better. Rebounding was big. We had several players that produced and got some big baskets for us is, especially these two sitting right here. Clemson, they really improved a lot. The kids played hard, that team, a lot of them are very young and they're going to be good in the next couple of years, I think. But we are glad to be playing tomorrow and we know it's going to be a really, really tough game. This is what an ACC tournament is all about. It's fun, and competitive and we enjoy being here.

THE MODERATOR: Questions?

Q. Jessica, you have 41 points between the two of you, how good was your team getting the ball inside today?

JESSICA BRELAND: Well, our guards did a great job of giving us the ball.

RASHANDA MCCANTS: With our offense there is a lot of cut through. So any time I got the ball, I went to feed it to Jess and cut through until she had one-on-one inside. Knowing matchups, we knew that they were playing, single coverage. They also threw double double teams at times. Jess, she is a very athletic player. She was kind of able to jump through the double teams and score easy baskets for us.

Q. Rashanda to follow that up, what would you say about Jess's development in the post? What do you notice the way she has blossomed as a senior?

RASHANDA MCCANTS: I think she has done a really good job of not just being a face up player. Earlier in the year she was doing a lot of jump shots and now she is taking it to the hole, and trying to get fouls. That's something that we've talked about being more aggressive, so she can get on the free throw line, and she definitely has gotten a lot better with that.

Q. Jessica, how much emphasis did you just put on rebounding today, especially after Sunday, you guys had some rebounding over at Duke?

JESSICA BRELAND: We knew that if we win the boards, then we win the game. I kind of focused on rebounding, and I got lot of offensive rebounding which opened up my offensive game.

Q. Rashanda, are you ever astounded by the pace that your team plays, how quickly you get from baseline to baseline?

RASHANDA MCCANTS: I don't know, I think I'm used to it now, going real fast. But when I am on the bench, yes, it kind of amazes me how fast we go and how tired the other team gets eventually. They will hang in at first, but we are so athletic and our guards are super quick, it's kind of difficult to stay with us. It's hard for me to stay with us the whole time. I need a sub sometime.

Q. What do you think of the atmosphere in the arena with all of the children in here today?

JESSICA BRELAND: It was great.

RASHANDA MCCANTS: I loved it. I shouldn't say this but I was attracted with the wave they were doing and all of the noise. During the game I looked up, I said oh, that's so cute.

COACH SYLVIA HATCHELL: I said the same thing. I never pay attention to anything in the stands and I all of a sudden I stopped. I think everybody caught everybody.

RASHANDA MCCANTS: It was fun, I loved the atmosphere. I think it's something that we need for this tournament, just to bring everyone's intensity and play for the fans, so it was fun.

THE MODERATOR: Anything else for either of the players? For Coach?

Q. Coach, the first half, when you struggled, or Clemson played really well, I would be interested to know when you went in at half time, what was your demeanor, and maybe instructions that you gave and what did the kids execute well when they went on that big run to start the second half.

COACH SYLVIA HATCHELL: Well, I have been doing this a long time. I got to where I don't really jump on them too much like I used to. All of my older players say I really mellowed a lot. But this group, you can't really fuss at them too much. You can fuss at them some. But if you fuss at them too much, you just lose them. When we looked at the numbers, we always look at rebounding and everything. We talked about that Clemson was able to run their sets. So we talked about denying the ball to the high post, which they were going through that a lot, and then doing a little better job on Lele, tightening up defense, the driving holes. We tried to get up the line more and shut down the driving holes. More than anything else rebounding. I said keep up the tempo. Let's just make better decisions in the half court with some of our passes. I really wanted us to reverse the ball a little bit more, move it. We were trying to go inside, I think to early on the perimeter lots of times instead of reversing the ball. When we get movement going, we are hard to guard. So those are some things that we talked about. I thought I came out and our defensive intensity was good early, and we were able to create some offense off our defense. But we wanted to keep the tempo up and I think that was good for us.

Q. Coach, can you talk about your possible opponents tomorrow?

COACH SYLVIA HATCHELL: Well, you know, I don't know who it's going to be. Most people would say Maryland. I wouldn't count Wake out. They played well yesterday. I think they have a lot of confidence. I mean if you were in Vegas I guess you would put your money on Maryland. Anything can happen in the ACC tournament. But whomever it is I know they're going to be ready to play us. It should be a great game.

Q. Sylvia, was this the first time you played in the game with all of the school children here that you recall?

COACH SYLVIA HATCHELL: I'm trying to remember. I think a few years ago. Maybe when they first started all of this. I'm not sure how many years they've been doing this. Probably five or six or seven years ago. I think we did play one time in this game. I'm not positive. All of the years run together. But it's a tremendous thing.

I mean our players come over here to the ACC tournament. We see all of this. I talk with a lot of the other coaches, none of the other conferences have a tournament like we do. I just don't want us to take for granted the ACC people, the organization, Matt Brown and his staff, all of these folks do a tremendous job. There is nobody else in the country that has a tournament anywhere close to the

tournament that we have here. Somebody's asking me when the contract is up, when are you thinking about going somewhere else. I said I hope we don't go anywhere else. I don't think anybody can match what is being done here. I just love it. I want to say thank you for all of the people that make such a great atmosphere, a great trip. Those kids, those field trips, we didn't have those when I was in school. You know what, one of these days some of those kids are going to be athletes, they're going to be coaches. So this is great, I love it.

Q. Coach, I would like to get in your mind just a second, I watched you yesterday as you watched the game unfold. All I can tell was that you enjoyed the dog and frisbee show pretty much?

COACH SYLVIA HATCHELL: I loved that.

Q. You were talking about, you don't know who you play, do you find yourself like a coach, like yesterday saying, Clemson you are a 12, you can beat a 5 seed, and today you are looking for the 8 to beat the one. Do you find yourself cheering inwardly for the underdog so you plays a lesser seed?

COACH SYLVIA HATCHELL: Well, I think more than anything else, just the competitiveness. The regular season is over. It's tournament time. Anybody can be win. Teams get new life. Their attitude and their energy level comes up. I think you saw a lot of that yesterday. So that's what makes the tournament time so much fun. Wake lost some games when they had some people hurt and sick. I think they are definitely an NCAA team. I don't know if they will get in. I think they are good enough to be. I mean I've seen things happen, you know, my coaching career, that most people will say were impossible. And we talk about this all of the time with the team. If you believe things can happen, they can happen. Yesterday, and last night we watched Rudy, and we talked about the movie and what we learned from it, about always follow your dreams and don't let anybody tell you you can't do something and what it takes to do what he did. Again that was just a little bit of fun and team building type stuff. Something that we did yesterday. I wouldn't be surprised if anything happens. Sometimes it's just sort of natural that you pull for the underdog. We have that happen against us. You like to see kids do great things and things that they haven't, that people don't expect, and maybe they haven't been doing. That's what sports are all about. That's why you keep the score.

Q. Coach, can you talk about the adjustments you made defensively today? Can you just assess where you are as a defense as a whole and how you improved over the last couple of weeks?

COACH SYLVIA HATCHELL: Well, this is one of the best defensive teams percentage-wise that we ever had. If you go back and look at all of the books, and all of our numbers, this team, our defensive percentage, scoring that other teams are having again us, it's pretty low, really. For us to go up and down the floor as much as we do, they may score more points, but their defensive percentage is lower. So we work a lot on defense. We take a lot of pride in our defense. People think about us go up and down the floor and all of that, but we really focus a lot on our defense. We worked a whole lot. I think we are a much better defensive team. We threw some things out there today we haven't really practiced in a while, but we only did it two or three times down the court and it worked. It gave us a spark and got us going a little bit especially starting the second half.

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