

**ACC Women's Basketball Championship
Greensboro, NC
#1 North Carolina 86, #3 Duke 73**

March 9, 2008

NORTH CAROLINA TAR HEELS

COACH SYLVIA HATCHELL: Well I'm just proud of our team. We knew it was going to be a tough game. And I thought Duke played well. I am proud of these guys sitting over here. We talked a lot about what we wanted to accomplish this year. And of course ACC Championship regular season and tournament, and also, you know, in the NCAA we want to play in Greensboro. And so our only two losses have been to teams that have been ranked No. 1 in the country on their home court. And back in December when Tennessee was ranked No. 1 in the country and we had a chance to win that game and the same thing at UCONN and they were ranked No. 1 and we had a 11 point lead in half time and later on lost it. We were hoping we could make a case for being here in Greensboro. And I'm proud of these guys. Erlana was so tough and she and L¹ a_T toya are seniors and I challenged those two to carry this team, and I think that is what they did. And when the technical was called and Erlana was not our best shooter and not shooting as well as she has in the past. She is below 60 and she is my leader and she is my senior. And I put her on the line because I know what this game means to her. And I put her on the line to make the foul shots and she did what we needed her to do. In my book she is our player of the year and I'm proud of her. It's great for the ACC Championship. Trust me we do not take it for granted. Not in any way, shape, or form because I told them in the locker room you win the ACC Championship you are not going to face anything any tougher, any teams, any competition any tougher to win a national championship. I mean we have already played the best teams in the country and the ACC prepares you for a national championship. Six games and you can be national champion. And so it was a great tournament and the ACC was fantastic Matt Brown and his staff they do an unbelievable job. There was no doubt we had the best conference tournament in the country. I will stop and let you ask questions.

Q Coach, talk about Cetera's game, particularly in the second half. And also the minutes that Italee Lucas gave you in the first half when Cetera was on the bench?

COACH SYLVIA HATCHELL: I have said this many times Cetera has not gotten the credit she deserves for leading the team she doesn't say much and she is real steady. She is just real solid and real steady. You can talk to her and tell her what you need her to do. And whenever she picked up some fouls and all she went out there in the second half and did just a great job for us. Italee went in there and did what we needed her to do.

They made some mistakes and you know Italee at times just, you know, over there just I'm ready to pull in the reins a little bit on her. I would rather to do that than have to light a fire under her. I can always pull back a little bit instead of having to light a fire. I know a lot of coaches have to do that to players. So, those two freshmen just worked hard and they improved so much. These guys have helped them a lot. They have taken them under their wing and talked to them and jumped on them in the locker room when they needed to. They have done a great job helping those freshmen come along. To be led by a freshman or two freshmen that is pretty good and I'm real proud of them.

Q I don't know if it sunk in yet, but can you talk about your walk out here in a few minutes knowing you never lost in this tournament and you are unbeaten, can you talk about that?

ERLANA LARKSINS: I feel it's great. This is the second historical record we set in the past two weeks. We finished the ACC 14-and-0. We had a great senior night and then we come over here play some great competition and won the ACC Championship. I don't think it's hit me but I'm sure when I get on the bus and get around everybody and everybody is enthusiastic and energetic I think it will set in.

Q She had some awfully big shoes to fill when she came in and for a freshman to play the way she has, how important has that been to your team?

ERLANA LARKSINS: It's been very important. We didn't know how she was going to react initially. But she got thrown in the fire and I think she has handled it really well.

Q I am wondering those games you mentioned Tennessee and Connecticut were a while back, given what you have done since then, do you go to a tournament feeling like you are at par with them or equal with them or as much of a favorite as they are, or do you feel you are a little under dog for the players and the coach?

COACH SYLVIA HATCHELL: Well we felt like in both of those games we could have won those games and if we played them at Chapel Hill we probably would have. But we don't feel below them. I mean. Those were games that were a while back, we played well, we just didn't play for 40 minutes that was the problem. We are a better team now. We played them at Connecticut and Tennessee. A lot of people don't. We could be undefeated if we didn't play them and we may be the No. 1 seed, but we played them and competed with them. And so, you know, a lot of other things have happened. So we feel like in the ACC, I mean our conference, I don't know what else we can do. We haven't lost a game this year, and, you know, won the championship. So, you know, we are hoping that all of that will be taken into consideration.

ERLANA LARKSINS: Yes, to reiterate what Coach said I personally, myself, don't try to equate myself or the team with other players and things like that. We have to worry about how to handle our business and not to be caught up with what Tennessee is doing and how we compare to them.

Q Coach, you had a four players on the tournament team. Could you talk about a little bit how this team effort really helped you out this season after losing Cameel?

COACH SYLVIA HATCHELL: After Cameel and Ivory graduated people thought we were going to take maybe not a dive, but a step down. And, so, again, I'm really proud of this team because the freshmen came in and did a great job and these guys stepped up another notch and another level. The strengths of our team two things. Our battles and depth. We played 9 kids for 10 minutes and Trinity and Iman and Jessica Breland and Italee those kids did a great job for us. And so again, I said the strength of our team is our depth and our balance. And they are so unselfish. They don't care who scores as

long as we win. And that is what makes them a championship team.

Q A lot of players of your caliber may be asked to score 25-and-10 on another team. Coach just alluded to the balance and depth. How important has everyone else's contribution been as to how good you have been.

ERLANA LARKSINS: That is a really good question. I think everyone's contribution has taken the pressure off myself to have people night in and night out to hit a minimum of 10 points or better has done a lot for the team and has opened up the inside and as well as the outside.

Q Sylvia the stats were close in this game. What was the difference since everything was so close physically.

COACH SYLVIA HATCHELL: I think we scored a lot of points off offensive rebounds. I mean that challenged our players to get on the boards and rebound. And the second chance points made 26 and they had 14 and everything else was even. A lot of points on the pane and points off turn-overs, you are right the numbers were pretty even here and I knew Duke was going to play us a lot better than they did last Sunday. I was impressed with them yesterday. But again, I feel like the rebounding offensive rebounding helped out a lot.

Q Coach, I get enjoyment watching Charlotte and Andrew as they battle back and forth, but the question for the players relative to Charlotte Smith, how does she impart to you? Obviously having experienced as a player that final level, what does she impart to you as far as how you have to be to finally achieve that national championship?

ERLANA LARKSINS: Knowledge. She provides a lot of knowledge. She talks about the trials and tribulations her team went through in '94 and how they fought through it and we are doing a couple of those things. Rebecca was able to play and we lost our senior point guard and I think she implies knowledge on us.

RASHANDA McCANTS: I think she encourages us a lot and keeps us up. If we're down and having a bad game she provides us with a lot of confidence to go out and continue to play. And I think she is a spiritual leader too. She gives us a lot of spirit to do everything we need to do to get the job done. Because she has been there and now she is a coach and she gives us two sides of the story. So it's pretty good for us.

Q I was just following up on Coach Hatchell's comment. Coach said they are a different team in this tournament from the team you saw last week. And I was going to ask the players if they noticed the same thing.

ERLANA LARKSINS: We noticed they were a different team. Coach Hatchell told us we can forget about last time and we were going to come in here and take us down as the running champs. They did a great job and they had great shots and they were on us and played great defense and they didn't want to go down without a fight today.

RASHANDA McCANTS: It's a neutral floor, it's a different atmosphere, you have fans on both sides of the floor and they were very intense and so we had to fight the whole way.

Q Sylvia, you are going into the third part of your season now I guess, the regular season being one, the ACC being the second. Are you doing anything differently this year than the years past? Does this team demand a different kind of approach going from here?

COACH SYLVIA HATCHELL: We'll do most of what we have done before and we may tweak it a little bit. And we have been in the last two final 4's. And the reason why

we haven't won the national championship is some things that we can control. You can't control everything. But there is some things that happened that we couldn't control. And, you know, but, we're not going to change. Like I said we may tweak a little bit, but we know what it takes to get there. And, you know these guys know, they got the experience. We're going to be in the weight room at 9:00 in the morning. We won't let up. This is our spring break. We don't know who we're going to play for at least another week. We're going to take time off this week. We'll take off Thursday and Friday and Saturday and then Sunday night we'll be back in there and have a really good competitive practice before we find out until Monday who we play and where we go and all of that. We'll give them a little time off to rest and everything.