

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Round - Oral Roberts vs Duke

Thursday, March 16, 2023

Orlando, Florida, USA

Amway Center

Duke Blue Devils Coach Jon Scheyer Dereck Lively II Dariq Whitehead Jeremy Roach

Media Conference

Duke 74, Oral Roberts 51

JON SCHEYER: Well, one, I thought it was a great win for us. Oral Roberts, they haven't lost in a long time. They're going in, these guys probably got sick of us watching so much film. They're so explosive. I thought our defense really set the tone for us today, the job we did.

We were able to switch a lot. We have a very versatile defensive group. This guy next to me having six blocks, which I think is a freshman record ever in the tournament at Duke. Besides the six blocks, he alters so much, and we were able to guard multiple positions, and not to let up, to hold that team to 51 points is a big deal.

I thought we had some key responses when they made their run, which you knew they were going to make at some time. So really proud of the effort, proud of these guys right here. They did a great job. Five of them, it was their first NCAA Tournament game. You really couldn't tell, and I think that's a credit to them and their competitiveness and their ability to rise to the occasion.

Q. Coach, it really feels like Jeremy played what could have been a perfect game. Is this the most --

JON SCHEYER: Don't go that far.

Q. Is this the most dominant you've seen him play?

JON SCHEYER: Jeremy has been on a tear. For me, it's more just his mindset. I think the scoring, the play making



comes with it. He's never rattled. He's playing both sides of the ball. He played 36 minutes, and defensively he did a great job. McBride could really score for them. He did a great job chasing him and Abmas around.

That's what I expected from him, and it's what I think he wants me to expect from him. But really proud of what he's done, and just leading the way for us.

Q. Dereck, he mentioned your six blocks. How much pride do you take in that end at controlling the paint, blocking, altering shots?

DERECK LIVELY II: This season I just accepted it as my role, being able to protect the house, backing up my teammates is just something I've accepted and just something I've tried to excel at. Being able to have them know they can trust me to have their backs at any moment is something I've just accepted throughout this point.

Q. Dariq, 13 points off the bench, does this feel like the performance you needed to have in front of everyone, and how good does it feel to really have a big performance like that on such a national stage?

DARIQ WHITEHEAD: It felt great. Coming into the game, a lot of guys before told me to be confident just like Jeremy who's our captain. He told me to come in and be confident, so that's what I did. When I needed -- we got a lot more games to go, got one Saturday, so just want to make sure we get ready for that one, prepare for that one.

Q. Jeremy, second half, you looked like you were not afraid to challenge their 7'5" center on reverse lay-ups or even one little floater over the top of him. What did you see there that you thought you could exploit that?

JEREMY ROACH: I mean, like kind of late in the second half I felt like I was kind of settling a little bit, kind of wanted to play inside out, go to our strength. I felt like I could attack him, get to my spot. Raise. I felt like I was a little bit quicker than him and could get my shot up. He's a great player, great rim protector. They play that drop. He's a big 7'5" guy in the paint, so I just wanted to get to my spot where I knew I could make something happen.



Q. Jon, you talked about how Dereck's length has totally changed what you guys are capable of doing. When you see it play out like that, how much do you think that elevates the upside of this team?

JON SCHEYER: Well, to be honest with you, it's totally changed our team. Dereck and Dariq had some unfortunate injuries early in the year, and it just set back the development time, the experience time.

Really, the second half of the season, Dereck has been on an absolute tear. His rebounding, his blocking shots, he's been scoring in double digits, too, and he's the ultimate team player. He's a guy that doesn't need the ball in his hands. He's a really good passer. NBA people see the way he passes on short rolls and the reads he makes, they're advanced reads. He's completely changed our team. I don't even think the six blocks he gets enough credit because there's a few more where they're either looking or they end up passing out just because of his presence around the basket, and then not to mention the job he does in pick-and-roll. He's defending up there with Abmas the whole game, showing in pick-and-roll and then getting back and protecting our basket. I don't know if there's anybody else in the country that can do it like that.

Q. You mentioned the defense having a big part in this game. Is there something different you did to prepare this team in such a short time period? Just speak to the work ethic of this team, to see how much of a master job they did.

JON SCHEYER: I think it's just their mindset. One, they have the ability, like I mentioned, the versatility, all three of these guys can guard multiple spots up here. So can many others on our team. But it's the preseason, doing a four man show, it's Coach Lucas being on these guys all the time. It's developing habits. Now it's a matter of, all right, you won the ACC Tournament, which is incredible to win the championship, then you have to move on very quickly. It doesn't entitle you to winning this game. That to me is what I'm most proud of, where they said, that was great but that's not all we want to do, and to come here with this performance was great.

I also just want to mention, with Dariq, you mentioned him, Dariq has been doing this. He has. He's been doing this. This isn't like a one-time thing. He's so unselfish. He had it going early. He should have gotten more shots in the second half. For him, he's all about winning. He's all about winning. Jeremy is all about winning.

For these guys with aspirations that they have, that's what makes this so special for me.

That's why I'm proud.

Q. Coach, congrats on the win and everything. I have two questions. First question is you guys had played a tremendous defensive game with the Virginia game, the ACC Championship game, only gave up 49 points and 51 points tonight to an explosive Oral Roberts team, who scores 80 plus points on average every game. How was your team able to just lately really have a tremendous defensive effort, first question. Then the second question is moving forward, what will your team have to do in order to continue this success?

JON SCHEYER: Well, playing defense would be great moving forward. I know that's number two. But as far as number one, I credit the preparation, the focus that these guys have had, and the will to want to stop somebody. I think there's a competitiveness there that you either have or you don't. These guys have it.

As far as number two goes, we'll see who we play, but I want us to be who we are, continue to keep our identity, defend, share it, rebound, and that's what's most important to me. We have to continue to be who we are.

Q. Jeremy, when it was -- you hit a three to make it 11-0 and it looked like you turned to the bench and said something. Do you remember what was going through your head?

JEREMY ROACH: I mean, just excited. Just like the start that we got off to, 11-0 start, that's a huge thing that we talk about, starting the game off right that first four minutes is very important. But I mean, I was just happy. Just happy that we had the lead and we was getting multiple stops.

Q. This is for any of the players. It was kind of weird this week with the sentiment. It was look out for Duke, maybe Duke can come up and sneak up on you. This is a blue blood program, a 5 seed coming in. I'm curious, did you guys hear any of that noise? Did it put a chip on your shoulder at all a little bit? Do you hear it? Do you pay attention to it?

JEREMY ROACH: I mean, obviously if you watch ESPN you're going to see it, but we try to flush that out. Like he said with the ACC Tournament, focus on one game. It's a new season now. We wanted to lock in on Oral Roberts, and we did a good job and made it as tough as we could for him. Now we've got to lock in on Saturday and take it one game at a time.

Q. Jon, I don't think Coach K won his NCAA

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

Tournament debut, so is there anything you can kind of --

JON SCHEYER: Let's not go down that road. He's done everything you could do. I'm not going down that road.

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