

Post-Game Quotes
Sunday, February 25, 2018
NC State 92, Florida State 72

Head Coach Kevin Keatts

(Opening Statement)

“Guys, I became a better coach tonight. Not because we scored 92 points. Not because we held Florida State 0-for-15 (from three-point range), but because I got Sam Hunt to take a charge. *(laughing)* I want you guys to go check it, but I think that may be the first charge he’s taken probably since he was in the eighth grade, and he was accidentally in the wrong place. *(laughing)* What a good game. I thought our guys played a really good game start to finish. We did a tremendous job, especially in the first half defensively. I thought we improved on our half-court defense. When you look at it, I thought our guys were in gaps. We did a great job of controlling penetration. After giving up 20 offensive rebounds to Boston College, I wasn’t happy, and I thought our guys bounced back, and we outrebounded those guys by four, held them to only eight offensive rebounds, and we have 12 ourselves. Guys are shooting the ball well. When you think about Sam, he’s shooting at a big rim, and I thought Markell (Johnson) got into it, and Al Freeman is playing really good basketball. I’m proud of these guys, and when you think about it, we’ve got 20 wins and 10 wins in the ACC, and I couldn’t be more proud as a coach.”

Head Coach Kevin Keatts

(On the team’s high shooting percentages)

“I just think we’re maturing. I think we’re playing better basketball because we’re passionate about it. When you look at it, we had 18 assists. I think we’re maturing, and I think we’re getting the right guys to take the shots, and we’re not forcing shots.”

Head Coach Kevin Keatts

(On defensive performance against FSU)

“If you look at our stats, we’ve been a pretty good three-point field goal percentage defensive team the whole year. We did a great job at challenging shots. I think the only clean look they got was when Omer (Yurtseven) fouled them in the corner. We couldn’t stop them from taking threes, but certainly we wanted to make them take some challenging shots.”

Head Coach Kevin Keatts

(On holding Florida State to zero threes)

“I think our ball screen coverage has become better. We’ve really worked with Omer (Yurtseven), Lennard (Freeman), and Malik (Abu) as far as guarding ball screens and getting a little higher on ball screens, and we’re staying a little longer instead of leaving our guards. Our guards are doing a great job of getting over screens and not getting stuck on screens, and I think that’s helped us out a lot.”

Coach Kevin Keatts

(On what the biggest individual improvements this season have been)

“I got asked that question earlier today already. I think every guy on this roster has improved in a lot of areas. You would say, ‘Well, what about Malike?’ I think he has started to improve mentally now after going through his knee deal. If you look at our roster, Sam Hunt is a guy who has gotten better. Braxton Beverly has matured. Al Freeman now is playing great team basketball. Omer Yurtseven...there are so many guys that I can talk about. We do a lot of individual workouts. The way you see us play every night is the way we practice, and we try to practice the way we are going to play.”

Coach Kevin Keatts

(On the team playing with intensity for the entire 40 minutes)

“We’ve talked about finishing games. I thought it got a little sloppy with about four minutes to go in the game. We did a tremendous job the entire game, but we gave up some transition baskets. I called a time out to talk about finishing the game. I disagree with him a little bit. I thought we played 37 minutes of good basketball, I’m looking for 40. Hopefully next time out or in a week or two or whenever we play a 40-minute game. Our guys are playing

with great energy, I think we play with effort and energy every 40 minutes we play. I just want to finish plays and finish games.”

Coach Kevin Keatts

(On Al Freeman’s experience paying off for the team)

“Yes, he’s playing very good basketball. If I’m proud of anyone, I’m proud of Al Freeman. He was a guy that took a lot of flak early on some of the shots he had taken or some of the things that have happened with the team. Now, I think everyone should celebrate him. He’s done a great job, and he’s matured in a lot of ways. I’m excited that we had the opportunity to get him and Sam Hunt.”

Coach Kevin Keatts

(On the team’s place in the standings and the importance of tonight’s win)

“Well, it’s important because you get separation. I don’t talk about this with the team, but I did look at the standings, and I told my assistant coaches, ‘You could be in the top four, or you could be, and I’m guessing on this, nine, 10, or 11.’ And it’s weird because there’s been one opportunity to do that. I never told the guys because I didn’t want to put that pressure on them, but I certainly told the assistant coaches. So if you saw them working a little harder, you know what the deal was.”

Allerik Freeman

(On if everything is coming together for the team)

“Yeah, it’s great. I said it early on when we kept having breakdowns. We would just keep talking about keep getting better, keep getting better. We had a lot to get better on. We’re starting to really trust each other, starting to play well, starting to defend at a really high level. Most importantly, I think our pace is just really fast and a lot of people try to play fast, but it’s different when you’re actually playing against a team that actually plays fast.”

Allerik Freeman

(On sharing his mindset with his teammates)

“It’s not really just me. It’s Coach Keatts and the scout team. They push us every single day in practice. We have really talented guys over there. Like I said, when it’s part of who you are, when you’re used to doing something a certain way and when you’re used to winning, you don’t really think twice about it. You just do everything that it takes to win: 50-50 balls, talking on defense, communicating with the guys about what I’ve been through, what the tournament’s like, or what it takes to win in big games. I feel like we’ve really done a great job in the biggest games of this season that we’ve won.”

Torin Dorn, Guard

(On what it was like in the locker room after the win)

“It was energetic. Guys were excited that we’re able to put together a season like this and this game together like this. We prepare extremely hard, so it’s always fun to execute a game plan and win a game.”

Torin Dorn, Guard

(On shooting 50 percent or more from the field for the 5-straight game)

“We’re just sharing the ball, getting to our spots. Everybody’s shooting the shots they’re good at. Our guys are just clicking right now and it’s great to click at this time of the year.”

Torin Dorn, Guard

(On the hot shooting from behind the arc tonight)

“We’re just taking what the defense gives us. We’ve got some great shooters. Sam (Hunt) and Al (Allerik Freeman) have been shooting the ball great, so we’re just taking what the defense gives us and knocking down shots.”

Torin Dorn, Guard

(On how the first five minutes set the tone for the game)

“Our mentality was to come out and set the tone defensively and I think we did that. We were able to rebound and take them away from their strengths, so we definitely executed our game plan.”

Sam Hunt, Guard

(On his hot shooting tonight)

“My teammates are able to find me in open spots. Omer (Yurtseven) found me for one off of an offensive rebound. Markell (Johnson), Braxton (Beverly)...when they find me, I just have to get my feet ready and shoot. I found a rhythm. I saw one go in, and the others looked good too.”

Sam Hunt, Guard

(On being a part of NC State and a team with success)

“It’s the best feeling in the world. I said last week I’m still dreaming, and I hope to continue to keep dreaming. I’ve never been here before. Everything is new to me, so I’m enjoying the process.”

Sam Hunt, Guard

(On bringing veteran leadership to the locker room as grad transfers)

“We played in a lot of college games, so we bring experience. We both bring shooting ability. Al (Allerik Freeman) is able to get to the basket and create for others. We just try to bring as much leadership as we can. Our young guys have grown so much over this year, so they’re doing a great job as well.”