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SportsTone.net

REIDSVILLE - Daniel Mitchell took a long pause, fighting back tears while answering questions after his Randleman High School varsity basketball team left everything on the floor in a 71-62 loss to two-time defending state champion Reidsville Saturday night.



The loss came in the third round of the NCHSAA state 4-A basketball tournament and not only ended another productive season for the Tigers, but Mitchell's RHS coaching career. Mitchell and his family, including his wife - RHS volleyball coach Kerry Mitchell - are heading to Iredell County to be closer to her family after this school year is complete.

Although the move was discussed years ago, Mitchell said it was important to him to see this senior class through. Seniors Brandon Boone, Nazir Staton, Damari Garner, Pacey Wagner, John Kirkpatrick, Brycen Nall, Connor Cassidy and Jackson Cook completed a varsity career that saw them record a final record of 76-30, including 15-10 this season.

"There's a lot of guys, not that I won't miss the other guys, but there are a lot of guys I am going to miss," Mitchell said of this senior class. "They love basketball. It's a group that loves to come and play basketball. They play other sports, but they love basketball. They kinda match my love for the game."

Mitchell finishes his varsity coaching career at RHS 220-120 and despite the loss to the 21-1 Rams, a team that went undefeated the past two seasons, the Tigers battled throughout the contest, fighting back from numerous double-digit deficits to close to within 44-41 in the third quarter and 66-62 with 1:17 to play.

"It's what we've been doing the last month and a half," Mitchell said of his team's fight. "I talk to the guys all the time about putting your toes on the line and being in a fight. A lot of people have come into this particular gym the past four years and put their toes in the fight and back down real quick. Our guys didn't do that and that's a credit to them."

The Rams are led by Dionte Neal, last year's North Carolina Gatorade Player of the Year who is averaging 35.6 points per game this year. Neal, an incredible all-around athlete who is headed to UNC Greensboro to play basketball, scored 37 points in the win.



Daniel Mitchell following the Tigers' SportsTone.net Christmas Invitational championship win in 2024.

"He's a smart player, gets his team organized and plays great defense," Mitchell said of Neal, one of just three players who scored against the Tigers. "He doesn't come off the floor. Credit to them because they fight pretty hard, too. This is a place they have a lot of pride in and they show up every game."

A 3-pointer by Burnett with 1:17 to go made it 66-62, but Neal, who scored 13 of his team's 15 points in the final quarter, hit five of six free throws down the stretch.

Wagner had 17 points and Staton 13 with Burnett chipping in 11 for RHS.

The Tigers finish with at least 15 wins for the 10th time in Mitchell's 14 varsity seasons.

"I will remember the kids, the guys I coached with and this town shows up," Mitchell said.

Mitchell and his teams certainly gave the town something to show up for.