Atlantic Coast Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Wednesday, March 11, 2026

Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

Spectrum Center

Louisville Cardinals

Coach Pat Kelsey

Vangelis Zougris

Isaac McKneely

Adrian Wooley

Postgame Press Conference

Louisville 62, SMU 58

PAT KELSEY: A lot of credit to SMU. Andy is a really good coach. We played down at their place a couple weeks ago, and they just kicked the crap out of us. So ton of respect for them. Their offensive firepower is as good as anybody in the country.

Proud of our guys. On a night we didn't shoot it our best, we just figured out a way to win. What do they say, in tournament play, survive and advance; I think that applied tonight. Just proud of their resiliency and their fight.

Q. Vangelis, it's very unusual to have your first career starts on a big platform like the ACC Tournament. What did your coach tell you about why you got these starts, and how have you played so well on this biggest stage?

PAT KELSEY: You can call him Clark Kent, too, if you wanted to.

VANGELIS ZOUGRIS: I don't have any glasses on right now. First of all, I want to give all glory to God.

As far as why I'm starting, that's a question for PK. I'm just doing what I have to do. It's been a long season for me, ups and downs, but it's been a long season for all of us, as well.

Just being there every day, same attitude, same mentality, I try to keep showing up every day, and that's what I did. I think it's paying off right now.

It's just one game, though, and this is what we've got to remember all the time. Celebrations stop after we leave this building and get ready for the next game tomorrow against a really good team.

Q. Isaac, big change coming from Charlottesville to Louisville. Big game today. Talk about your season this year and adjusting to a new environment, new team, new coaching style.

ISAAC McKNEELY: Yeah, definitely took some time to adjust to the pace. I got winded a lot in the summer and workouts and stuff. Once you get used to it, it's the most fun I've ever had in my playing in this system. PK really lets his guards play, he doesn't get on you for turnovers. He wants you to play as confident as you can, and I think I've grown into a much better player than I ever was this year.

Credit to him, credit to these guys beside me, they played really well today, make it really easy on me. Zeus sets the best screens in the country so he gets me a lot of open shots. But I'm having a blast, going to continue to have a blast, and hopefully we can go get three more, win the ACC championship here.

Q. For you guys as shooters, Ryan was 1 for 8 from three-point land, and you guys as a team did not hit a lot of threes, but then he hits one of the biggest buckets of the game from three-point land. Speak about your confidence in each other and what it takes as shooters to be willing to take that shot on a night where he was cold prior to that?

ADRIAN WOOLEY: Yeah, just having the utmost confidence in him. Him being a senior, leader on the team, whatever he do is fine with me, as long as we sticking to what we work on. He works on those shots each and every day, so I trust him with whatever he does.

ISAAC McKNEELY: RC is one of the best shooters in the country, and every single shot he missed I went up to him

tapped him on the chest, next one is going in. As a shooter you have to have that mentality. It's great for us we didn't shoot it our best, we shot is really bad actually and we found a way to win.

We proved we can win with our defense. The emphasis, especially as of late, is really honing in on the defense because defense wins championships in March. Super proud of our defense today. Yeah, if we can win with shooting it like this, it makes us a really tough team to beat when we're shooting it well.

Q. Adrian and Isaac, for you two, what was it like to see Zeus and the energy he brings you guys and have that 6-0 run by himself. And for, Zou, did you dance in the locker room after this game?

VANGELIS ZOUGRIS: No, that's something we won't -- it's not ready yet. We put the work every day.

ADRIAN WOOLEY: I feel like Zou put in so much work and I just want him to go out there and kill each and every time he's on the court. I just love how he's energetic, he's energetic throughout everything he went through this year. It's him, and I feel like he can do it each and every time he steps on the court.

ISAAC McKNEELY: Yeah, Zou just not got discouraged. Zou kind of touched on it a little bit ago. Beginning of the season he didn't get the minutes he thought he deserved or wanted and he just continued to work. I swear every time I walk in the gym for weights in the morning, this dude is in the gym shooting. Hardest worker I've ever seen.

And he deserves everything that he's getting right now. He's going to continue to help us win. He's going to continue to bring energy, puts a smile on smile on my face being around him. Super happy he's on my team.

Q. Adrian, you were 7 of 8 from the free-throw line. How you were initiating contact and what was the difference between your team and SMU who only took three free throws as a team?

ADRIAN WOOLEY: I'd say I feel like my teammates needed me to get downhill to open things up for them. So I feel like that was a big emphasis for today for me to get downhill and see what I could create. For the other team, not making -- going to the free-throw line, I felt like we did a great job with not fouling so much. We held them off the free-throw line and that was a key emphasis for the game today, too.

Q. The resolve and the faith that this team has had in each other, this game went back and forth, it was tight for a while, a lot of ties. What you can say about those last few minutes and how your team responded and really how they responded the whole game?

PAT KELSEY: Yeah, we've got a bunch of vets. We've got one of the oldest, most mature teams in the country, and they've been through so many situations throughout the course of their career. They've logged so many minutes. They've played in big games.

An example is late in the game when it was kind of back-to-back time-outs called. So we were in the first time-out and we were talking about strategy, we were talking about what we were doing, and then they went to go back on the floor and they called another 30-second time-out.

So I went to kind of, all right, come back over. I was going to talk to them, and Ryan and J'Vonne -- we've got a team full of leaders, those guys were like, we got it. They got in their own circle and talked through stuff, and I was like, great. When you have something like that and it's player led, you have something special.

Back-to-back games when it came right down to the wire, our last game at Miami on their Senior Day, big game, and then this one tonight showed great resolve down the stretch.

We play that very, very talented well-coached team Miami again tomorrow.

Q. Zou suggested that I should ask this question to you. It is unusual that a guy starts for the first time in the ACC Tournament. He obviously earned it. How do you put into words how he earned it and why he's in this role?

PAT KELSEY: He's actually started the last several regular-season games. But he's a guy -- it's just a great story to tell players. I talk to my son about, he didn't get discouraged. Early in the season he was buried on the bench, he was getting no minutes.

And he had some tough times. Coming over from Greece, just wasn't going the way he wanted it to basketball-wise. He was having a struggle adjusting, and then his role wasn't something, obviously, that he envisioned.

But he never lost hope, never lost faith. Isaac said it, and he's exactly right. My office kind of oversees the practice gym, and I get there crazy early because I don't really sleep. And usually it's like, boom, boom, boom, the ball is bouncing and Zou is out there. He just continued to work.

Here he is on a big stage, put in the starting lineup, and he just gives people around him courage. It's like sometimes they laugh at him at first because he just does one of those primal screams, but it really loosens him up and gives them confidence. I'm proud of him, and I'm happy that he had that performance tonight.

Q. Your team limited Boopie Miller to 4 of 17 from the field, kept him scoreless from beyond the arc. What did you like about how your team defended him and what was the game plan going into that?

PAT KELSEY: Whoever used to say it on SportsCenter years ago, the old you can't stop him, you can only hope to contain him. Like, I've been trying to game plan against that kid for several years, and it's a nightmare. Andy does a really good job of putting him and the rest of their guys in situations that you've got to make really tough decisions from an X and O standpoint.

I like to think our guys had something to do with his shooting night. I thought our defense was pretty good. But gosh, we played down there, and I thought he was going to have 90. I don't know what he ended up with, but we couldn't stop him. He was a huge, huge key.

Obviously they've got a very important player out. That's hard. That's hard, and he's probably their best defender. He's good, and he's a very, very important part of your team. They weren't at full strength.

That's an NCAA tournament team for sure.

Q. You played guard back in the day; when you see your guards having a cold shooting night or somebody like Ryan Conwell go 1 for 8, what is your message to them, to have no memory and if it's the right shot, take it? What did you think of his clutch shot down the stretch, which is about as big as it got?

PAT KELSEY: I literally missed 1,000 points by 912, so I wasn't the best player in the world, but I did play.

I remember in 1995, I think, I was the captain of the scout team. We were really good at Xavier so I wasn't playing very much anymore, and I had to get our team ready for Allen Iverson and Georgetown. And that four or five days getting ready for the NCAA Tournament, I played with unbridled confidence and freedom, and I cooked everybody to the point where the starters were losing confidence because I was just giving them buckets.

I just remember, if you can put that in a bottle, that confidence, what it does to your game -- Isaac mentioned it, I don't lose my mind when a guy turns the ball over.

Yes, you need to play sound on the offensive end and make good decisions. I want them to play free. I want them to play confident.

Isaac, I think he was 1 for 6 at the time, and we drew up a baseline out-of-bounds play for him to get a three off of a stagger. His bubble gum card says the next one is going in. My staff and myself, we just try to pour confidence into those guys, and it's good to -- even on a night we didn't shoot it well, it was awesome to see us figure out a way to get a tough win.

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