

Atlantic Coast Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Thursday, March 12, 2026
Charlotte, North Carolina, USA
Spectrum Center

Virginia Cavaliers

Ryan Odom

Jacari White

Thijs De Ridder

Postgame Press Conference

Virginia 81, NC State 74

RYAN ODOM: All right, excited for our guys to be able to play in the tournament, obviously, and advance. NC State is an excellent team, an extremely well-coached team. They got off to a great start early in the game, 11-5. I thought our guys did a nice job of weathering that early storm and coming back.

It was kind of a back and forth first half, and to end up one at half was a positive thing for our guys. We had one stretch during that first half where we felt like we were playing pretty good basketball, and it started with our defense. We were forcing some misses and then we were able to get out and play in transition.

The second half we had another one of those little stretches in the middle of it, and we were able to extend the lead. These two guys, obviously, were a big part of that, along with their teammates and we were able to just kind of finish the game down the stretch. Ugo was amazing. Eight blocks, really incredible.

Early foul trouble for Johann and we haven't been in that position very often this season where either one of them is really in foul trouble.

I thought Johann did a nice job in a very disjointed game for him of playing well early in that second half. Got the run-out, played good defense, and really helped us.

Malik was tremendous, Dallin, of course, Chance. It was just a typical Virginia team effort throughout the game. Happy to answer any questions after you talk to these



guys.

Q. Jacari, you were here in December and you found the nets to your liking a lot that day. Did you feel comfortable coming back here, and how important was that to you guys?

JACARI WHITE: I think it was just a testament to the work I put in every day, just coming in and having that confidence. I feel like shooting is a confidence thing, and I feel like my teammates put their confidence in me to make those plays and hit those shots.

Q. Talk a little bit about you seemed impatient, like I want the ball now and the ball wasn't coming to you and then they started finding you later in the first half and you just took off like a Jet?

THIJS DE RIDDER: I was not really impatient or something. I just wanted to talk to my teammates that I'm open or not. I think everybody is doing that. Like always, the team finds always a great spot or a great moment to find me, and I just have to take advantage of that.

Q. For both of the players, you're both veteran leaders on this team but it's also your first experience in the ACC Tournament. How do you balance that leadership role with taking in the environment and enjoying your time this week?

JACARI WHITE: We try to stay connected and together as much as possible. A big game is a big game. But it's still just -- it's basketball, at the end of the day. All we've got is us, and we focus on that a lot.

THIJS DE RIDDER: Yeah, it's a do-or-die tournament, so we have to rest as quick as possible, have to stay together, and we will get the job done.

Q. Jacari, you've obviously had a little bit of a fan club, the Jacarmy coming out to support you. What is it like having that kind of support on the road even in an environment like this?



JACARI WHITE: It feels good knowing that they can make it out to the games. Hopefully we have more in the stands at the next game. But I'm glad they were able to come out and have that support for the team. It feels great.

Q. You made a lot of timely shots today when NC State was trying to go on runs. Are you conscious of trying to break their momentum and make those timely shots or are you just trying to do your job offensively?

JACARI WHITE: I'm just trying to do my job offensively. If the ball finds me -- I mean, I do take that into consideration, the momentum. Like I know it's a big momentum change. If I miss a shot then it kills the momentum for us.

Just something I don't really think about, and yeah, I just make the play when it happens.

Q. Watched a lot of UVA this year. The defensive intensity today was on point, nine blocks, no fast break points. Was that a point of emphasis for you guys to come into this game and make a statement?

THIJS DE RIDDER: Yeah, of course. That's our thing, defense. We are a defensive mindset team, and we just want the ball and play off -- every time we play good defense, it mostly turns into good offense, so yeah.

Q. Eight blocked shots by any single player is a crazy number. You have to deal with Ugo in practice. How do you describe what makes him such a great defensive player and shot blocker?

THIJS DE RIDDER: Like you said, I played some years overseas, and that's probably the best shot blocker I ever saw in my life. He's making us better in practice, too. We have to score over him, and yeah. That's it.

RYAN ODOM: You just don't attack him.

THIJS DE RIDDER: Yeah, just pass it up.

Q. The past two games against NC State you led from start to finish and today you didn't lead until 13 minutes into the game. How do you navigate that with the team in time-outs and how did you try and build momentum offensively?

RYAN ODOM: Yeah, I think in early halves, early in the halves, leads are going to happen. It's more about how you're playing the game and what were the things that were leading to them getting the lead in that instance.

Our guys, they're veterans. We've had situations

throughout this season where we've been behind. We've had situations where we've had big leads and lost them. It's all part of the process.

I think our guys just come into every huddle ready to listen. They have ideas, and they communicate with one another. They listen to one another in those time-outs. They try to go out and execute. It's pretty simple.

Q. Coach, seen a lot of Wahoo basketball this year. Defense has gotten better all year. I think that's a testament to you. My question today is how were you able to convince the team to persevere when so many loose balls got kicked out deep and State were hitting those threes?

RYAN ODOM: Yeah, they're good at that. We had defensive rebounded pretty well up until that point. We got a little bit stretched out. They were making some good plays and they were attacking the rim.

They could make tough shots. There were a few that were really hard, that were contested. Then you add in some miscues, some miscommunications on some switching, then all of a sudden they're loose and were late, and some things that we just have to clean up.

We'll go back and we'll certainly watch the film and show these guys some of the mistakes, but also the really good plays that they made. The offense down the stretch was pretty strong. Malik getting the offensive rebound; Ugo getting the offensive rebound on the free throw was obviously huge; Malik's pivots in the lane were huge, as well.

Then we came up with a defensive rebound when we needed it.

Again, going back to the last question, these guys have weathered storms, and they understand how to win in big moments.

Q. Obviously Jacari and Sam, seven threes between those two, and they stepped up and closed a lot of the NC State runs. It felt like when momentum was going the Wolf pack way, they stepped up and knocked down a shot. How much energy do you think that gives your offense and how deflating do you think that was for NC state as they tried to find offense?

RYAN ODOM: That's the name of the game. You have to get the stop when you need it. When other teams are coming at you, you have to run good offense to be able to maintain a distance.

Our guys did a nice job of that tonight. Certainly there were some miscues down the stretch, the turnover against the press, and then the defensive miscues that we had.

But I thought our guys overall did a nice job.

Q. When you were hired at UVA you shared some pretty cool stories about being a ball boy way back in the day. Some of us have been around long enough to see your dad coach in this event. This is a little bit unusual. I know you're in competition mode, but what can you share about living a dream of whatever your view was of this great event long ago and now coaching in it?

RYAN ODOM: Yeah, I used to come as a kid, when there were eight teams and then there were nine and then 12 and now there are 18. I know there was some in between that, as well.

It's just a special event. We're all lucky to be a part of it. Even the fans, obviously, they enjoy it.

For me personally, I never knew if I would have an opportunity to coach a team in the ACC, and to coach Virginia is extremely special. I'm very fortunate to be here and represent and be the current steward of this place.

You can see from our guys, we have a great group of guys. They really feed off one another. They're very respectful of the place and their role now as it relates to Virginia basketball and the tradition. They just want to do their part and do their best.

We'll let it lie after that. But really fun. I spent some time with my mom and dad last night prior to going to sleep and went up there and hung out in my mom's room for a little bit. They love this tournament. They're clearly ACC people.

For them to be able to be here and witness that, I'm sure it was extremely special for them.

Q. Coach, you mentioned Ugo, eight blocks in the game on the court, honored before the game for the man that he is. Just what you can say about the all-around human being that you have in your locker room?

RYAN ODOM: Yeah, it's hard for any coach to say they have favorites, but I love Ugo. We all love Ugo. He's an amazing person. He's found a home at the University of Virginia and within our basketball program. I can remember when he first arrived, really quiet, probably unassured, not quite sure what was going to happen next.

Confidence a little bit shaken.

Just to see him bloom where he's been planted has been really special, not only for our coaching staff but for our players, as well.

Tess was just talking about him when we were sitting in the back waiting to come in here, just how good he thinks he is. He's like, I think that guy is playing in the NBA. Like, he's just a really, really good player, and he's an even better person.

Q. To have such a pivotal anchor like Sam Lewis, he goes 4 of 5 from three, how pivotal was that in guiding your team to victory today?

RYAN ODOM: Yeah, it was huge. He became aggressive. He started out a little bit slow and then got aggressive. That's what we need Sam to do. Sam is a big part of this team and the winning that has taken place this year, and just really proud of his overall development.

Q. Just following up on Ugo, is he playing his best basketball right now? How much of a game changer can he be?

RYAN ODOM: I think he is, yeah, there's no question about it. He had to play 16 minutes in the first half. He hasn't done that all year. He's usually playing about 20, 22, somewhere in there.

For him to step up and be able to go that long in this game says a lot about his physical fitness and the impact that he had within the game was huge. We don't win that game without his play overall.

That's the great thing about this team is they take up for one another. Johann gets two fouls early, Ugo steps up right away. Had he not, we probably would have been in trouble or had to come up with something different.

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