

# Atlantic Coast Conference Men's Basketball Championship

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

**Miami Hurricanes**

**Coach Jai Lucas**

**Malik Reneau**

**Tru Washington**

Postgame Press Conference



Miami 78, Louisville 73

JAI LUCAS: First off, just proud of the way we competed, and especially the start of the second half. Really turned the game for us, gave us the ability to finally guard in some situations and create some separation, and then for some reason, we get bored and like to make the game interesting.

It's a credit, really, to Louisville and the way their team built, but also some of the stuff Coach Kelsey does is really good and hard to guard.

You knew they were going to make a run. To play within I think five days is always hard to do. But I think it helped us down the stretch, just having multiple guys in that made big shots like true for us these last two weeks, three weeks, just in his role for me what we've been missing the year, just having some pop, having some firepower off the bench to create separations in those gaps and I feel like he's really starred in his role.

For Malik, had to apologize to him during the game. Yelling at him the whole game and I look down and he's got 24 and 6. That is kind of the standard I hold him to and what I think of him.

But I'm just happy we were able to finish the game after not being able to finish it last week.

**Q. Malik, just taking over towards the end of this game, be it a free throw, be it going after it at the rim, what you can say about your overall play and trusting in yourself?**

MALIK RENEAU: I trust in myself a lot and also my teammates trust in me to go get a basket at any moment. You know, just having that feeling that my team is behind me when we need a basket, a go-to basket, it gives me the utmost confidence to go do that.

**Q. Tru, just talk about the steal there at the end of the game, what you saw in the inbound pass to put the game away.**

TRU WASHINGTON: What I saw, I was kind by the inbound pass. I seen he was trying to get it off fast. I was just right there, perfect timing, and got the steal.

**Q. What did that do for your team?**

TRU WASHINGTON: I think after that I got a steal and he fouled me and I knew I was going to the free-throw line and I was going to make both.

MALIK RENEAU: It was a huge steal coming down the stretch. It gave us the ability to go up five and give us a comfort lead to fall back on, and then just ultimately get a stop coming down the next play.

**Q. They jumped out to an early 10-0 run in the last game you guys played last Saturday. They had a 10-0 run in this game. What was the message from Coach Lucas and how were you able to do that?**

MALIK RENEAU: Yeah, like Coach said, we was making the game interesting. We just stopped playing defense, and we had to get back with our energy, getting our stuff jumping again so we could get back on the defensive side to ultimately get some more stops.

When we realized they were going 10 in a row we just calmed down and let everything slow down and just played defense.

TRU WASHINGTON: Just believing in each other, believing in what Coach got us doing, believing in the game plan. Just sticking to the script.



**Q. Coach Lucas obviously flipped this team I think from 24 losses to 24 wins this season. What has he done to instill that belief in you guys and in your teammates?**

MALIK RENEAU: It started from the summer. I think just the foundation that he was building and then the culture he wanted to build, we all bought in and went day by day, slowly getting better.

And then just throughout the season, just constantly believing in his game plans, like Tru was saying, and sticking to the script and just keep constantly pushing and playing with huge energy throughout these games.

TRU WASHINGTON: Yeah, that's pretty much it. He got all the right players. Everybody he got came with a chip on their shoulder. Everybody came from a winning culture before they got here. That was a big part of his recruitment, and we're winning.

**Q. Tru, how would you say that Coach Jai is different from any other coaches that you guys have had?**

TRU WASHINGTON: He's a player coach. He played basketball. He was one of us, so he knows what it is. He can relate to us in most situations we go through.

MALIK RENEAU: Yeah, like Tru was saying, he's a player coach. He can relate to a lot of stuff that we're going through, whether it's on or off the court and everybody trusts in him, so that's pretty much it.

**Q. Malik, Coach likened your previous matchup with UVA to an Elite 8, Sweet 16 type of game. What do you remember about that matchup, and what are you anticipating tomorrow?**

MALIK RENEAU: It's going to be a war. It's going to be a hard-nosed basketball game, and we've got to be ready to play all 40 minutes. Relentless 40 minutes, energy throughout the whole game, and constantly keep pushing, whether we're the ones making the run or they're making the run.

We've got to constantly stay with it for the whole 40 minutes. It's going to be a war.

**Q. Coach Lucas, you inherited a program that struggled some last year. In what ways is it that you have such a quick turnaround? I know the players touched on it, but if you could just give us a few factors you were looking for going into the season to right the ship.**

JAI LUCAS: For me, it starts with, one, although they had a tough year last year, the foundation was built with going to the Final Four and going to the Elite 8 the two years before and I think winning a conference championship, a time for it, I believe, two years.

So that was one.

And then the second part was getting the right people in the building, and it always starts and ends with the players.

For those guys like a Malik and Tru and Tre and Ernest, the core group of transfers and their pedigree and what they come from. Like he was talking about, Tre won everywhere he's been; Big Ten, SEC Championships. Ernest played at Kansas and TCU for two really good coaches. Tru won two Mountain West championships. And Malik, although they didn't win to the level, he played at Indiana. Which if you've been to Indiana and played at a blue blood and been around it, you know the pressure and the kind of will that has to go in, how much winning means.

So all that stuff is important in moments like this, and it all started with them.

Then after that, just getting to work.

**Q. In the first half they were 3 for 8 from the three. In the locker room we were 3 for 16 in the second half. What adjustments did you make?**

JAI LUCAS: The first game I thought we were too soft on the ball and we just gave them too much space and they were shooting almost dare shots from three.

So a big part of our game plan was making sure we impacted the ball and really upped our pressure and our pickup point. I felt that was the difference in some of the threes they made and were able to get in the first game and this game.

**Q. Coach, you mentioned guys coming from different places, the transfer portal, utilizing it, and obviously having a lot of success with that. What can you say about having that nucleus come together this season and seeing it continue to grow? Because not every team can do that, not every team can put it all together when guys are new.**

JAI LUCAS: Yeah, you know, the season, the schedule and everything just kind of worked out perfectly, to be honest with you, and the experience we've gained throughout the season to get to this point has kind of molded us to where I feel at this part of the season where you want to be playing is your best basketball but you want

to have your most confidence.

I feel like we have our confidence now and feel we are good and we can compete at a high level. So everything we went through during the season, the close wins, the close losses, we've been through so much this year.

Just to think about everything we've had to go through as a team, and for us to be here is pretty cool.

**Q. Just wanted to ask, I saw your dad behind the bench. He was really getting into it, yelling at the refs, just prayer hands for the free throws and everything. What's it been like to have his support throughout this season?**

JAI LUCAS: You know, it's just different to see him in a different role; you know what I mean? I've always been the one following him and being with him in the gym and now that he's in the gym and he's getting older, you get to see him just kind of love being around and just being a part of it and still the coach and the player in him comes out, and just his support and my family's support just means a lot to me.

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