Atlantic Coast Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Thursday, March 12, 2026

Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

Spectrum Center

Florida State Seminoles

Coach Luke Loucks

Chauncey Wiggins

Lajae Jones

Postgame Press Conference

Duke 80, Florida State 79

LUKE LOUCKS: Obviously a tough way to finish that game, but I'm so proud of these guys, the way they battled throughout this match. But most importantly, the way they battled through the second half of this season, in a season where these guys could have easily folded. They came to work every day and tried to find solutions.

I'm proud to coach this bunch. They have real character. They have real grit. Hopefully, as we build this program, I can continue to bring guys like we had this year on this roster, because it was an absolute joy and pleasure to coach them.

A huge credit to Jon, his staff, and Duke's whole team. That team is so talented. They're big. They're tough. They're physical. We thought we had a pretty good game plan, and we executed that game plan. They made adjustments to it. We tried to make adjustments back. It was fun coaching against Jon. He's smart. He sees the game. He's tough. He's competitive, just like he was as a player.

But their youth, how talented and tough those kids are, there's a reason they're the No. 1 team in the country. There's a reason they're favorites to win the ACC and favorites to win the national title. That's a well put together team with a lot of selfless kids that are tough and about the right things.

I'll open it up for questions for our guys now.

Q. Lajae, you played most of the second half with four fouls. How important was it to avoid that fifth foul so you could continue to contribute for your team?

LAJAE JONES: The refs did the best job to keep me in the game. Some of the stuff where I just had to try to contest, I had to let them go just so I wouldn't foul out and put my team in a bad spot to where either it could go left or right. It just went down to the final possession, or it's just a 10-point loss or a win, who knows.

Q. A question for either of you. Duke goes on the 18-2 run midway through the second half. What do you feel wasn't working for your team and what was for Duke?

CHAUNCEY WIGGINS: With me, I would just say they were making a lot of shots. As we can see, they out-rebounded us, which was on us. I just kept telling the guys, stay connected. We were leading, I think they were up 69, 61 and I just tried to tell them, stay connected, we can win this game.

LAJAE JONES: I mean, it's a game of runs, at the end of the day. We went on a run, they went on a run. All you've got to do is just stop the bleeding and just get on your own run, as well.

Q. Obviously a lot of seniors on this team. What is it that you want the younger guys like Thomas and Martin to take away from this experience just heading into next year?

LUKE LOUCKS: I think our seniors are about the right things, and that's most important, especially coaching at this level. But coaching any team sport, you want guys that are about the right things. Generally, that leads to good results on the court.

Life is full of ups and downs. It's full of challenges. The thing I'm pleased with most with those six seniors, and really our whole team, we never let those lows get to us and break our spirit and break our character.

I think as they go through life, especially the six that are departing, hopefully they bring that with them. It doesn't

matter how much life kicks you, what curve balls hit you in the face, you've got to be resilient, and you've got to have a great attitude and show up and work every day. And I felt like our team for the most part did that, especially in the second half of the season.

Q. Your video guys, Michael and Ryan, what did you think of them getting some shine this week, and, two, two more successful reviews tonight. How would you describe their value to the program?

LUKE LOUCKS: Yeah, those two are on fire. I'm trying to humble them now that they're getting interviews and getting some TV time.

It's the thing that probably brings me the most joy as a head coach. And I know I'm in my first year, so I can't have a ton of experiences. But when your staff gets credit -- because we get a lot of credit and a lot of blame. That's why we get paid what we get paid to stand up front here and answer you guys. But anytime your staff can get credit -- and I think we've got one of the best staffs in America, they work their tails off. They have great attitudes. No job is too small for them.

But especially those two. Ryan Snyder was a holdover from Coach Hamilton's staff, but he showed up every day when I got the job and just proved his worth.

And Rubin is no different. He's a student manager with, like, real responsibility in games, which is probably a little bit baffling for me to give him that responsibility. But he earned it. Again, he shows up every day. He does analytics for us. He basically created an analytical program. Me and a couple of the other NBA guys told him what we were looking for. That kid is a borderline genius.

Both of those guys are going to go on in their careers, whether it's front office, coaching, and have a heck of a career because they show up every day and try to do the little things at a high level.

Q. Obviously this is very disappointing right now, but is there an underlying sense of pride in that locker room for staying so close with the No. 1 team in the nation?

LUKE LOUCKS: I wouldn't say because of that. I've said it before, I'm not a big believer in moral victories, but I am a big believer about doing the right thing. To me, our team did the right thing.

I'm not talking about tonight's game. I'm talking about this season. I think right now they're beat up. They're hurt. I feel bad. I felt like obviously we played well enough to have a shot to win and have the last-second shot to win. I'm sure I'll beat myself up for mistakes I made throughout the game, as they're doing currently right now.

Once you get out of this present moment, hopefully -- I know I will -- all those guys in the locker room will look back at this year and have some pride about it. And again, it's a reflection for life of we had some really dark moments this year, and they fought through them.

Now you can go home with a sense of -- hopefully looking back on this year with some gratitude for what we did, but a sense of pride for what we represent at Florida State.

Again, I'm going to keep saying this, as we build this program, I would sign up seven days out of seven to coach guys like this, that care about the right things, that fight, especially when it's tough, and that care about each other.

Q. Coach, seemed like Cameron Boozer heated up after a quiet first half. Seemed like he was quiet beyond the free-throw line in the first half. What did you like about your team's coverage of him in the first 20 minutes and how do you think he evolved to it as the game went on?

LUKE LOUCKS: Yeah, Cameron is one of the best players I've ever seen, and obviously he's a Florida kid, possibly the most decorated high school Florida basketball player in the history of Florida basketball, winning all those state titles. I don't know if he even lost five games from the time he entered high school until the time he left.

But what he's doing here is so special. He doesn't have many weaknesses. We tried to find them and tried to pick on them, and like I said, Jon did a really good job adjusting.

He's so strong and so physical when he gets close to the basket. But honestly, he played point guard for them for most of the night. Obviously we wanted to pressure him, we wanted to sit on his right hand, try to force him left. We tried to throw bodies at him, make him finish around the basket with his left hand.

The problem was even when he missed those shots, he's so strong down there, he's such a grown man that he got his own rebound a lot of the times.

You look at the box score, they had 22 offensive rebounds and 24 second chance points. It's really tough to win a game or even be in a game when you're out-rebounded by that margin. And it's a huge credit to Cam but also to Maliq. Those two kids are just unbelievable. They've got size, strength, athleticism, great timing, they're tough.

But again, we came up with the best game plan possible for playing the No. 1 team in the country, and I would probably run the same game plan back tomorrow. It came down to one shot, and I'll take that shot every day of the week with your best player getting a decent look at the end of the game.

In hindsight I asked the staff -- I should have called a time-out. I thought about it, but we get a blocked shot, it's in transition. I don't know that we get a better look than the one we got. Sometimes the ball goes your way and sometimes it doesn't.

Q. Duke gives up the second-fewest points in the country, but in your two games, 87 and 79. What does your offense do or the scheme, the game plan you've referenced a few times, how do you give them fits offensively that really no one else does?

LUKE LOUCKS: Yeah, they're one of the better defensive teams I've seen in college. I think analytically they're No. 1. They have positional size all over the place. They're aggressive. They have rim protection. Obviously a little bit shorthanded right now with their injuries.

At times we probably went to it too much, but because of their size and because of our ability to break guys down off the dribble, we tried to get the opponents we wanted to in the action and then give those guys as much space as possible to attack. Once you attack, you have a responsibility to make the right play. Sometimes the right play is for you. Sometimes as the help collapses, it's for a teammate. And obviously a lot more nuanced and more detailed than that. But that was pretty much our game plan: Get out after stops and push as fast as possible to try to score as quickly as possible because of how good they are in the half court.

Then find the guys that aren't poor defenders. But in terms of ranking them, they're probably not as good as the next two guys, and give our guys as much space as possible to try to create an advantage. Once you create it, you've got to sustain the advantage, and hopefully that leads to good shots.

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