

Atlantic Coast Conference Men's Basketball Championship

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

Duke Blue Devils Coach Jon Scheyer Cameron Boozer Isaiah Evans

Postgame Press Conference

Duke 80, Florida State 79

JON SCHEYER: First of all, congrats to Florida State with the year they've had, and especially the last second half of the year. I think the job Luke has done has been incredible. I told our team, this is exactly the way -- again, not necessarily the ending -- but we knew we were in for a big-time game. If anybody is paying attention to college basketball the last two months, no question, analytically, you can look at it with their efficiency on both ends of the floor, but you also can look at their wins.

To go 0-5 and then win 10 of their 12 games, they found something, and I think that's a credit to their coaching staff, to kind of reinvent their team. They've done an incredible job and they've talented and they have one of the most dynamic players in McCray. He's a really good player.

With that said, I think -- look, it was a different game for us. We had different lineups. We were in some positions we haven't been in all year, down eight second half. I think the character that our guys showed in that moment was big time. And then that led to some great defense, and finally we got some stops and get out in transition. Both these guys made big-time plays. All seven guys that played really helped.

Proud of this win. We have to recover quickly. We're not playing the noon game this year. We're the only 1 seed not to be playing early in the country. But it's a quick turnaround, and we're going to work on keeping this thing going.

Q. Cameron and Isaiah, what does it say about this



team and about Coach Scheyer to have you guys ready, down two players? What stood out this week in terms of your preparation to be ready to do this and show such resiliency?

CAMERON BOOZER: Yeah, we talked about it. We're making no excuses, next man up. Come out here -- like Coach said, FSU is the hottest team in our league besides us the last 12 games. I think it just says that we can win ugly. Obviously we don't want to win ugly, but we can if we have to.

We pushed -- I think we were down eight at one point and went on a big time run, started on the defensive end. And moving forward just got to be better.

ISIAH EVANS: Yeah, I mean, it's March, so it's not really time for any excuses. We've just got to figure out how to execute Duke basketball offensively and defensively.

Q. You mentioned that run earlier, it was an 18-2 run in the middle of the second half. You talked about defensively. How did you guys thrive offensively?

CAMERON BOOZER: I think it started on the defensive end. I think Maliq Brown came in, he had some big-time plays, steals, rebounds, and then we got some easy bucket positions. Slim got out, I think Dame got out in transition. For us it just starts on the defensive end.

Obviously they have dynamic guards, really hard to stop. But when we got stops, we got a lot of great looks.

Q. 22 offensive rebounds, 24 points second chance points. Obviously there's that Duke strength, but what has been working schematically at the paint that allowed y'all to get so many offensive rebounds?

CAMERON BOOZER: That's been a staple for us all year. We talked about crashing all year long. We're a big physical team even with Pat being out. Like you said, 22, that's a lot of offensive rebounds. I think we've just got to keep crashing going forward. I think that can really change the game for us. I think it helped a lot tonight because they



junk it up. It was really tough to get a rhythm on offense, but offensive rebounds can really change that.

Q. Isaiah, this is the second time this season you've hit a career high against Florida State. What were you finding in the first half that was working so well for you?

ISAIAH EVANS: Yeah, me and Coach just talk about letting the play come to me, not really trying to press it. You know, it just ended up working out in my favor today. And I'm just blessed to be able to come out for my team and just give us the extra little boost.

Q. What was your message to Cayden to kind of keep the team calm, poised, and collected coming into this matchup down two starters, but being that floor general or being a reflection of Coach on the court?

CAMERON BOOZER: I think it's tough when a team spies on you. It messes with your mind a little bit. I was just telling him play with some confidence, bro. You're open, shoot it, attack, be aggressive. They're doing that for a reason because they don't think they can guard us straight up.

I think we found something in the second half, put him in the middle, hit a big time rebound at the end. Yeah, we've just got to be able to find a rhythm going forward.

Q. For both players, how was it when you were already down one point guard, and Cayden gets two quick fouls and it seemed like you were having to play point guard by committee out there?

ISAIAH EVANS: Yeah, I mean, it's just a strong face. Cayden goes to the bench, the next guy comes in, someone got to bring the ball up. It doesn't really matter who does it as long as we just do it effectively and efficiently.

Q. Coach, this is kind of building off my question to the players, but no one wants to be down two players with injury. I know you like to embrace challenges. How much have you embraced this challenge to get creative?

JON SCHEYER: I think you can spend all your time thinking about why or you're disappointed for Caleb, for Pat, for our team, or you can get to the next play and really focus on what you can control.

Ultimately we have to have their backs because Caleb was in every huddle talking. He was incredible. Pat's energy was great. So that's what we've put our focus towards.

We're no excuses. We've got to step up with the team that we have, get those guys -- they're working like crazy every day. And we've got to figure this out, though. I thought it put us in some tough positions tonight that you can't really practice, and we'll learn a lot from it.

Q. Jon, in the first half when Cayden got in foul trouble, you went with Nik as your point guard, but in the second half, a lot of the time Cameron was your main ball handler playmaker. Why the change, and how effective do you think he can be going forward this way?

JON SCHEYER: Well, look, part of the strength of the team we've built is collective ball handling and decision making. Nik has a background of being a point guard. Cam basically is a point guard, as well, even though he doesn't look like one.

It's going to be by committee. We have multiple guys that can bring it up. Isaiah had to initiate some tonight, Dame. But Nik and Cam can have a great control of the game when Cayden isn't in there.

Q. Coach, this is the second time this Florida State team was able to take you down to the wire. What did you see from them on the floor that made them able to stick with you when a lot of other teams in the league haven't been able to?

JON SCHEYER: Well, one, we've played some of the best guards in the country. McCray is not in that mix -- he's a tough cover, man. He's a tough cover. I thought he hit some shots that were well-defended. He's incredibly difficult to keep out of the paint.

For me, the job that Luke and his staff have done with the way they space the floor is incredibly difficult. They put us in some different positions because of their personnel other teams don't put us in. You think about the threes. Also I thought they hit some really tough shots especially down the stretch, where you've got to weather that storm and still find a way -- Jones and his step backs in the corner. And it's kind of what they did the first time.

I'll watch the film and probably we'll learn even more from it, though.

Q. You can practice without Patrick and Caleb, but this is the first time in a game situation you've got play without those guys. What did you learn about your team tonight, and what will you change, if anything, tomorrow?

JON SCHEYER: Well, in retrospect, the fact we won and

the fact that we had to come back from being down at halftime, being down eight in the second half, that's been a different position for us. We haven't seen that as much this year.

I told our team, you can show great character when you're winning. Not going to say it's easy because it's not. But I think you get a chance when you're down in a moment like that, missing those two guys. Florida State has a ton of confidence, you've got a chance to show true character, what it's all about when you're down. I thought we did that.

Again, strategically, lineups, I can help our guys so much better. We'll learn from this, but I think the character and toughness that we showed in that moment, that's what I learned tonight.

Q. You brought up a couple times, down eight in the second half isn't somewhere you guys are used to being. There was a time-out there when you were down 59-51. Then you went on the 19-2 run. What was the message in at that time-out? What did you change or tell your guys?

JON SCHEYER: I think there was two things. One, I just didn't feel like it was a schematic change in terms of our ball screen coverage or in terms of what we were doing. I think there was just a toughness that we've had all year that we were missing a little bit. And I thought the shot making knocked us back a little bit.

For me, it was all about our competitive edge. I tried to explain, we can switch defense what we're playing, we can switch coverages. It's going to come down to our toughness and our defense.

How ironic that our guys made plays, Maliq gets a steal, we get some stops and that led to just cutting the lead very quickly. That was the main thing.

Then I just tried to get them to look at it as an opportunity. It was a true opportunity for me to be down eight and see what we're all about in that moment.

Really proud of our guys for that.

Q. Isaiah Evans has performed really well in this building multiple times. Obviously this is his home. From your perspective, why does he thrive when he comes to this place?

JON SCHEYER: Yeah, well, look, he's hit big shots in every building we've played in. But I do think there's a different look in his eye when he's here, there's no question.

When we go to Chicago, he always gives me -- he tries to tell me it's not that great of a city. I love Charlotte, by the way. But to him I try to tell him it's not that great of a city, just to get his juices flowing. No, we love Charlotte. It's been great to us, and hopefully we can keep that going tomorrow.

Q. Coach Kara Lawson about a month ago told me we are not allowed to determine the length of our adversity. Given all the adversity you've been through the last several days, being down two starters, what have you learned about yourself as a coach to get this group ready for March Madness?

JON SCHEYER: Well, just like I told our guys being down in the second half, I think this is what leadership is all about. It's what coaching is all about.

Look, we've had four years in a row and we've had some type of injury in the tournament. Do I wish it wasn't the case? Of course. But other teams have that, too. It's part of the game, unfortunately.

Nobody has put their head down. I'm not going to allow any of our guys to do that. Again, I thought tonight we did a great job of weathering the storm. All the free throws we missed in the first half, I thought we missed -- Cam especially missed some uncharacteristic lay-ups he normally makes.

And to be able to just hang tough, keep going, find a way, I do think I'm good at that. I do think I'm good at that, and our players definitely are, too.

Q. The zone that Florida State threw out there seemed to take you a little bit out of sync on offense. What did you learn from that -- because you may see it again in the next tournament coming up, what did you learn tonight that you think will help you with that?

JON SCHEYER: Well, one, a lot of the time when we went zone, we had a lineup where I didn't have us as comfortable as I should have with the positioning without Cayden in the game. Then give them credit; it's a little bit different than what NC State played against us. We attacked that great.

But I thought they did an incredible job of just switching it up, just where we couldn't quite get comfortable. I'm pissed at myself the last two minutes. I've got to help our guys to manufacture a better shot. We got really stagnant, stood way too much, and that's something we're going to definitely work on and expect to see going forward.

We've done a great job against zone, but we didn't handle it as well tonight.

Q. Maliq had the two steals early in that run that really keyed things. They were off passes from McCray. Was that something off the scout, his instincts, being aggressive? What did you see?

JON SCHEYER: Well, I think McCray, he can make you be on your heels very quickly. And for us, I thought in the first half, that's how we were. In the second half we just wanted to just ramp up our disruptiveness, our activity. It's where Maliq and Dame are at their best. We got a little bit more aggressive in pick-and-roll coverage. And he's a great player. He has had turnovers at times, and that's something we've been good at, just using our length and being disruptive.

But he made us pay way more than -- we got him twice or whatever in that moment, but he made us pay way more than we got him.

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