

Atlantic Coast Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Friday, March 13, 2026

Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

Spectrum Center

Virginia Cavaliers

Coach Ryan Odom

Chance Mallory

Malik Thomas

Postgame Press Conference



Virginia 84, Miami 62

RYAN ODOM: Obviously it was a great game for Virginia. I thought our guys did an awesome job throughout the game. It was obviously really physical and hard-fought. Last time we played these guys, they beat us up on the glass. They scored it well. It was really hard for us defensively in that game. Couldn't really get into our press as much as we wanted to.

Both teams did score. This game was a little bit different, especially the first 10 minutes. Really tight back and forth, and both teams were playing well.

I thought our guys did a really nice job midway through the first half of really just turning up the defense and Ugo was a big part of that. Our guards did a nice job at the point of the screen. We were switching effectively and coming up with some key rebounds so we could get out and get the game going a little bit.

The end of the half obviously was key to the game. Chance makes a huge play in the three. But even going back before that, the stops and scores that we had at the end of the half set us up in a good position.

I thought our guys just played an excellent second half in a workmanlike fashion, a very mature second half. They of course got in foul trouble early in the game. We're having to monitor that and go back and forth, and that can make things a little bit disjointed.

They have a really good basketball team, and they're going to do well in the NCAA Tournament, no doubt.

Q. For both of the players, Ugo had another great game on defense; how much does his presence in the paint affect what you guys are able to do on the defensive end?

CHANCE MALLORY: He's a great player, great shot blocker, so it allows us to get into the ball a little bit more freely and play more loosely because we know we have him to protect us on the backside. He's a great shot blocker and played great again today.

MALIK THOMAS: Ugo did a great job offensively as well, being very efficient, only missing one shot. Had a big three and the dump offs were big and huge. Everybody knows what he can do on the defensive end and he continues to prove that night in and night out.

Q. Chance, you hit that three right before the end of the first half to send your team into halftime. How do you think that kind of motivated and amped you, and how do you think that amped up the rest of the team as well?

CHANCE MALLORY: In our minds it was just a regular shot. It obviously had a little bit more implications being at the end of the half. We knew at the start of the half we had to punch first and take care of business and play how we were playing the whole rest of the game, and that's what we did.

Q. For both of you guys, Chance, you talked about your three before the half. That kind of set the tone. Then Malik, they cut the lead down to 11 in the second half. You had a big three, a two-handed dunk. Talk about punching back after they respond?

MALIK THOMAS: Yeah, it's important to respond when they have their runs because they're a good team that is capable of having their runs. So answering back was huge. Shout out to Thijs for that outlet pass and touch pass to me for the three. It was big, and yeah, good momentum swing.



CHANCE MALLORY: Yeah, like he said, just responding to their punches, I felt like we did that very well in this game. They went on their little runs, but we didn't fold, we just kept punching back and got our lead back. I felt like those big shots by Malik and everybody else on the team helped us a lot during this game.

Q. How excited are you to celebrate with your teammates but also knowing you have a game tomorrow?

MALIK THOMAS: We know it was a big win for us. Barely winning at our house, we knew we had to respond. I felt like they got a lot of 50/50 balls back in Charlottesville, and we wanted to come out hungry and get this dub. But we're going to celebrate it for a little bit and then get right back to business, make sure we recover. Two back-to-back games, another back-to-back tomorrow. Got to take care of our bodies, hone in on the details with this film, and coaches do a great job of preparing us for the next game, and we're ready.

Q. The two of you guys, this is only Virginia's 11th time making the ACC Tournament final and Ryan Odom's first year. Talk about what that means for this team's legacy?

CHANCE MALLORY: I mean, I would say it means a lot. Me growing up in Charlottesville, I've only seen very few ACC championships, so to be able to play in one is like a dream come true. And then obviously Coach Odom's history, he's been to a couple. It's just a full-circle moment. It's a great memory, and I'm just blessed to be part of it.

MALIK THOMAS: Just to touch up on that, the coaches did a great job of connecting us with the place when we first got there in June. They made a book for us to read, a great book called Legacy, and just knowing what it takes to leave the jersey better than what you found it. It's a great opportunity for us ahead and to compete for an ACC championship.

Q. Coach, this is the first time that Virginia has appeared in the ACC championship since 2023. They're looking for their first win since 2018. What needs to be touched on? What needs to have a few extra drills before heading to the game tomorrow?

RYAN ODOM: Yeah, I think we just have to do what we do. The moment can't be too big for us. We're just going to prepare for the next game, whoever we play, and get ready just like we did today. There's no reason to change anything at this point. We're however many games into the season and these guys know how we do things, and there's a process, and we've just got to stick with that.

Q. You may be the only head coach in the league that has used the same nine guys essentially from November until now, got help from all nine against State, almost everybody again. What kind of advantage do you think that gives you in general, and is it an even bigger advantage when you're going back to back to back?

RYAN ODOM: It may be. I think when we put the roster together that we were certainly intentional with that. In order to press the way that we press, you have to have bodies and you have to have good players that are willing to do that. They exhaust themselves.

You could look at the numbers. We don't have guys playing 30 minutes on a regular basis. There are some that are 26, 27. Because it's hard to do that, to press and play with that to exhaustion.

But for us, we've had Johann go down -- he was a warrior today. Probably shouldn't have even played in the game. He hurt his wrist pretty badly yesterday and we weren't sure that he was going to play. He couldn't shoot, couldn't do anything. Ended up giving it up for his team.

We anticipate another day. There's nothing structurally wrong with it, another day he's going to be ready to go. But depth has been the key to this team, to answer your question. It's not about one guy, it's about the totality of our roster. We've certainly gotten beat on some nights, but most nights these guys take up for one another.

Q. Coach, you doubled on Malik Reneau again today same as you did last game against Miami. Can you talk about that defensive strategy, running that back, what you carried over from last game, holding them to eight points, three turnovers?

RYAN ODOM: Yeah, he's just a really good player, and if you leave him alone one-on-one, he'll do damage. We felt like we needed to double him. If we needed to take it off, we could take it off at times, but we wanted to just stick with it. And I thought our guys did a nice job, shy a couple possessions at the beginning of the game, of being ready for their attack against it.

But the key was just getting it out of his hands.

Q. A little bit of a big picture question, but as you reach this point in the season and look back, you took over a program that has such a deep-rooted identity in the way it played. And obviously you guys played differently than Virginia played before. When you reach this point, ACC championship game, is there

sort of a validation in the way you've changed everything about the program?

RYAN ODOM: Yeah, I don't really view it that way. I think my job is just to do the best that I can for Virginia. That's what we tried to instill in these players. We're a part of the history. That's the way we view it. We're just the current stewards of it.

There's a lot of different ways to win basketball games. Nobody did it better than Tony Bennett, the most humble National Championship coach to ever do it. I'm just honored to be the one chosen to follow a guy like that.

I want to do my best for UVA and these players. You can see it, they love the place, and they want to do their best for UVA.

We have a tremendous group of guys, like, a tremendous group of guys. I'm just really proud of the way that they've approached being together, most importantly. Because they're going to remember that more than they're going to remember any championship or any game that they won. They're going to remember their time together, without a doubt. These guys will be friends for a long time.

Q. Miami went 4 for 20 from beyond the arc. What did you like about your team's defense of their three-point looks?

RYAN ODOM: Yeah, Miami has proven over the course of the season that they like to get to the rim, and we wanted to do our best to limit that. They're amazing from two. They shoot the ball well from three, they're just not high volume. We wanted to make sure we limited the fouls, we limited their ability to get to the rim and tried to make it as hard as we could.

I think we were successful for the most part in that. And then the real game begins, can you clean it up with a rebound. Our guys did a nice job overall on both sides. We encouraged them to crash on offense, we got some offensive rebounds to get our offense going in the first half, and then defensively the guys did a nice job.

Q. Quick turnarounds are the nature of these tournaments. It's a little bit unusual in that I believe Clemson is the only team you had not played in the regular season, and Duke, although you had one game, they're missing two very important players. How does that complicate your preparation for whatever is next?

RYAN ODOM: Not much because when you play in a conference with 18 teams, you're playing them one time

anyway. We only have the two crossover games. So both teams are used to these preps. We played Wake Forest in March for the first time. It's not much different. We're only two weeks later at the beginning of March.

For us, it's not going to be -- and for them it's not going to be a problem, I don't think.

Q. A couple games that you had 10-plus point leads come down to two-possession games. How does it feel to come out and really grab one and run away with it, and what kind of adjustments went into that?

RYAN ODOM: It's hard to beat good teams. I think when you're in your own conference and you're playing a team like Miami who has a body of work that's stellar, you're not just going to blow people out. There are good players on every bench, and obviously on the court. And today was our day. I think that's really what I would make of it.

I'm not sure who asked the question, but I thought our guys did a nice job tonight of answering the runs. But we've done that in other games, too, where we stopped runs where all of a sudden it was 17 to tied. That's not easy to do, either.

These guys just show a poise that you need to win basketball games.

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