

# Atlantic Coast Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Saturday, March 14, 2026  
Charlotte, North Carolina, USA  
Spectrum Center

## Clemson Tigers Coach Brad Brownell RJ Godfrey Dillon Hunter

Postgame Press Conference

Duke 73, Clemson 61

BRAD BROWNELL: Congrats to Duke, Jon and his staff and team. They played very well today. Obviously they've had an outstanding year. Tough to beat.

We didn't have our best in the first half. I told my team some of that is on me. I don't think that we had the best plan in place initially and didn't do enough to help them in the first half. I thought we regrouped at halftime and played better, but Duke is very good. Obviously their defense, we've played them twice, and it's been hard for us to score against them.

We've done a decent job defensively but not good enough offense to help us. There's just too much pressure on us. Obviously the Boozer brothers hurt us today.

**Q. How much do you feel like fatigue played a role in this game, if at all?**

RJ GODFREY: I don't think it played a role at all. I think we took some bad ones in the first half early, and they took advantage of that. But I think the team came out with pretty good energy. I don't think any of the guys were tired.

**Q. You guys went I think the last 7:44 of the first half without a field goal. What specifically did Duke do to take you out of your rhythm and make it so hard to score?**

BRAD BROWNELL: RJ was on the bench a lot, which is probably bad coaching.



DILLON HUNTER: They're a long defensive team so they start switching 1 through 5 just being in the gaps and that kind of affected us a little bit. We weren't able to get the ball inside, get it to RJ and Nick so it kind of affected our offense.

**Q. Your team limited Isaiah Evans to 1 of 9 from the field and 0 for 7 from field. What did you like about your team's defense of him?**

RJ GODFREY: We just had a good game plan on him. Last time he hurt us when we played at Cameron, and he had an awesome game last night, so we keyed in on him. We have one of the best staffs in the country and they made us aware of his impact.

DILLON HUNTER: We came in with the game plan just making sure we were guarding him around screens, not letting him get easy looks. Tried to shut him down on the offensive end and it worked for us.

**Q. You guys got into foul trouble, the bigs. How much did you miss Carter Welling tonight and what he brings to you guys defensively?**

RJ GODFREY: Yeah, he's a really good player. He does it on both ends. He's super athletic, probably the most athletic guy on our team and not having somebody who is our leading rebounder and shot blocker is hard. It's tough. It's more pressure on us to make smarter plays. I could have made some smarter plays in the first half, not reaching and not just dumb fouls off the ball. But it definitely puts more pressure on us.

**Q. RJ, Coach loves to refer to you as an energy giver. What will you say to the team to give them energy, come back from a tough loss for the NCAA Tournament?**

RJ GODFREY: We have a lot of basketball to play. Obviously we're going to have another chance next week. Coach Brownell just said in here, we should be thankful for this weekend. We had two really good games prior to this, really good game against Wake Forest, and played

amazing yesterday against North Carolina. So I think having gratitude and just being thankful for the moment that we had.

**Q. Dillon, you talked about the goals you had entering this tournament. Where do you feel like you're at heading into March Madness and do you feel like you accomplished what you wanted to?**

DILLON HUNTER: Yeah, as a team I feel like we rallied back, being able to come in here, get two good wins. Didn't accomplish what we wanted to, but using this momentum. And going into Selection Sunday, just staying positive, going back, knowing we have to work and knowing what we have to do to win these games. We feel good as a team. We know we're going to come out with a win next time, but just staying together.

**Q. Coach, you said you didn't have the best plan for the first half. What specifically was that game plan --**

BRAD BROWNELL: Yeah, I'm not going to get into game plan stuff, but I need to do a better job of helping my players. When we don't play well, it starts with me. I didn't do a good enough job on either end of the floor. I won't sleep very well tonight because of it.

**Q. Coach, can you talk a little bit more about what Duke specifically was doing defensively to you?**

BRAD BROWNELL: Well, I think some of it's just we didn't have RJ on the floor as much as we need. Obviously the biggest challenge for us a little bit is we have to play differently to some degree without playing the two bigs together, and we have three bigs that we've used all year.

And when those guys all play together, we play mostly one way. And then now it's hard to play Nick and RJ together that much because you know with Boozer you're probably going to get some fouls, so now you're managing all of that.

Some of it is just us having to change what we're doing. Some of it is the first time we played them we had everybody and it didn't go well.

It's hard to make adjustments in a -- we didn't get to the hotel until after 1:00 and now you're trying to figure out how to score against Duke in 24 hours. We've been trying to figure out how to score against Wake and Carolina. It's challenging. They're unbelievable defensively. They've got great length. They've got great closing speed.

Maliq Brown, Defensive Player of the Year, Boozer really smart. They're very well schooled and coached, and we're

just not quite as dynamic to be able to do enough sometimes to affect that right now. I've got to help our team more.

**Q. Coach, what's your overall satisfaction level with winning a couple games? I know tonight didn't go the way you wanted, but the satisfaction level with the team's performance in the tournament?**

BRAD BROWNELL: I'm proud of my team. I'm proud of them not just for the two games this week. I'm proud of them for the season we've had. A lot of people did not think we were going to be very good, and those two guys right here were a big reason why we turned this thing into a really good year.

I'm proud of the way we responded. We had a couple weeks where it didn't go very well and backs were a little bit against the wall, and we responded with a good win against Louisville and finished the season and then came to this tournament with a lot of confidence. We played great the first two days. Just didn't have as good a performance today against a really good team.

**Q. You've had a lot of firsts in your career at Clemson. Winning at Chapel Hill, Elite 8, last year 18 wins. This is one hump you haven't gotten over yet. Is it a source of frustration or is it just kind of motivation that every time you get another shot at it?**

BRAD BROWNELL: All of it, yeah. I've lost in the semifinals I don't know how many times, four times, five times. Four times maybe. I think we've made it three of the last four years, I think. So I know at least four, maybe five.

But we've always gotten beat by a really good team. Tony's teams beat me a couple times, obviously Duke tonight, North Carolina beat me my first year, I think Harrison Barnes had 40.

Obviously I want to win an ACC Tournament, and we haven't been able to do that. Certainly it's a point of frustration. But it's a heck of a challenge, too. There's 18 teams trying to do it.

We'll keep grinding away and get back at it next year.

**Q. Coach, what did you see from RJ on the offensive end tonight, and how he was able to get it going?**

BRAD BROWNELL: Yeah, I thought he was good. I'm so proud of him. He's an improved player. What a young man. How about his answer on humility. He's just special.

It's a privilege to coach these guys. I hate it because they're hurting. Because these two guys wanted to be in the final two, and we're not going to get that opportunity. But we're going to celebrate Sunday. I know that. We're not on any bubble. We've had a hell of a year, and we're going to have one hell of a fun Sunday.

**Q. You said you're going to have a fun Sunday off the bubble. Just what this entire season has shown you and this specific group and then maybe an overall look and your sense of the ACC.**

BRAD BROWNELL: You know, it reminds you that team can be sum of greater parts. This is a true team. We've had the motto, everybody all the time, and it's kind of taken that for us. We've talked about it in June and July. We didn't think we had anybody that was maybe going to be an all-conference player.

But we have a lot of good players, and we have competitive guys and we have guys that are coachable and we have guys that care and we have guys that have tremendous character and care about each other, and we've built that.

In this climate right now, this is still possible. The value that you get by having those kinds of kids can surprise some people in terms of success on the court. It doesn't surprise me because it's what we've always tried to do at Clemson.

It just reminds us all even though there's a lot of things we don't like about what's going on in college athletics, you can still do things the right way and be successful.

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