

# Atlantic Coast Conference Men's Basketball Championship

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

## Duke Blue Devils Coach Jon Scheyer Nikolas Khamenia Postgame Press Conference



Duke 73, Clemson 61

JON SCHEYER: Really proud of our team. The ability to respond to a tough game yesterday and to totally play a different style. Clemson for me has always been -- you know what kind of game you're going to get with a Coach Brownell coached team. Physical, really understand their roles and what they're doing. They're adjusting a little bit like we are with Welling being out. He's a terrific player and I'm sure they'll make some adjustments before the tournament.

But I thought for us to gain control, our defense was terrific. I thought it was a great response. And Nik, man, what a job he did coming off the bench. Gave us energy, offense, defense. He did everything for us.

But great collective effort, and now we've got to go get some rest and get ready for one more.

**Q. Nik, you've had a lot of big important moments in big-time games this year, so how cool did it feel to come out here in the ACC Tournament and do it on this stage and really impact the team like that?**

NIKOLAS KHAMENIA: Yeah, it's big for me. I grew up dreaming about names like this. With CFos and Pat out, those are my brothers. They've been big for us all year so I have to come in the game and have their back. And that's all I tried to do today, just make winning plays.

**Q. Nik, obviously the defense was much improved tonight. I'm not asking you to give away the secrets, but what did you think you did better tonight? What were the last 24 hours like trying to get that going?**

NIKOLAS KHAMENIA: We talked yesterday about our edge when we went on that run against Florida State, so that was a big thing for us coming into today's game. We talked about getting kills and getting consecutive stops. So we thought it was kind of our mindset, just taking pride on the defensive end.

**Q. A much more dominant performance than last night. Much more like what we're accustomed to see from this team. What was different about today?**

JON SCHEYER: Well, you know, I wish every game you could get a double-digit lead and control the game, but unfortunately, that's not how it always goes in March. I just think naturally you're going to have some games where you can't get separation and do that and you have to find a way.

Different styles, different types of teams, but at the end of the day, I think what also helped us from day one to day two is even for me just helping our guys with rotations and what we're doing. I thought we were in a much better flow, and I didn't feel that's something I did a great job of yesterday. I thought that helped us, as well, just the experience of working through the rotation.

**Q. Earlier you talked about the adjustments that you've had to make because of the depleted lineup. How has that evolved over these past two games, especially defensively?**

JON SCHEYER: Yeah, well, it's hard to say. Both games Maliq got two fouls in the first half, which isn't ideal. But we have a special guy in Cam Boozer, man, that can play and defend anywhere. So it allows you to put different guys on the floor.

I think about Cam's versatility, you think about Nik's versatility, Dame's versatility, even Isaiah at his size, it allows us just to cover really for foul trouble in different spots.

But the minutes were better tonight, which is how I would expect with seven guys in double figures and finding just



the quick burst in terms of subs for guys. So that worked out better tonight.

**Q. You have an entire smooth operation that seems to be clicking all around at this time of the year. But I want you to talk about the row behind your bench, those five or six guys that work behind the scenes. How important are they to your winning culture?**

JON SCHEYER: They're huge. They're somewhat behind the scenes, right, but one, it's our senior managers who are -- you talk about a smooth operation, our managers, everything they do, they make it a smooth operation.

We actually have a couple managers that are very involved in scouting, very involved in prep. Even in-game with lineups for the other team, and then you have Mike Schrage there with his experience and Trevor Marcus. Those guys did a great job with the challenge today and they've done a great job all year helping me with that.

I love just the coordination that's helping with our assistants, our coaches, and then those guys behind the bench. They do a great job.

**Q. I know it's hard to think back to the Virginia game when you're fresh off this one, but you guys hit a ton of threes early. And Caleb Foster even though he didn't score a ton was really involved in facilitating some of those looks. What was the approach to getting those kind of shots against Virginia, and is there a way to get that without Caleb on the floor?**

JON SCHEYER: Well, generally when you're in the tournament, like that game, what just happened two weeks ago or how many days ago did that happen? Yeah, whatever it is, it feels like a million years ago in some respects. I'll rewatch the game tonight. You're seeing what they did earlier. They have big time firepower. I just think they're so connected, and Coach Odom has done an incredible job with his team.

We'll regroup tonight, and I could give you a better answer tomorrow, but it's hard to say after not watching and playing tonight.

**Q. Cam and Cayden accounted for 40 of your 73 points tonight. Just what you saw from them overall tonight, and then a greater look at the season, what the Boozer brothers have done for you?**

JON SCHEYER: Well, they're winners in every way. I think what makes them winners is who they are every day as people, how they operate in practice. Cam, he's done this three straight games. He's had a 20-point

double-double. He's terrific with what he's done.

I'm really proud of Cayden, though, because Cayden yesterday was a different kind of game, and to bounce back with the confidence, the control over the game, I just thought he made big plays. He's grown so much. Those guys have been terrific for us.

**Q. There was a lot of focus on Cayden after yesterday's game. What did you do in the 20 hours, 24 hours to coach him to perform like he did today?**

JON SCHEYER: Just talked to him today. He's been a big-time player his whole life, and credit Florida State for doing something different. I've coached really, really good players where they have different scouting. They try to not guard. They can do different things, and it can knock you back at first.

But what he did in game yesterday to come back, he had a big three-point play, he hit our last basket, the offensive rebound. Today I just loved his assertiveness right away.

I just want to tell him just how much I believe in him. And to handle different things that are thrown your way as a freshman, you haven't seen everything. I just want to help prepare him for what other teams can do. But his toughness, his mental toughness is not something you can teach. He had that on his own.

**Q. Maliq picks up his second foul with about 10 minutes left in the first half, it's 15-14, you go to more of a two-wing lineup and you go on a 26-8 run. What did you see from Dame and Darren and Isaiah during that stretch there?**

JON SCHEYER: Well, I thought the run started, Darren had an offensive rebound, he knocked it out, we scored. He came right back and hit a three. That was the first time we had separation. I thought Darren was huge in that moment.

Then those guys just collectively I thought really good decisions on offense, really consistent on the defensive end. I think there was a stretch there, they only had a made field goal or two in about a nine-minute stretch, and they scored off of fouling. We could have done a better job with that.

But the consistency on defense was big time, and I think what we found also is you have more versatility, as well, with the size and length on the floor to switch when we need to.

**Q. When you guys go on that run you've got Cam and**



**Nik in the front court, you mentioned the lineups. What did you like about that front court pairing and do you expect to use that more? We're talking about all this in the vacuum of Pat. How is his rehab coming?**

JON SCHEYER: You know, our spacing is different when we have that lineup. I think that's something we haven't done as much, but it's also worked really well. The floor is more open. Those guys, Nik and Cam, they're just such good decision makers, too, which helps.

As far as Pat goes, Pat is working his butt off every day. He took another really good step with our medical team today, so he's trending in a great direction from where he's going, which is exciting. For me, very exciting.

**Q. Coach, your team limited Ace Buckner to 2 for 10 from the field. What did you like about your team's defense of him?**

JON SCHEYER: I just thought the consistency of arriving on the catch, keeping him in front. He's very shifty. He can really create his own shot. You have to sustain your stance against him. So I thought that just the discipline we had was really good, and probably looking back, he probably missed a couple shots, too, that he normally makes.

But I thought the defense was very consistent with him.

**Q. Jon, you know that Ryan Odom is going to play nine players tomorrow night. How concerned are you about depth and fatigue. Given that you're going to be in the late game tonight, you won't get back to your rooms until after 1:00 a.m. and you've got a relatively early start tomorrow?**

JON SCHEYER: Are you asking me if the 1 seed did not -- I'm just kidding. No excuses from us. That's part of the strength of their team is their depth. I think the way we can sub and with our rotations, we'll be fresh ready to go.

It's a blessing to be playing for a championship. So fatigue is not going to be a factor in this. It's a blessing. We're grateful to be in this position where it's hard to sleep, you're not going to get much sleep tonight. It's probably going to be -- what is it, probably going to be 2:00, 3:00 in the morning by the time these guys actually get to bed. We'll focus on just letting them get great recovery tonight, and knowing these guys, we'll be ready to go tomorrow at 8:30.

**Q. I just wanted to ask about Isaiah. He didn't have the offensive night you would have wanted after last night but he had 10 rebounds. How does that speak to his development from last year to this year?**

JON SCHEYER: Glad you asked about him. I think it's incredible growth by Isaiah. I've tried to explain to him there's a thing called gravity. When he's on the floor and he's coming off screens, he's spaced. Defenses are aware where he's at, especially when you're coming off a 30 plus game. So I thought he just missed some shots he's capable of making.

But for the most part I thought he was incredibly patient, disciplined, and then he threw his energy into what we call the 98 percent, all the areas that are without the ball. So the fact he had 10 rebounds and only making one shot and impacting winning as much as he did, I'm just really proud of him and his growth.

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