

Atlantic Coast Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Sunday, March 8, 2026

Duluth, Georgia, USA

Gas South Arena

Louisville Cardinals

Jeff Walz

Mackeny Randolph

Postgame Press Conference

Duke - 70, Louisville - 65

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with an opening statement from Coach and then take questions.

JEFF WALZ: No, I first just want to thank everyone here at the arena. I thought it was a first-class run event. Everybody was amazing. Just really appreciated the way they handled things. It was great.

And then I've got to just tip my hat. You've got to give respect to what Delaney Thomas did. She won the game for 'em. I told Kara -- I told her after the game, no question, MVP of that game. I don't care -- well, she ended up scoring 19. It wouldn't have mattered. She got every offensive rebound that they had to have in order for them to win. Every defense for them we had to get, we didn't get. But then it's my fault too. I told the kids, I should have called a timeout before the 10-second violation.

But, I mean, God forbid we're just trying to rip it and go because they were going to foul us, and then all of a sudden we stopped. And it's one of those where it's like, shoot, we're not really doing this, and we did. So that's my fault. I take responsibility when it's something that I should have done.

It wasn't under a minute when we got the rebound, so we weren't going to be able to advance the ball, and the last thing I wanted to do was to allow 'em to set up in a press. So that's where I was, like, just get it across and attack 'em and then let's see what they have to do. Then if we get it across, there's going to be -- even if we ran the shot clock out, there's about 42 seconds left, you're up four.

But, you know, we executed, they take a one-point lead,



then we come back, we execute an out-of-bounds play, we take a one-point lead, and then we can't get a rebound again. Then we got to rebound there at the end of the game with 24 seconds and it gets ripped out of our hands.

The urgency you have to play with, it's pretty elite, and unfortunately we -- (audio cut out) -- because you're going to play everybody good, and if you don't come prepared to play with a mentality to compete and play hard, it's not fun. And that's what took place today.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. I know you spoke to ESPN before the game and said rebounding was one of your keys to success today. Earlier in the game you were controlling the boards. Did something change during the game that you saw out of your team that caused Duke to start controlling the boards?

JEFF WALZ: Their effort was elite. Mair went flying in there. Thomas did a great job. And they came up with the big ones. That's the killer. They came up with the big ones when it mattered. And it's just urgency.

And then I talked about it to our team. Their guards did a really nice job of getting downhill past ours. So then our post has to step over to help. Well, then when the shot goes up and they miss, I got to have a guard slide in and box out the post that came over to help, and we didn't have the rotation. We stood beside 'em. And we're not going to out-jump 'em. And then that's where Thomas really cleaned things up.

Q. When you look at just kind of what this performance was for you, how close this team gets, how do you take that, appreciate it for what it is, and then be able to use the remainder as motivation going into the tournament?

MACKENLY RANDOLPH: I mean, it was a great game. Kudos to Duke. Congratulations. But we just got to play harder. Of course I want to have a good game, but it's about what the team does, and like Coach said, we had to

ASAP sports . . . when all is said, we're done.®

come up with those rebounds at the end. If we win by one, lose by one, it doesn't matter. So it doesn't matter what I do. It just really matters about the win or the loss.

Q. Earlier in the week you talked about wanting more national headlines for Louisville, and I know today didn't turn out the way that you wanted to, but if you could write the headline for Louisville and the ACC what would it say?

JEFF WALZ: Well, I think it's for all of our teams in this league. I mean, we're good. We're all good. I mean, as I've said from day one, what hurts women's basketball -- and I've said this for 20 years, so it's not like we lost, it's bad, we've been to Final Fours, we've played for national a National Championship. I think we're lazy in women's basketball. When we start the year with a narrative, we stick with it. It doesn't matter. We're not going to do -- if somebody comes along that we didn't think was going to really be good, we don't put any extra work in because, first off, it costs money.

We're just going to put in what we've done, and then we beat that dead horse. I mean, we will absolutely beat the heck out of it. But we will never cover -- and it's not just us. I'm talking nationally. There have been some really -- Iowa has done some amazing things with the way they have played this year. You barely hear about 'em. And it's sad.

But that's women's basketball. We pick with the ones we want to pick with and we stick with it. And that's why our game is where it is. We're growing, but not the way I think we could. But you also have to put the resources into it with ESPN and the other networks and go, Hey, I know at media day we didn't think Mackenly Randolph was going to be any damn good, but, wow, she turned out to be good. So we're going to go to Louisville and actually do a feature story on her. God forbid if they would try to look at other players around the country that have really stepped their game up. We just don't do it.

On the men's side I see it all the time. So it's not just us, it's nationally. And again, I've won a lot, I've lost some, okay? I've complained, win, lose, or draw, when it comes to national media how we do things. Because I do think our game could grow. Like, it's amazing, I listen to 'em and it's like, we talk about the same people. It's like, man, let the country know about Taina Mair. I think the kid's one of the best point guards in the country. You barely hear about her. But that's because ESPN doesn't want to. It's a little too much extra work possibly to cover that kid. Look what she's done all year. It's not like just our game. I mean, she had 12 boards tonight from the point guard spot. But that's what she's been doing all year. And that's

the one thing I wish we could get better at, yes. I don't have enough time to keep going. I would love to.

Q. You talked about close loss margins throughout the season, and then this was a game tonight, high effort, fought to the end, but what do you think now that we're approaching win-or-go-home season it's going to take to close out these games?

JEFF WALZ: You got to rebound. Rebounding and free throw shooting. I told the kids that before we came in here. You want to win in March, you got to be able to make free throws and rebound the basketball. And unfortunately, we didn't do that. In crunch time. We did it for 36 minutes. But the last minute, when it mattered, man, we had to get 'em and we just didn't. I'm not saying we're not trying, but it's just a matter of the urgency of understanding that everybody's got to box out. I'm watching Mac down there, I mean, she's competing. So then I need someone else to come in and clean up when our posts are down there battling so hard.

Q. Maybe this is the antidote for some of the laziness over the last couple years. Obviously this program hasn't been to the standard that you built for it being --

JEFF WALZ: We've actually really sucked, I know. I've been trying to get fired. My SWA is back there, and I think if you'll start a GoFundMe I think she will accept it, and I'll take a buyout.

Q. I'm sure Kelly Graves in Eugene said the same at some point.

JEFF WALZ: We got beat in the first -- we've been to the tournament every year, and won 20 games for 16 or something straight. So that's the narrative. And that's what we do in this business. So we've been to the tournament every single year, got beat in the first round two years ago, a second-round loss, and then five straight Elite Eights before that. So now where are you going with this question because you're comparing us to Oregon?

Q. No not at all.

JEFF WALZ: You just said --

Q. Sure, but --

JEFF WALZ: Okay.

Q. You got to let me finish the question.

JEFF WALZ: Are you talking about a losing record?

Q. Let me finish the question, if we're going to do a back and forth.

JEFF WALZ: Well, let's be accurate.

Q. Well, I'm going to set you up for something that's going to be a good question, just let me get there. The question I had for you is, how have you managed to take those two years of fans or people that might not know otherwise or people in the media who might not know otherwise and stay the course, build things into where you're right back here in a championship game, has there been anything that's been different over the last --

JEFF WALZ: No, because I can't help ignorance.

Q. Okay.

JEFF WALZ: That's, if you're ignorant and you don't know anything about the sport or the game, you're going to be ignorant. You can't help it. It's why you don't argue with stupid because you'll eventually lose, okay, because they will wear you down. So you don't.

You know, yes, our expectations are extremely high, there's no question about it. But our last two years if somebody's going to say we had a bad year? I would be like, what the hell are you looking at? Because we're ignorant. Like, we got beat in the first round one year. We got upset, our second-round loss last year was a great game at TCU. And then, I mean, that's it. So I think in the 19 years now -- our COVID year we didn't have a tournament. Our third year we didn't go to the tournament. We've gone to the Sweet 16 I think 12 times in like 15 years. But you don't hear about that. And you never even heard about it when we were going to five straight Elite Eights. Because it's got, you got to be the one that they're focusing on. And there are a lot of teams out there. But that's where, if you want to grow this game, we got to do homework. We got to educate. There's no question about it. Kelly Graves? He's a friend of mine, but lord, come on (laughing).

Q. We talked at the games about the jumps that E, Mac, and obviously Imari have made. What are some of the things you're going to work on with them in the next two weeks to get 'em ready for the next big stage, which sounds cliché, I guess --

JEFF WALZ: Well, we got to get everybody healthy. We got to get E healthy. Mac's foot's been bothering her, I got to get her healthy. We got to take some time off to just make sure everybody is a hundred percent. And then we'll get back to work. And then it's really just cleaning things

up. It's execution. Rebounding the ball. We will do plenty of rebounding drills the next search days, I can guarantee you that. But I mean, yeah, it's what it came down to. And then we couldn't get to the free-throw line because we weren't aggressive enough. I mean, I thought the officiating was fine and I've said it all along, I love the officiating this time of year. It is way better than during the regular season, because you have to play strong, you have to be physical. You have to come off the ball screen and expect to have some contact. Where in the regular season, if you blow on 'em, it's a foul. So I wish we would officiate like this all year long, because I think it's better for the game. So you make sure you write that I said I thought the officiating was good, okay? Thank you. I would do like bold headlines on that.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports