

Atlantic Coast Conference

Operation Basketball

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Amile Jefferson

Matt Jones

Duke Blue Devils

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with Amile Jefferson. Questions for Amile.

Q. Just what you can say about having this opportunity to stand here and have another season, and just what you've learned through adversity of injuries that you've had recently?

AMILE JEFFERSON: Definitely, yeah. I think I'm truly blessed to be here with this group. It was a blessing in disguise to be injured and to miss the season. But now being able to be back and be one of three captains with me, Matt and Grayson, and to lead our group this year is something I'm really honored and privileged to be a part of.

So adversity happens, it's how we bounce back from it. Really grateful to be able to be playing again with this group and to do something special with the group of guys we have.

Q. Talk about your recovery process. And also now as a leader and this being your last season, what do you want your legacy at Duke to be?

AMILE JEFFERSON: Definitely. First question on recovery, I was at Duke all summer, so I got to really take my time. My body's at 100% now. Now being back, being a leader for our group is something that me, Matt and Grayson really cherish. We don't take it lightly. One of our mottos for our group is "earn everything." Me, Matt and Grayson are the catalysts to instill that in our young guys. We want to do something truly special. We want to leave Duke after this year knowing that we gave it our all and knowing that we really lived in our moment with the group we have.

Q. Coach has described you as the best communicator on the team. What does that mean to you? Is that something that you actively work to get better at or is that just you?

AMILE JEFFERSON: Yeah, being vocal is something that I think our team really needs. It's going to be a key aspect to our group communicating, because we're going to be able to do so many different things on the court. I feel like we have ten guys that will really be in the game at any different time. So being able to be

vocal and communicate is going to be a very important aspect for our group.

So it starts with guys like me, Matt and Grayson being vocal, making sure guys know the sets we're in, making sure guys are in constant communications, calling out our commands. It's something we all have to take pride in. So being vocal is one of many things we have to do to be a good team.

Q. You and Matt were obviously decorated high school players. How do you evolve into where you guys were glue guys on the team, and accept that role and embrace everything it entails?

AMILE JEFFERSON: I think it's about being confident. Really, truly being confident in your skin as a player and understanding your value to the team. We have so many different guys, different players, different talents on the team. Everyone has to accept their role. And for us to be really good and for us to reach our true potential, it's about understanding your role, and understanding the things you can do to make our team better. I think once we get to a point where everyone is buying in and understanding that we're playing for something bigger than ourselves, then that's when we're truly good. And guys like me, Matt, Grayson understand that, get that, and understand what it takes for our team to win.

Q. I know your rivalry is with North Carolina, but over the last couple years Syracuse and Duke have played some pretty important games. What's that rivalry like, and how hard is it to face that 2-3 zone?

AMILE JEFFERSON: Syracuse is always a really good team. They have an amazing coach in Coach Boeheim and an amazing program. In going up there, playing in front of all those fans is always challenging. When they come to Cameron, they're always good games. I think they're two really touted and historic programs, so playing against them is always not only fun but competitive.

Q. So a big part of your 2015 National Championship was Tyus Jones and the leadership he brought as a freshman. Do any of the freshmen this year have that same kind of late-game, clutch mentality leadership that you think can be crucial along with you and Matt and Grayson?

AMILE JEFFERSON: Yeah, so far I think we have

numerous freshmen that really exemplify those kind of characteristics. I think guys like Jayson Tatum and Frank Jackson are real key guys to our group and they're going to be called upon to be leaders on our team. So far they've really shown that they can do that.

Frank is going to be a point guard for our group. So being an extension of coach, knowing the commands, knowing how to get guys in their correct position, and really making sure that the ship is going the right way is going to be something that he has done so far and will have to do later in the season.

So I think we have a lot of freshmen that are going to be called to step up and really be leaders on our team.

Q. How concerning is Jayson's injury right now, and what do you guys think about that?

AMILE JEFFERSON: I don't know much about it. I think it's fairly new. I think we have the best medical team in the business and they're on top of it. I hope it's nothing too big and that he'll be fine pretty soon. But I don't really know much.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Matt Jones.

Q. You've been around long enough now with different team makeups, do you see Coach K a little differently depending on the makeup of the team or is it kind of the same guy each year?

MATT JONES: It's been different each year. Coach K does a really good job of figuring out what guys respond to and how well they respond to it. For the 2015 year they've got Tyus, Justise, Ja, those guys are mature beyond their age. So in a way he was along for our ride. And last year the same way with Brandon. I felt like he needed more of a father figure, of just somebody to just be there for him and kind of keep him motivated and things like that. This year it remains to be seen. Guys are obviously motivated and are hungry. But you never really know what to do until you get into that moment where you have to decide what's best.

Q. When you look at this year's team with so many different players to feed the ball to, just speak on balance and what you think this team can do this season?

MATT JONES: I think this team can be very special. We're very versatile, can pose a lot of mismatches. It will be interesting to see how the making of the scoring is involved and things like that. We have a lot of guys that can score the ball at a high rate. But we have a lot of selfless guys as well. So selfishness isn't going to be the issue. It's just whoever is hot, keep feeding them the ball. Guys know at the end of the day we just want to win. If we can put all of our talents together,

then we'll be able to be special.

Q. At a program like Duke, the expectations are always through the roof. But now with that No. 1 ranking tied to your name, does that add any pressure to an already pressure-packed situation for you?

MATT JONES: I think the beauty of this team is we have a good mixture of older guys to younger guys. So for the older guys, we've been there. We've had that pressure on us for numerous years now. The younger guys, obviously, they haven't been through that. But they have us to kind of lean on. I think the calm demeanors of Amile and Grayson, and even Luke and Jayson and myself, I felt like those bode well for those guys. I said earlier, they're eager to learn and they take everything in stride. That makes our job easier. I think it gives us a calm sense.

Obviously with Coach K at the helm, he puts everybody in position to succeed.

Q. That early tournament game against UNCW was obviously one of the most dramatic in that first weekend back and forth. You guys trailed at the half. What stands out to you about that game, and how beneficial do you think that was for a lot of the younger guys on your team to go through that the first weekend?

MATT JONES: What stands out is how different a team can play from what you see on film to in person.

The team we played that night were really special, really talented. They had a really great game. I think we learned the most is we can't take anything for granted. Obviously, we didn't come out the way we wanted to. So, I mean, basketball is unpredictable. Even though we might be favored, anything can happen if we don't come out and do our job. So we just have to do our jobs and be consistent in doing that.

Q. How is it over the last couple years the rivalry with Syracuse grown, and what makes that 2-3 zone so difficult to play against?

MATT JONES: Like Amile said earlier, it's been fun to play Syracuse. I think what makes it so difficult to play against it is how athletic they are and how versatile. They have guys with a lot of length. Thinking back on the games I've played against them, they've been more of the most memorable games I've been involved in. So I'm definitely looking forward to playing them this year.

Like I said earlier, it's always good to play them. Just the tradition behind it and all the other factors to it, it makes it exciting.