

# NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Round - Siena vs Duke

Wednesday, March 18, 2026

Greenville, South Carolina, USA

Bon Secours Wellness Arena

**Siena Saints**

**Gerry McNamara**

**Brendan Coyle**

**Gavin Doty**

**Francis Folefac**

**Riley Mulvey**

**Justice Shoats**

Media Conference

THE MODERATOR: We're joined today by student-athletes from Siena, Brendan Coyle, Gavin Doty, Francis Folefac, Riley Mulvey, and Justice Shoats. Congratulations on being here. We're going to turn it over for questions.

**Q. Gavin and Justice, you've dreamed of being here, but starting with maybe 24 hours ago when you first got on that charter flight, can you describe what it's been like, and what's it like to finally be here on this stage?**

JUSTICE SHOATS: It's been great so far. We're just settling in. Got a practice in yesterday. Going to get a practice in today. We're just feeling it out. It's a great experience so far. So, yeah, we're loving it.

GAVIN DOTY: First off, I just want to start by giving God all the glory. How blessed we are to be in this position. It's a surreal feeling, something you dream of since you were a little boy. Just to finally be here and get down here and get to work, it feels great.

**Q. Brendan or any guys who want to talk about, you guys have now had a chance to look at Duke on film. What strikes you the most about them?**

BRENDAN COYLE: I would say just their physicality that



they play with. They're a very physical, athletic team. We're going to have to do a good job taking care of the ball, not turning it over, and getting good rebounding. They're a very good offensive rebounding team. So just emphasizing taking care of the ball and rebounding.

RILEY MULVEY: They just go through a couple of guys mainly and it's just going to be stopping them, and making sure they, whenever we get a shot that we want to get the rebound, just like BC said, we need to take care of it and be strong.

**Q. Why can Siena be the next Fairleigh Dickinson of UMBC, the next 16 seed to beat a 1?**

BRENDAN COYLE: I think our ability to defend the ball. I think we did a good job in the MAC tournament showing how we defend the ball and really shutting teams down. You combine that with a large amount of confidence in ourselves as a group to go out and perform. The capability on any given night for these guys to go out and score double figures. I think, when you put it all together, we have a really good team with a lot of confidence going into this tournament of why not us?

RILEY MULVEY: I think what BC is saying confidence-wise, we all have confidence in each other too, not just ourselves. We believe in everybody on the court to do everything. There's never a moment where it's like can't go in. Every shot that we take can always go in. Everybody can defend everybody on the court. We just believe in each other.

We've come in with so much professionalism that we've had the entire year, and we're going to keep going and keep being our best selves.

**Q. Gavin and Francis, you guys are young players. This is the first time your team has been here in the NCAA Tournament. You're going to play the Number 1 team in the country. Lots of people are going to be here. I'm curious how you deal with the nerves and the enormity of this situation?**

FRANCIS FOLEFAC: Just taking it day by day. We try to prepare -- I feel like we prepare as much as anybody in the country. We have a great coaching staff that provides us



with great scouts and help us figure out what we need to do on the court offensively and defensively and just playing together.

GAVIN DOTY: Just taking it all in. I mean, Duke's a whole different beast. They're probably the best team in the country. We're going to have to be really connected. We're going to have to guard really well, knock down some shots, but got to believe. You really do.

**Q. Gavin, you called yourself delusional for thinking you could beat anybody on the biggest stage. You haven't hit your confidence over the last couple of days. What gives you this emboldened sense of confidence going up against the best team in the nation?**

GAVIN DOTY: I would say the guys in the locker room and the coaching staff. They do a phenomenal job, through the scout, the preparation through film. We work really hard and get a lot of shots. Seeing these guys to my right and left here, I have full confidence in these guys.

BC, he could be the next white boy who goes in and knocks down a bunch of shots. Francis is a beast. Mulvey is a dog and Zip is on the best point guards in the country. I believe in everybody down the line here.

**Q. I was wondering if you guys could address Gerry McNamara, there's some rumors with him, and always will be, of him going back to Syracuse. What's he been like to play for? Tell me some stories of him as a coach, some stories that maybe nobody knows about.**

JUSTICE SHOATS: I don't know about any stories, but he's definitely a great coach. Gerry and I are from the same area. We play the same way. We're both competitive, and we both want to win. It just shows throughout the whole season, what we did, what we accomplished, everything we've been through, adversity.

I'm proud of this group and what we did, and I know what we could do. He's a great guy, and I'm glad he's able to coach us in everything he did this year. All these guys next to me, I'm glad I was able to play with them as well, and it's going to show.

**Q. Anyone can answer this, but you talked about confidence. How important is it to get off to a good start tomorrow and stay in the game, or are you going to just take it one step at a time or walk me through that approach.**

RILEY MULVEY: With the team that we're playing, we're going to need to get off to a good start because there's not

going to be much margin for error in this game. Usually there isn't much, but we've got to take it to the next level and play our best in this game throughout the entire 40 minutes.

**Q. Riley, it seems like you've taken your defensive game to the next level. That's been a huge reason why this team has gotten to where they are today, your presence down low. How big of a factor can you play in this matchup on Thursday, do you think?**

RILEY MULVEY: It could play a huge factor. It just depends if I can do what I did in the conference championship, get five blocks again, that would be a big upside. Then I have to make sure I grab every rebound down low that we need because, whenever we force a miss, we have to get the rebound, because they're a great offensive rebounding team. So we need to play to the standard.

THE MODERATOR: We're pleased to be joined by Siena head coach Gerry McNamara. We're going to turn it over for an opening statement.

GERRY McNAMARA: We're thrilled to be here. We've got a great group of kids. This last week for us has been such a joy, a lot of energy in the building. To watch them accomplish what they accomplished in Atlantic City to stay together, we've gone through a lot this year in terms of injury.

I didn't hear my guys speak, but if they did, I'm assuming they all praised one another. It's the type of group we have.

We obviously have a tall task ahead of us. Duke's terrific. Jon's done a great job. Their average margin of victory in ACC play is 18, 19 points a game. The way they rebound, defend, they're outstanding defensively. It's going to be a big test for us, but the one thing we've talked about this week, we've earned the right to play in this game, what we did in Atlantic City and how we played this year.

Really looking forward to hopefully playing our best basketball on the biggest stage and giving them everything we've got. That's the one thing I know my group's going to be ready to play tomorrow, confident, stay together. We've been really good defensively this year. We were terrific defensively in our conference tournament. If we're going to have a chance tomorrow, we've got to defend at a high level and take care of the basketball. We're really looking forward to the challenge.

**Q. Coach, obviously you played against Duke, coached against Duke during your time at Syracuse.**



**Is there anything that first comes to mind when you think of Duke, and what were you thinking when they were unveiled as your opponent?**

GERRY McNAMARA: I haven't had the pleasure of playing against them, but I've coached against them a ton. Par for the course, they're terrific every season. We're probably talking back to back years they're going to have National Player of the Year. I think Cam Boozer is the National Player of the Year, if you ask me. He needs to be in the discussion for the Number 1 pick. I don't know why no one's talking about him.

If you saw the kid in high school, he won everything. He won three Peach Jams, won the National Championship, he just won the ACC.

Year in and year out, you know what you're getting. You're getting a team that the brand speaks for itself. You know what they've done. The accomplishments, the players, the tradition, or as they call it, the brotherhood.

It's a great task. It's a good thing when they're good. You either love them or you hate them. That's how it works, I think, in their brand. The one thing I know as coaches and players, we all respect them, and I think that's the biggest compliment you can pay to a program is the respect that they've earned with their long storied tradition and success that they've had.

**Q. I know you guys didn't have Antonio in the conference tournament. I'm just wondering if you have an update on him, or do you feel like a couple games without him has you guys better prepared in case he's not able to participate?**

GERRY McNAMARA: He won't be available. That's unfortunately not concluded. The one thing I'm happy about through that process, the administration's here, they saw how our team rallied around that situation in terms of Antonio.

What I'll say about Antonio Chandler, he's one of the best kids I've ever been around, and his story is a good one. If you go back and look at his story and where he came from and how he ended up playing one year of Division I basketball with us, it's a good story. It's a shame that it ended the way it did, but I'm really proud of him, and I'm really, really proud of our guys in terms of how they handled the situation, in terms of rallying around their brother and being there for him.

It's a wonderful thing. When we played in Atlantic City, he came out for the championship game, and he wore his shirt. Right before we took to the court, he put his jersey

on. Even that gave me a jolt. Watching his family, their support while we were there. He won't be with us, but he's with us.

The thing that makes me really happy is as a coach you want the guys you coach in your program to have a wonderful experience, create lifelong relationships and friendships. I know I've got a group of kids in there that that's exactly what has happened this year. These guys are going to be bonded tight forever, and Tone is right at the top of the list. He was such an emotional and incredible leader for us.

**Q. I want to ask you the question that you know you're going to get asked, and then I'm going to ask you another question that you're going to want to get asked. The first question is what's the situation with Syracuse? Has anybody reached out, and where are you with that?**

GERRY McNAMARA: My situation with that right now is I'm here at the NCAA Tournament for the first time as a head coach, and I get an opportunity to coach Siena University, and the kids in that locker room deserve that opportunity. They've got my full attention. That's where my focus is.

These kids have given me everything they've got every day this season, and they deserve my full attention, and they've got it.

**Q. My second question about Maliq Brown. I know you recruited him when you were at Syracuse. What did you see in him as a player and have you contacted him since you were matched up?**

GERRY McNAMARA: I texted him last night. I love Maliq Brown. I loved him from the first time I watched him. I think, when you watch -- I think, when he was in high school, it was the offensive side of the ball. Hey, there's a lot to be determined on the offensive side of the ball. It wasn't because he didn't have the ability, it's because he was selfless.

If you watch him play with Duke, it's the same thing. Maliq Brown could care less if he scores a point, but when they double the post on Boozer, he's the guy on the weak side setting a weak side flare for Evans. Evans gets a wide open shot, it comes from Boozer, but Maliq is the one who sets the screen. He is elite defensively.

He's a great kid. As good a kid as I've ever been around in my career, player, coach. I'm so happy for him.

Before last night, the last time I texted him was to

congratulate him on Defensive Player of the Year and Sixth Man of the Year because he earned both. Just really happy for him. I left for Siena. He left for Duke.

The third time Jon called me at Duke, I answered the phone and said, "Stop calling me. Take him. He's really good." I had texted Jon a few times over the years saying just, "Maliq Brown." I'm happy that he's really happy. I think Jon's done a great job with him, and I'm just happy that on a national stage he's proven his worth and how good he is as a player. It couldn't happen to a better kid.

**Q. Gerry, how much, if at all, have you brought up the other 16 seeds who have beaten 1s in UMBC and Fairleigh Dickinson? Have you mentioned that at all in your plans?**

GERRY McNAMARA: I've said to the team it's happened before. It's clearly happened before. It's not something that hasn't been done. The conversations that we've had about this matchup have mainly been focused on what we would normally do in terms of regular prep, how we would prepare, how we would scout, but I'm trying to do my best for them to not make the moment too big, that it's just another game. You have to go through your process of how we prepare for everything else.

This has been done before, so you have to have your full attention. It can't be one of those things where you defeat yourself going in. We have to be fully confident like we have all year. I didn't bring up UMBC and FDU. I know it's the two that have won the 16 seed matchup. I just said it's been done before. I haven't brought up their particular cases. I'm just focused on us, like I always have been, like our group always has been.

We've got to go through our process and keep this as par for the course in terms of how we prepared all season and have some normalcy to it, even though it's on a much bigger stage.

**Q. I'm originally a Syracuse native. I'm going to try you one more time. That's all anybody back home can seem to talk about is, would you end up going there? I'm just wondering is this something that you would entertain after the season if they contacted you?**

GERRY McNAMARA: I'll say this, and I said it this week. I think with what we did, with the job obviously being open, it was inevitable, with my history there, just coming from there.

I will reiterate again my full focus is on the team in that locker room that has an opportunity to play against the best team in the country tomorrow at 2:50.

I have not deviated from that from Tuesday night from when we won in Atlantic City. My focus has been on them. The reality is because of them, my name is coming up. That's the way I look at this. You get good players, you coach them right, you win, everybody gets recognition. I think the situation with the job opening and what we've done in the last week, there was obviously going to be some speculation.

I have not brought it up to the team. No one's asked me about it because we've gone, just as we've always done, and prepared the last week for the sole intent of being prepared to play tomorrow.

**Q. You've talked about this being your team's first time here. How do you sort of prepare them for the enormity of the situation, the crowd, Duke, the whole spectacle of it?**

GERRY McNAMARA: Kind of going back to the week of preparation, I'm trying to do what -- I'm not trying. We have done exactly what we've done in terms of preparation for every other game. I think that's my experience as a coach, as a player when I was in this, played in a lot of big games in this tournament and have coached in a lot of big games in this tournament.

When I was at Syracuse with Coach Boeheim, we always prepared the same way. I've talked about what's the biggest thing I've taken from him all these years is how consistent every day was. There was a lot of the same things every day, repetitive, over and over and over. That's what I've done quite a bit.

Now, in a different way, I do it in my own way, but very, very normal this week to prepare them just like we did for Atlantic City, just like we would for a split Friday-Sunday game in the MAC.

But obviously tomorrow when the pregame speech hits, there might be a little bit more juices flowing.

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