

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

Wednesday, March 18, 2026

Greenville, South Carolina, USA

Bon Secours Wellness Arena

**Duke Blue Devils**

**Jon Scheyer**

**Cameron Boozer**

**Dame Sarr**

**Isaiah Evans**

Media Conference

THE MODERATOR: We're going to go ahead and get started. Joined today by Duke student-athletes Cameron Boozer, Isaiah Evans, and Dame Sarr.

**Q. For anybody, how was flushing the elation of just some days ago into kind of just forgetting it and getting back to the work?**

CAMERON BOOZER: That was a lot of big words, but it was great. We've got to move past it fast. Obviously it was a great accomplishment. We celebrated it for sure.

We finished on Saturday and leave Tuesday to get here. So it's a quick turnaround. Got to stay locked in, get ready for Siena, yeah.

ISAIAH EVANS: Yeah, we've just been doing that the whole year, getting to the next game, flushing the wins, and focusing on the next opponent. So it's really nothing to us, to be honest.

DAME SARR: Like they said, it was our goal, and I feel like we did a great job. We competed really well. Just being able to enjoy the win, but also being able to move on and understanding that we have bigger goals ahead of us. So just being able to switch the page.

**Q. For any of the players, it's very rare for a 16 seed to beat a 1, but it has happened a couple of times. What kind of mindset is it going to take to avoid being a victim of that?**



CAMERON BOOZER: First, it doesn't matter who our opponent is, we're going to stay locked in, stay focused. A lot of teams would overlook this game and go on to the next game. We haven't done that all year. Whoever we're playing, we don't talk about the next team or whatever happens after this game, we're always focused on the matchup.

We're going to throw ourselves all into this game, and we won't let that happen for sure.

ISAIAH EVANS: I think we do a great job of respecting our opponent. If they're in the tournament, they deserve to be here. They're here for a reason. So it doesn't matter what seed they are, they're still a good team. We're going to play them like they are.

DAME SARR: Yeah, like Cam said, I feel like we did a great job during the whole year of not making it about other people, but making it about us. I feel like whenever we do what we're supposed to do, we normally get the win.

I feel like it's about us, and we don't want to get out of ourselves and look too much out of who we are.

So just focusing on ourselves and focusing on the game, knowing that it's one game at a time and there is no Saturday if you don't win tomorrow. So just understanding that.

**Q. Isaiah, you look at what Cooper Flagg's done, Kon Knueppel has done at the NBA level, and you guys look back to last season and didn't get it done in terms of winning it all. Is there anything you look back at that season and say that it's motivated you to win it all this year, given what you guys had on the roster last year?**

ISAIAH EVANS: I don't think it's got nothing to do with the roster. I think just the fact that we couldn't get the job done is keeping us motivated. Especially for the returners from last year, it wasn't a great feeling to be so close and have it slip away.

I feel like that's what keeps us motivated.

**Q. Cameron, Gavin Doty, their best player, had**



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**mentioned facing you. He remembered playing you and your brother on UYBL circuits. I don't know if you remember that, but I wonder what your impression is of No. 4, their guard.**

CAMERON BOOZER: Yeah, he's a great player. Obviously we scouted him a little bit already. So we're going to be aware of him. He always takes a lot of their shots, plays an extended dribble. Like you said, we've played against him before, and he's a great player. So we've got to be focused on that matchup, especially because it's March, yeah.

THE MODERATOR: Lucky to be joined right now by Duke head coach Jon Scheyer.

JON SCHEYER: I'll just say truly grateful to be in the NCAA Tournament, grateful to be in Greenville. I'm really excited for our guys to have this opportunity.

You have to turn the page very quickly from the ACC Tournament to now, but our focus is on Siena, Gerry McNamara. I've known G Mac for a long time. He's a great coach. I think he's done an incredible job with this team. They're hard-nosed. They're tough. They have great role identity. They play a very clear style. And we're excited for this challenge and opportunity.

**Q. Do you have an update on Pat, how he's progressing? Do you think you could have him for round 1, round 2? Where do you stand with those benchmarks?**

JON SCHEYER: He's been progressing as we've gotten closer to tomorrow. I think it's very unlikely that he plays tomorrow. We're taking it day by day. He's itching to play, but we're not quite there for tomorrow just yet.

**Q. Just to follow up, you said he's progressing. Is it on pace for what you hoped? Has there been any kind of setback?**

JON SCHEYER: No, not a setback. It's not just anything where you can say two weeks and you're back, 12 days and you're back. You have to take it step by step with what he's doing. Everything is going in a good direction, but I think the comfort that we want him to feel is not quite there. So that's something we can only know day to day.

I can tell you that in a perfect world, I think he'd be playing tomorrow. But it's nothing other than he's not quite ready to go. We'll do everything we can to get ready for Saturday and go from there.

**Q. Coach, I'm not asking to you get ahead of yourself**

**or look ahead, but how much appreciation do you have for the fact that this team enters the NCAA Tournament with 32 wins and is still in contention this late in the season to end up with the most wins of any Duke team in history? Just how special is it?**

JON SCHEYER: I just think what you want to do going into The tournament, you want to put yourself in a position where you're playing your best and you have a chance to control your own destiny.

I think for us we feel like each game we go into, if we do what we're supposed to do, we could be in a good position to win. A lot of things have to happen in between there, but that's why we haven't talked about winning the most games, we haven't talked even about -- it wasn't about winning the ACC Tournament championship. It was just about the each-game mentality of winning it and then special things can happen.

I told our guys on Sunday, man, I'm proud of what you guys have done. Let's take a moment and just celebrate the fact of the record that we have and what we've done, 32-2, and then get our minds to completely get shifted for one game. We're guaranteed one game, and that's against Siena.

**Q. You talked about Gerry McNamara a little bit earlier. He's been recounting for us this week about the conversations he had with you about Maliq Brown. I'm wondering if you could take us back to that time and what those conversations were like.**

JON SCHEYER: In the day and age of the transfer portal being so rampant, I don't think coaches usually call each other. For me, that's something I've always done, like with our guys that have come here, to understand who they are as people, to hear what their coaches have to say. I also think it shows really good respect as well.

I respect G Mac's opinion and who he was as a player and obviously who he is as a coach. I remember talking to him about Maliq, and everything he said was true, I can tell you that much. I'm grateful that we had those conversations, and he explained his defensive impact, talked about his versatility, and then just talked about his offensive game, knowing there's game in there. He just has to continue to gain that confidence.

I respected the fact that he was just very transparent and was very complimentary of Maliq.

**Q. Aside from the shorter rotation, what is the biggest change in the way you guys have to play without Pat in there?**

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JON SCHEYER: Well, I think the thing that Pat gave us and will continue to give us as we get him back is just the interior scoring. It's important. His rim protection is valuable. Then end of the day, Cam, he just has to slide over to play some more in that spot, where he hasn't done that as much this year.

I think we found some really good lineups that can be really tough to guard when we do that. But Pat, I think it's underrated his defensive impact, his rim protection, his pick-and-roll coverage, his ability to switch has been a big strength for us.

Then the obvious thing, to your point, just depth. In the past three games, Maliq's had two fouls in the first half. That's not ideal, but that's something we're going to have to work through.

**Q. You look at what Kon and Cooper have done at the next level. When you look back at last season and not being able to get it done, not being able to ultimately cut down the nets, how much has that driven you throughout the off-season going into this year and where you are now?**

JON SCHEYER: Well, every moment in my life has driven me. I take every lesson along the way and learn from it. I learned very quickly, like being in this position, the head coach at Duke, you put yourself in a spot where, just like we had Saturday, we've had championships and special moments, but you also put yourself in position where you can have your heart broken. I'd rather have that any day of the week than be not in this position.

I've used year one, year two, year three all in different ways to continue to get better, to continue to grow, and to continue to use that as motivation.

So last year's no different. We had a special group, put ourselves in the exact spot you want to be in, couldn't get it done. That's unfortunately part of how this thing goes. So we're back and ready to keep going in this.

**Q. Jon, you've talked all year about Cam being a warrior, but he's had two guys to play the 5 next to him. Now with only one guy he has to -- like you mentioned with Maliq in foul trouble, he has to slide down to the 5. What different things have you learned about him in the last week having to play more responsibility and take on the 5 role in addition to what he already does?**

JON SCHEYER: Cam for me, it's the fact that he's no excuses, no excuses. That's something we talked about in

his recruitment, the fact that we knew we'd have two of the best 5s in the country, Maliq and in Pat. Obviously for the most part our health has been there throughout the whole year.

So this is different. No excuses. He'll do whatever it takes to win. He'll bring the ball up. He'll rebound. He'll guard different people.

So that mentality really helped us in the ACC Tournament. I also think Maliq, for him, he didn't play his best in the ACC Tournament. Knowing him, he always responds, and his presence, I think, is going to be really felt as we go into this week as well.

**Q. I know you mentioned that you've gotten better and improved and there's things you've taken and grown at every year. Specifically, I wanted to ask about late close games. You guys have had a number of those. Obviously just came off one against Virginia. Being the off-season coming into this year, what are things you did specifically to try to get better in those games that led to the 7-2 record you have?**

JON SCHEYER: I think the more you can give your players ownership over how they feel in different spots, how to personalize it based on your personnel and the team that you have, and then the staff and myself, we just spent a lot of time this summer in preseason going through game situations, talking about different spots we could put our guys in, and then how to give them great confidence.

How do you give somebody confidence in a position they've never been in before? That's going to always happen for us. You guys are going through things they haven't experienced before for the most part.

Even today we watched a couple of game situations this morning, just always trying to get them thinking and taking ownership where they're in those spots. They're not running a play. I don't think that's the way to do it. They have to understand what we're looking for. They have to understand how they can be guarded, and then give them confidence to make reads and be aggressive in it.

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