

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

Thursday, March 19, 2026
Greenville, South Carolina, USA
Bon Secours Wellness Arena

Siena Saints

Gerry McNamara

Gavin Doty

Brendan Coyle

Francis Folefac

Media Conference

Duke - 71, Siena - 65

GERRY McNAMARA: I've been doing this a long time. I don't think I've ever been more proud of any group of kids I've been around. I think the world and college basketball saw what I've been so grateful and thankful to be around all season, a group of kids that love each other, that compete at the highest level and play for each other.

We got off to a great start offensively in the second half when they switched to zone and slowed us down a little bit. I went back and watched, every time they've been scored on this season this past week, go game by game and there are stretches where they don't give up points, that's who they are. It kind of bit us in the second half where we weren't able to score or make a shot late and that kind of pushed the lead out.

I love Jon. The job he's done at Duke is remarkable. I wish them luck moving forward. They're a tough group. They're a Number 1 seed for a reason. They've got a lot of talent and a lot of heart and pride. I've got all that right here too.

I'm just really proud. I'm devastated for them because we were fearless. We wanted to accept this. I knew when we came back from Atlantic City, when I got them that Friday before Selection Sunday, where we had two practices, really three practices before that Selection Sunday, the energy they brought to the gym.

I've said it before, coaches take a lot of credit in terms of



culture, and I've said it, the character that I have in that room. I'm just so blessed. I'm so grateful.

I'm crushed for them because they played well enough to win. They did. But we got kind of crushed on the glass in the second half. The free-throw differential really hurt us, and we had a couple chances late to make a shot. We just couldn't capitalize.

For me to take this job, to take it over, the goal was always to play on this stage, and I'm really, really proud of how they represented our school, our community, the alumni. Even the way they talked about each other, I think yesterday up here, I said yesterday up here. I said after Atlantic City I'm a proud coach. I'm still a damn proud coach.

Q. To any of the players, or all of the players, the rebounding issue that Coach just mentioned and shots not going in, how much did that have to do with the fact that your legs might have been a little bit tired, all five of you playing 40 minutes?

GAVIN DOTY: First, I just want to start by giving all the glory to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. How blessed I am to be a part of this thing. It's truly special.

I want to thank all our seniors, just really grateful for those guys.

Duke's got length. We made an emphasis in this game we're going to have to rebound and block out. I don't really think we were tired at the end. We played a lot of guys a lot of minutes all year long. They just grabbed some good rebounds there, and Maliq does a great job at poking them out, and Cameron Boozer is a piece. So credit to them.

Q. You came close to pulling off one of the greatest upsets in NCAA Tournament history. How do you feel about that coming out of this game? Is that enough for you to get some satisfaction?

BRENDAN COYLE: Obviously we poured our heart out, but close doesn't count for much. We talk all season about no moral victories, and we came into the game wanting to win. Ultimately, we fell short of that.



GAVIN DOTY: Kind of on top of that, no moral victories. I was in my hotel room praying the rosary before the game today, and I had full confidence we were going to win this game. If you'd have told me we were up by 10 at halftime, I'd have believed it because that's how much faith I have in these guys.

Seeing our coaching staff, getting us ready for the scout, they did an unbelievable job. Unbelievable.

It sucks that we came up short, but I'm proud of the fight we had.

Q. You guys played like you belonged. You showed the nation that you belonged. What gave you guys that confidence that you belonged on this stage?

FRANCIS FOLEFAC: I feel like we take every game, we treat every game the same way. We just come out and try to have extreme focus, energy, effort, pour our heart out in every minute of every game, play together, hold each other accountable, and just try our best to come up with victories.

Obviously we fell short today, but I love these guys. If I could do it all over again, I would.

Q. There was a sequence with 17 minutes left in the second half. You missed two dunks and one possession, then Duke goes on an 11-0 run to erase their deficit. Did you feel the momentum switch there? Did it feel like maybe there was just some bad luck for you guys?

GAVIN DOTY: It's a game of runs. We knew they would make runs. They're the Number 1 team in the country for a reason. It was about withstanding those runs. We didn't stop fighting until the final buzzer sounded. So I'm proud of these guys.

Q. Jon Scheyer was just up here saying that you outcoached him today. Could you take us through a little bit of the preparation that you guys went through to prepare for a game with Duke or a team like Duke?

GERRY McNAMARA: I appreciate the compliment, but it's those kids. It's the kids that just walked away. It's my staff. I've got an incredible group in that locker room.

Like I said, a lot of people have game plans. Duke's been able to pretty much wash that out in pretty much any team they've played.

Our kids, I've talked about the professionalism and maturity they have. I'm not, they say blowing smoke, I'm not doing any of that. I tell you the truth of what I have in terms of my

group. Yeah, it's the kids that were just up here that implemented what we saw, how we wanted to try to attack them, how we wanted to try to defend them. And they did a great job of implementing our game plan like they always have.

Q. Gerry, playing all five guys 40 minutes, how much do you feel you might have just run out of gas?

GERRY McNAMARA: You're looking at a guy that played 40 minutes a lot. We just got here from Atlantic City doing pretty much the same thing. I thought we needed Riley and Francis on the court at all times because of their size.

I said it yesterday about Booze, I thought we did a good job on him, what he finished with. That kid's a stud. The way that BC was shooting, how he looked, the way he defends, the way he understands me. Gav's Gav and Justice is Justice.

The way we looked, the way it felt to me, I went with a group that I thought could give us the best chance.

I thought Zay Henderson changed the Fairfield game in Atlantic City for us. Christian Jones won us multiple games. I just thought with the size of their guards today it was the best lineup to give us a chance.

It doesn't mean those guys aren't great players. They are. They helped us a lot this year. I just felt like with the rhythm of the game that we had, it was the right --

And I asked them, not that they would tell me the truth when I say, "are you good? They tell me "yeah." I would tell my coach the same thing, I'm fine regardless. They gave us everything. But that stretch did hurt us. We missed two dunks, led to a run, but we responded.

I thought we missed some shots late that were really good. I thought we got some really decent looks. 22 points in the second half was the difference. Getting our tails whipped on the glass was the difference, the free-throw differential. We had to go zone a little bit, I thought, at the end of the first half, to protect us from fatigue.

Then in the second half when Riley picked up his third, I wanted to protect him because I thought we needed the size for the rebounding.

Yeah, you're going to get a little gassed, but when you're playing the best team in the country, sometimes you dig a little deeper and fight it out.

Q. When you mentioned the game plan, what did you think you guys could be successful in both offensively

and also in defending Duke to maybe get them a little bit out of sync?

GERRY McNAMARA: I'm not going to give all of our stuff out. I just thought early on we were going to see if we could live with some of the 3s from some of the players, not Evans. We had a game plan in terms of when Booze got to 15 feet, how we were going to defend him with multiple bodies.

These kids, they were just on it. Our energy was elite. Our attention to detail was elite. And like they do, for us, what really gave us a chance -- I talked about our defense and our ball security. I think we finished with only six turnovers; it's remarkable. Justice Shoats played the first 20 minutes with zero.

I thought we did everything we needed to do to give ourselves a chance. I think anybody that watched the game, we had a real chance. We controlled a lot of this game.

But Duke's Duke, and they're going to make a run, and they're going to make a run defensively a lot of times. That's what they did to us. Watching these guys all year -- I watch a lot. I'm a junkie. I watch hoop. These guys, in every game I watched, I'm like, damn, they're good defensively.

We felt a little bit of that in the second half. When they went to zone, it flipped the momentum a little bit. Then late, we just couldn't capitalize on a few good looks we had.

Q. Gerry, you were talking about this team and just leading the team the way that you did this season and what you've seen in these last two seasons, the turnaround.

GERRY McNAMARA: Could you start over?

Q. Just going from last season to this season, having 20-plus wins, get to this point and show the world what Siena has become as a program, just what it's been like for you to lead this program and put it together the way you did with the guys that you have on staff and players.

GERRY McNAMARA: I'm just really proud. I said before I thought last year we put together a group that was ready to compete right away, and we lost a lot of close games. This off-season was focused on the frontcourt, which you watched Riley Mulvey play today, Francis Folefac, Tas has been hurt, and Antonio didn't play, we've got the best frontcourt, one of the best frontcourts in our league.

Listen, your kids in a lot of ways are a reflection of you as a coach, and I couldn't be prouder in terms of how hard they play. That gives us a chance.

So when I took the job at Siena, you've got to understand that when I played in college, my understanding, Fran was right behind me. This program was in this tournament. The support from the alumni, from the students, from the fans, it's real. We've got a real thing going in Albany.

I wanted it to feel and look a certain way, feel a certain way in that locker room, a brotherhood, a family. I wanted it to look a certain way on the court in terms of the fight and the grit, and these kids have done all of it. They've done all of it.

Yeah, so when I got the job, I couldn't have scripted a better group of young men, young student-athletes to put together that would represent the place as finely as they have.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports