

Atlantic Coast Conference Football Kickoff

Wednesday, July 24, 2024
Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

Duke Blue Devils Jaylen Stinson

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Questions for Jaylen.

Q. You had the transfer portal in December, but you came back, said, This is my home. Why is it your home?

JAYLEN STINSON: Yeah, I did test the waters with the transfer portal 'cause during that time we had doubt. We really didn't know where this would go.

When Manny got to come to the front and talk to us, tell us his plan, what he had planned for this team, it just built confidence in us as a whole as far as like the locker room. We knew he wanted to do the right thing with us, we could trust him as a coach. I know that he would take this program in the right direction, so...

Q. Testing the waters, didn't really know what was going to happen in the coaching change. What was it about Manny Diaz that spoke to you and said that your fifth year at Duke, it's better to spend it here than to go elsewhere?

JAYLEN STINSON: He's a standup guy. We all had doubt. The first day he made it here, he called us up personally. That meant a lot for me. At that time, being my last year, I'm not sure where I'm going to be, he cleared a few things up with me. I knew he had the best interest in me.

But not only, it wasn't just Manny. It was the locker room as well, just the culture, everything we built in that locker room. It speaks for itself. I feel like there's not another locker room like ours. It's truly a brotherhood at Duke football.

Q. How important was it for you all to retain veterans and senior leadership on this team, get more experience on the roster?

JAYLEN STINSON: It was very important. I know coach

talked a lot about the experience. It's always great playing with other experienced players who played in big games that you know you can call on and they'll make a play because they done it before.

We had to call on some younger guys, they had to grow up, step up into a leadership role. I feel like we done well with that coming from spring ball, summer ball. We found out who we can call, who name we can call, and it's been great.

Q. I notice you're 83 tackles shy of becoming the 21st player in program history to have 300 career tackles. How hungry does that make you?

JAYLEN STINSON: It makes me very hungry. It should be less than that, just looking at my film from last year I left a lot on the table. That's one thing I talked to Manny about. He was honest, he watched film on me, he knew I left a lot on the table. I was honest with myself to know I left a lot on the table.

He's going to help me perfect my game and do the little things to make that happen, so...

Q. Much like your teammate, you're going to turn 23 when you're at home against UConn in a couple of months. Do you think of yourself as being the old man on the team?

JAYLEN STINSON: Yeah, for sure (smiling). I am starting to feel old. Growing up, getting older, you got to take that leadership position.

When I first got here, I kind of went with the flow. I'm starting to feel old. The guys are looking up to me. That's been a big phase in my college career, just taking that next stage, growing up, being a professional, leading by example.

Q. How would you describe yourself as a leader?

JAYLEN STINSON: Just doing the little things like getting in, watching film, taking care of the young guys, leading the defense. If you see something, you got to call it out.



That's how we are in our locker room, so...

Q. You talk about being the old man in the room. What is the message you wish you could have told yourself when you first started out this journey? What kind of message are you telling the younger guys now?

JAYLEN STINSON: I wish I could tell myself to lock in. It will be over before you know it. I feel like it was yesterday I was just a freshman. Just locking in, doing the little things. It catch up to you. If you don't take advantage of it now, it will end up catching up with you.

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