

# Atlantic Coast Conference Basketball Tipoff Media Day

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Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

## Notre Dame Fighting Irish Coach Micah Shrewsberry

**J.R. Konieczny**

**Julian Roper, II**

Men's Press Conference



season, mostly everyone is back. What can you say about culture and environment and what you are building at Notre Dame that has given you an opportunity to stand out as a place where you have consistency, which we don't typically see a lot now?

MICAH SHREWSBERRY: I think that's one of the things that we have to hang our hat on is continuity and having groups that you can build from. Like, how do we get older? We get older from within.

We have a lot to sell. We have a lot that people are excited about. These guys have put a lot of time in to graduating from the University of Notre Dame and what that degree can do for you after your basketball career is over, but I think if they look at their development and how much better they're getting as players. If they look at how much our staff and the people around our basketball program care about them as individuals, it makes it easier to want to come back.

You see that growth. Now we need to take advantage of that growth. We need to take advantage of that continuity and continue to take steps going forward and grow old from within.

THE MODERATOR: You wore your passport out this summer. In Spain; you were in Buenos Aires as well. What did you learn about you? What were the takeaways for you personally during all this international travel?

MICAH SHREWSBERRY: I don't know how many takeaways I took from the travel besides going and visiting new places, being able to experience the world, but also being able to experience Notre Dame and the power of our university.

I always go back to an example of somebody that wanted to take a picture with me when we were in Buenos Aires. People in South Bend have no idea who I am, but because of the Notre Dame logo they were excited about getting a picture with the coach at Notre Dame.

Seeing the brand, seeing Notre Dame, seeing its reach throughout this country, but also being able to experience

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by the Fighting Irish of Notre Dame. Questions for Head Coach Micah Shrewsberry, please.

**Q. Yesterday Jim Phillips spoke on how the ACC doesn't get the respect it deserves and the teams that deserve to be in the tournament because of toughness of schedule. What are your thoughts on Jim Phillips' comments?**

MICAH SHREWSBERRY: That's a good question. The one thing that I know and now going into year two in the ACC, this is a really good league. You know, we played Pittsburgh. When you line up against people, you get a feel for is this a tournament team, is this not a tournament team? I felt like that with Pittsburgh, that they are a tournament team.

That was still early in the year, and they had only got better after that. Same thing with Wake Forest late in the year.

I feel like our league, the depth of our league, there's a lot of quality depth. I think it's only going to increase. I think we're going to be better as a program. I think Louisville is going to be better as a program. I think teams are on the rise. I think that the teams that we add all bring unique things to our league.

Now it's just about playing the games and taking advantage of our opportunities, right? Especially early in the year. You know, change the narrative of everybody by playing really well in November and December so people are talking about our league in a positive light before we get to conference play.

**Q. In the ever-changing climate that we have in collegiate athletics, your team from last season to this**



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Spain with our team and allowing them to kind of grow together during that time was really fun.

**Q. You've got some great veteran leadership, great veteran players. We also saw a bunch of your young guys stand out, including Rookie of the Year Marcus Burton; your son performed super well. How have you seen them progress coming into their sophomore years? What can we expect from them that we haven't already seen?**

MICAH SHREWSBERRY: I think once the season ended and everybody took a little break to kind of refresh and gain their legs, you saw a renewed energy from everybody. I think everybody's game has grown. That's through their time on the court, what they're doing as individuals, being in the same system for two years in a row.

I think they're starting to pick things up a lot faster. I think they're starting to understand the reads and the decisions and the movements and everything that's going to happen.

You see people take steps from one year to the next, but they've also worked really, really hard, and they've pushed each other really, really hard, right?

Marcus is one of the guys you got to kick out of the gym. Braeden is a guy you have to kick out of the gym. It's always fun for me as a coach to get there in the morning and see J.R. down on the court working out. Right? To see Julian in the middle of the day down there with Coach Getter getting extra shots up.

We have a team of workers. When they have that built in hard work already instilled in them, it makes them easy to coach. It makes them easy to want to be around on a daily basis, and that's what I feel like we have right now.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you. You can swap spots with J.R. Questions for J.R., please.

**Q. J.R., we know you're a great rim protector. We know you can get the boards. Is there another part of your game that we haven't seen that we should look forward to this year?**

J.R. KONIECZNY: Yeah. I think so. I think building off of that and kind of being able to go out to Las Vegas kind of gave me -- going out to Las Vegas this summer gave me the confidence in my offensive game that I've kind of been lacking the past few years.

Obviously I haven't played a game where the outcome of a game really meant anything until this last year. So just having my mentality right and having my confidence right is

going to be key for me going forward I think for sure, so...

**Q. What is it about the culture? I asked Coach about it, but what about Notre Dame speaks to you and beyond the athlete side of it, the fact that this is a storied place for education as well? A lot of times we forget about the student in student-athlete, so just what does it mean to you overall, student-athlete?**

J.R. KONIECZNY: Yeah, I think being from South Bend, I think I have a unique experience kind of growing up around Notre Dame and kind of seeing the tradition, seeing, like, the fans in South Bend, seeing the fans even when the football team goes to Dublin, Ireland, the fans travel. The fans travel worldwide. It's not just in the U.S. The fans are all over the place, and it really means a lot.

Yeah, it's like the institution itself is a great academic institution. The degree will get you a long way. Just like the traditions, if you believe in God, if you are a faith-driven person, then you will find a lot of buildings, a lot of monuments, a lot of iconic statues on campus that really speak volumes to what university means. It's a really cool place to be for sure.

THE MODERATOR: You speak about the brand, and we think about what Coach said last year about starting from ground level. What is your responsibility to the brand? What is your respond to Coach's vision as a student-athlete in this program?

J.R. KONIECZNY: Yeah, the one thing I try to do every single day is just work my tail off as much as I can and just empty my tank. I think what I kind of bring to the table is I like to cause chaos on offense, on defense. I like to fly around, throw my body in different places.

I really just leave it all out on the court and kind of just do my role the best I can, whatever role I need to do. That's what I'm going to try to do and do it to the best of my abilities as well.

THE MODERATOR: You can switch spots with Julian. We will finish our time with the Irish with Mr. Roper II. Questions for Julian, please.

**Q. Being a facilitator that you are on the court, how is it leading these young guys into getting them these open opportunities on the court when it comes to shots?**

JULIAN ROPER II: Yeah, I feel like just being able to be a playmaker, get them off the ball a little bit at times, and just get them in positions to get their shots.

I feel like it just comes with a lot of practicing, playing with both Braeden, Marcus, just everyone in general. Just playing with everybody in practice and learning where they like the ball, learning where they like to shoot it from, things like that, where they like to get to for certain shots. It just comes with practice.

Everything after that is just a feel for the game, so...

**Q. How you see your role evolving this season from last season at Notre Dame when you came in to where you are now, just what you see could happen this season for you as far as your leadership?**

JULIAN ROPER II: Yeah, definitely being a little more vocal leader out there. Just being a voice, being that older guy that people can lean on and rely on. Playing-wise I feel like just bringing the intensity on defense, bringing the energy on defense that I usually pride myself in bringing.

Offensively just being able to -- like I talked about before, just being able to create for others and create for myself a little bit. Been working on my post game a lot with Coach Getter, Coach Shrew. It will be pretty exciting to see that.

THE MODERATOR: When you are sitting quietly in April thinking about the season, how will you know the season was a success at that point?

JULIAN ROPER II: Can you --

THE MODERATOR: This upcoming April after the season is behind you in your quiet moment, how will you know that it was a good season?

JULIAN ROPER II: I'll know it's a good season once we do everything we talked about doing. We have a lot of goals that we want to accomplish, and we want to win a lot of games. We want to win every game we play, but it don't always work out like that. That's just something when I look back in April just accomplishing our goals, and I'll know that we had a successful season.

THE MODERATOR: Notre Dame, thanks a lot. Good luck this year.

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