

State Farm Champions Classic: Duke vs Kentucky

Tuesday, November 12, 2024

Duke Blue Devils

Jon Scheyer

Cooper Flagg

Press Conference



Kentucky - 77, Duke - 72

JON SCHEYER: This is a big time college basketball game. Incredibly proud of our team. I thought we came out, played a great first half, really competed at a high level.

One, give Kentucky credit for the plays they've made. I think they showed incredible maturity, and their experience came out in that second half, no question.

For us it's disappointing because you're winning for 27 minutes, and our guys competed, and they played hard. This guy to my right at 17 years old, what he does and how he competes and how he shows up, I couldn't be more proud of him. I could not be more proud of him, coaching this guy, man.

We've got a long season to go. I feel more optimistic tonight losing than I did even before because you find out in this game the character of your team, the heart that they have, and this team's got a lot of heart. We're missing Khaman -- I think we were up nine when Khaman started cramping in the first half. Sion too. There was a huge sequence for us Sion got injured and they hit a 3. It was a double whammy.

They kept coming at us, making shots, and we had an answer. We just kept answering. Came down to one more play, and give them credit, tip your hat to them.

For us, we're going to grow and learn from this. I promise you that. We've got a locker room full of guys that are disappointed, heart broken. I'm with them. And we're going to get better.

Q. What were you hoping to get out of that last timeout?

JON SCHEYER: Well, the ball in his hands. They knew that was happening too, and I'm okay with that. We're

going to be in these moments a lot together, and I trust his instincts. I probably could have put him in a better position, to be honest.

But he's got to touch it and trust that good things are going to happen. I wish you could say that every time it's going to work out, and that's not reality. I'm just so proud of him. Again, what he did in that game -- he willed us in that game. He willed us. Especially down the stretch, to have 12 rebounds. Again, 26. He'd tell you he's got more in him too. Again, I want him to touch it down the stretch.

Q. Andrew Carr is obviously a player you know well. What were your impressions of him down the stretch?

JON SCHEYER: He made some big plays. Yeah, Andrew's a good player. We've competed against him for a couple of years. He had the two and one finishes. He's capable from three. Those are two big plays, the finishes down the stretch. Give him credit. He's got good size and does a good job inside. But that's where the details matter, and we're going to grow from that.

Q. Cooper, what did you feel the difference was offensively for you guys from the first half to the second half?

COOPER FLAGG: I think we could have got a little stagnant at times. I think a lot of it was defense. It was a lot of miscommunications on defense that led to some easy stuff for them.

Transition offense is a lot easier than playing in half-court the whole half, so I think we kind of slowed it down a little bit and that could play into that.

Q. You played all 20 minutes in the second half. Did you feel any fatigue down that stretch at all?

COOPER FLAGG: I wish I could say I didn't. I felt a little bit and tried to fight through it the best I could.

Q. What does it say to have the ball in your hands late in this big matchup at the end of the game?

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COOPER FLAGG: Coach trusted me to go and make a play, like he said it didn't work out. I'm glad he had that trust in me to put the ball in my hands. I'm looking for it in that moment. It didn't work out, but I'm still going to look for it no matter what.

JON SCHEYER: It worked out basically every other time throughout the game to put us in that position.

Q. Cooper, do you think that you learned a lot tonight being outside Cameron and playing such a big opponent?

COOPER FLAGG: Yeah, it was definitely a big experience. We started three freshmen. I know me, Kon, and Khaman learned a lot from tonight. Playing some big minutes. It was definitely a big learning experience for us.

It was just basketball. We came out, and we competed. A bunch of plays we can clean up on and get better at, but at the end of the day, it's just basketball.

Q. Coach Scheyer, what did you know about Mark Pope and a Mark Pope team before tonight, and what did you learn from the game?

JON SCHEYER: Honestly, nothing different. A ton of respect for him and them. Their offense has been impressive watching on film.

I thought our guys in the first half did a really good job, and they just kept coming at us. A lot of credit to him, his team. They executed really well down the stretch, really well. I think that's where that experience for them really paid off. They shared it. They were patient. Give them all the credit in the world, all the credit.

Q. On that final possession, did you slip on something? Did you step on a wet part of the floor?

COOPER FLAGG: I mean, I could have. It was definitely wet once I slipped or whatever happened. I kind of lost the ball at first, and then I might have slipped. Whatever happened, that's not an excuse. Just kind of move forward.

Q. Jon, you perhaps know better than anybody what it's like to step up and take over a Blue Blood college basketball program following a storied head coach. What can you say about how Mark Pope has handled that at Kentucky?

JON SCHEYER: It's not for me to say. He's been a head coach for a long time. He's done a great job. Obviously any time you're a head coach at Duke or Kentucky, that

means a lot to a lot of people.

College basketball is at its best when those two programs are really good, and I'm not surprised, the way the game went tonight in terms of it being a really back and forth and a high level basketball game. Obviously he's doing a really good job.

Q. Jon, what do you know about Sion's injury right now? What are your thoughts about having another cramping issue after Cooper had it the last game?

JON SCHEYER: Look, it's concerning. I think part of it is we have young bodies. I think that's part of it, where we've got to help these guys. Again, we're not trying to just dip our toes in the water. We need Cooper to play a lot and Khaman.

I thought the way he impacted the game tonight, besides the 10 and 7, just his presence on the floor. You could see guys on their team just looking to see where he's at. So obviously that's something we've got to take a hard look at.

As far as Sion goes, I don't know his status. He took a hard hit on that screen, a hard hit. We'll get him back and get him evaluated and sigh. Obviously those two guys are really important to us.

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