

# NCAA Men's Basketball Championship - Final Four: Houston vs Duke

Saturday, April 5, 2025

San Antonio, Texas, USA

Alamodome

**Duke Blue Devils**

**Coach Jon Scheyer**

**Cooper Flagg**

**Kon Knueppel**

Semifinals Postgame Media Conference



Houston 70, Duke 67

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by head coach of Duke with student-athletes.

We'll ask Coach Scheyer to begin with a statement, then we'll take questions for the Duke student-athletes.

JON SCHEYER: So for me the very first thing I want to say is how proud I am to coach these two guys next to me and our entire team. I mean, it's been a special ride that ended in a heartbreaking way.

Frankly, the game, we did what we wanted to do. I thought our guys followed the game plan, controlled the game, we had the lead for 35 minutes, winning by six with a minute 15 to go. They made plays. You got to give 'em a ton of credit. We didn't make those plays.

You go from some of the most special moments in the tournament to the most heartbreaking loss. I'm not about to feel sorry for one second. These guys have done an incredible job. It's heartbreaking. It's incredibly disappointing. There's a lot of pain that comes with this. That's what the tournament is all about. You're an inch away from the national championship game.

But I could not be more proud of these two guys next to me. We've done this thing differently. What they've done in 18 and 19 years old I couldn't fathom doing. Just incredible.

Are they going to get questions first?

THE MODERATOR: Yes.

JON SCHEYER: But I want to say Houston is a championship-caliber team. We had a ton of respect for them. We obviously still do. Just really disappointed we couldn't make one more play down the stretch.

But congratulations to them.

THE MODERATOR: We're looking for questions for Kon and Cooper.

**Q. Cooper, you had a great season, obviously didn't end how you wanted it to end. Take a second to give me a little bit of an overview on the season.**

COOPER FLAGG: Yeah, I mean, it was an incredible season. Incredible people, incredible relationships that I'm going to have for the rest of my life. Didn't end the way we wanted it to, but still an incredible year (tearing up).

**Q. Cooper, can you just talk about not obviously the very last possession but the possession before that. Is that the shot you were looking for? Is that the look you wanted?**

COOPER FLAGG: Yeah, I mean, it's the play coach drew up. Took it into the paint. Thought I got my feet set, rose up. Left it short obviously. A shot I'm willing to live with in the scenario. I went up on the rim, trust the work that I've put in.

**Q. Cooper, had you a six-point lead 47 seconds to go. Been closing out all season long. Anything you can look back at now that you think wish you could have done differently?**

COOPER FLAGG: Just communication. I thought me and Sion messed up a switch. Got to get the ball inbounds, find whatever we got to do, find a way to get the ball inbounds. I think that was a big messed-up communication play between me and Sion that led to a big three.

**Q. Kon, what was your thought as it was clear Cooper was trying to do more and more, and you obviously**



**trying to support him? Was that something that was going through your mind, that we need to make sure this is a team effort? How much do you think about that when you play with a guy like that?**

KON KNUEPPEL: Yeah, I mean, it's always a team effort. Coop had the hot hand. Just won Player of the Year, got to give him the ball. He's a great, great player.

He made a bunch of great plays tonight. It was awesome. Yeah, I thought he played a phenomenal game. I thought we could have done a couple things to help him, too.

**Q. You scored I believe nine points in the last 10 and a half minutes. Was that more attributed to Houston's defense or execution?**

KON KNUEPPEL: I think probably both equally. They're a really good defensive team. I didn't think we were sharp the last, whatever it was you said, ten and a half minutes. I didn't think we were as sharp on our execution as we had been for the first 10 minutes of the second half.

Tip our hats. They're a really good defensive team.

COOPER FLAGG: I think Kon said it really well. Got to give them a lot of credit for what they do every single night they play. Like he said, we could have been a little bit more sharp down the stretch executing some things. At the end of the day, you got to give them a lot of credit, as well.

**Q. Despite the way tonight unfolded, you still had a pretty good year. How would you want this team to be remembered in the future?**

KON KNUEPPEL: Yeah, I thought we had a phenomenal year. It was a joy to be a part of. I mean, I would just hope that the fans and everybody appreciates how we gave it our all every night and appreciate how we played together.

COOPER FLAGG: Yeah, I would very similar. Just the connectivity of this team. I mean, I know I can speak for myself, I think the rest of the guys, that the connections and relationships we were able to have all year long, it was phenomenal. Like, I wouldn't have wanted it to be with anybody else. So I hope that was able to shine through on the court. People can remember us and appreciate the way we were able to play and the effort we gave for one another.

THE MODERATOR: We want to thank Kon and Cooper for joining us. We're looking for our first question for Coach Scheyer.

**Q. All year you have been known for these scoring runs, putting opponents away. You were up 14 tonight, then it was Houston who had the 10-0 run. Were you worried about Houston going on a run? How did that sort of change the game?**

JON SCHEYER: Well, Houston is a team that doesn't quit. I mean, they're never going to stop. So my messaging throughout the whole way with the team was, Understand this team doesn't go away.

So no lead is safe with them. We could talk about not scoring down the stretch. For me it's our defense. We gave up 42 points in the second half. That's what carried us in the first half. I thought the last segment to close the half was big. We gave them four threes and then some uncharacteristic plays we probably made. They hit some tough shots.

For me, as I reflect in the moment, I look at our defense. That was disappointing. Even if we're not scoring, usually we get stops to get separation.

**Q. As you process this, what will you do over the next weeks, months to think about it, reflect? Who will you talk to? You're going to be here in the future, have these kind of scenarios come up again. What will your process be to analyze this?**

JON SCHEYER: I'm not there yet, to be honest. I'm heartbroken for our team that did everything for 38 minutes or 39 minutes, and came up short.

Obviously as a coach, I'm reflecting right now what else I could have said or done. I'm sure there's a lot more that I could have done to help our guys at the end there. That's the thing that kills me the most.

The amount of game situations we've watched this year. We haven't had the real-life experience all the time, but that's something I really felt we prepared for. So I feel like I let our guys down in that regard.

But I'll cross that bridge the next couple days. Right now I'm just hurting for our guys, want to be there for them.

**Q. I'm sure it was a tough locker room after the game, emotional. What can you share with us about what you said, how you handled that situation?**

JON SCHEYER: Well, the first thing is I told them I'm sorry because we truly believed that we were going to be playing Monday night, and we're capable of doing that.

The thing I loved about this group, they had a purity to

them. We've done this thing differently. Being young, to be this successful, part of 'em doesn't know any better, which is great. Then also, like, these are the things that experience gives you, when you go through these moments.

Unfortunately it comes with the tournament. It's the most heartbreaking thing. But I just try to explain to them, like, what they've done for Duke, our program, our university. It's been one of the best seasons ever.

Obviously we came up short of winning the whole thing, which is what we wanted to do. But 35 wins, how hard these guys played, how together they played. You just thank them all. I couldn't be more grateful in 2025 to have this connected of a group. It's hard to do.

**Q. You called a timeout when the margin was five. What did you see there to make you call the timeout? I'm guessing it was an opportunity to regroup, refocus?**

JON SCHEYER: Yeah, it was strictly that. I didn't feel our defense, we had that same edge in the second half. So I just wanted to give our guys just a quick breather, get 'em refocused on the key points for our defense, specifically trying to stop Cryer.

We had some really uncharacteristic communication breakdowns with him to give him some open looks. Once a guy like that sees it go in, he's been in this moment before, a heck of a competitor, a big-time scorer.

I thought we settled in. I actually thought the final five minutes there we did get some stops, but that was the sole purpose of my timeout, just try to get us refocused on what we had to do to execute to get stops.

**Q. You had a double-digit lead. I don't remember exactly how much it was, but Mason got the dead-ball technical. How much did that and the possession after that change the momentum?**

JON SCHEYER: Well, I think there's a few plays that change momentum. That's not ideal. But still we're up six. I keep going back we're up six with under a minute to go.

Houston never once did I feel we were going to blow Houston out, even with that lead. Look, they were in that same position at Kansas. I was watching that game a couple days ago. You never feel like they're out of it.

So I think, sure, you can look to that play. We fouled them in the bonus. There's a bunch of plays. But end of the day, you're winning, you have the ball, and we came up

empty twice with a missed free throw and then a turnover.

We just have to finish the deal.

I don't look at one play at being the momentum swinger by any means.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, we want to thank you.

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