

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Round - Mount St. Mary's vs Duke

Thursday, March 20, 2025

Raleigh, North Carolina, USA

Lenovo Center

Duke Blue Devils

Kon Knueppel

Cooper Flagg

Tyrese Proctor

Media Conference



TYRESE PROCTOR: Yeah, I'm in a good state of mind. I think our guys are ready. In terms of only collecting 1 through 4 really, everyone is sort of that floor general. Just the way that we play, five out, everyone sort of bring the ball up and getting involved.

I think I'm ready, our team's ready, and we're just looking forward to the first game.

Q. Tyrese, this is also for you. You've been through the process of winning a conference championship and moving on quickly to the NCAA Tournament. What's the difference with this team than it was two years ago, and how quickly do you move on from Saturday night to now?

TYRESE PROCTOR: Yeah, I think the biggest thing is it's 0-0, the season starts over again. Everyone's a champion coming into March. All the guys that are in the tournament have won their conference, so everyone's on a high.

I think just staying level headed is a big thing, and just focusing on us is a really big thing moving forward.

Q. Cooper, Kon, as you guys get ready to play in your first NCAA Tournament, how do you feel the overall season has prepared you as a whole.

THE MODERATOR: Kon, could you answer that first, please.

KON KNUEPPEL: We've been in a lot of tough games, especially recently, tough physical games. I think that will prepare us for the physicality of the tournament. Also, Coach did a great job nonconference in getting us to play a bunch of good teams. So we'll be ready for any team that's going to play us.

THE MODERATOR: Cooper, do you have anything to add?

COOPER FLAGG: I would just say, to what Kon said, our schedule all year long is about getting better every single day. I think we've done a good job of moving forward and trying to get better every single day.

THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon.

Q. This is for Cooper. Just kind of walk us through a little bit of how you're feeling and what you've done the last few days in terms of trying to -- for recovery and rehab type things.

COOPER FLAGG: I'm feeling pretty good. We have an incredible team, incredible training staff. So we've been working through the steps of just getting back to 100 percent, and I feel very good. I'm very confident moving forward.

Q. Cooper, can you just kind of talk us through what those days were like initially when you got hurt and then the rehab just while you were still in Charlotte and watching the team. What was it like for you? Were you fearful your season was over? Just tell us about those feelings.

COOPER FLAGG: Yeah, like I said, we have a great team. So as soon as I got hurt, it was just about getting the right treatment, the right recovery, figuring out exactly what was going on.

I had an MRI, X-Ray, both of those looked really good. So from then, it was just moving on, pain tolerance type of things, just getting the recovery and treatment that I needed.

Q. Tyrese, we know March Madness is about the floor general, about you dictating tempo and being that point guard for Duke University. How are you mentally and physically getting ready for this tournament?



Q. Cooper, I'm just curious, how much have you been able to practice over the last few days? Then physically do you expect to maybe take it a little lighter when you first get back on the court, or do you feel like you'll be full go tomorrow?

COOPER FLAGG: From the start of the week, it was kind of like a build-up of jumping back into practice, getting back to a hundred percent, doing some individual things with some of the coaches on the side. Then I was back at full practice yesterday.

So I feel really good, I'm really confident about going 100 percent tomorrow.

Q. Cooper, not to relitigate the injury again, but when you did go down, what was your vantage point on that play against Georgia Tech? What did you see happen, and what was going through your head at that moment?

COOPER FLAGG: Just kind of went up for a rebound, kind of came down and landed on the player's foot and twisted my ankle. I've twisted my ankle a good amount of times. Growing up, I feel like most basketball players go through something like that.

It was kind of just figuring out how severe it is and how it feels, see if you can just get up and walk it off, but obviously it was definitely more than that. So I had to go to the back.

Q. Cooper, how much confidence did it give you in guys like Kon and Tyrese and even Sion, when you were out having to watch from the side, that they were able to execute everything so flawlessly. Whether it's about UNC in that game before the tournament, or even in the tournament, just being able to get that extra help to see them, whether it's foul trouble or the injury, to carry you?

COOPER FLAGG: I think that was really good for us to go through and kind of have that experience. Obviously I hated every second of not being out on the court, but these guys made it really easy for me to kind of sit back and watch them execute, watch them go out there and dominate the other team. So they definitely made it easy for me.

Q. This is regarding the question that Cooper was just asked. How much better do you think you guys are now because you've had to go through a couple of games without him, and you've learned to play different roles, Pat has increased his contribution and that kind of thing?

TYRESE PROCTOR: Yeah, I think not having Coop and Maliq, it hurt our team, but it was also a good experience. We've sort of played without a couple guys the whole year, and I think it's just good to have that in your back pocket. You never know what's going to happen, and you pray to God no one else gets hurt. It's possible, and stuff happens.

I thought we adapted really well. Coop and Maliq and everyone had full confidence in everyone, and we just went out and played our game.

THE MODERATOR: Kon, do you have anything to add?

KON KNUEPPEL: Yeah, I think it gave some guys some opportunities, but also helped us unlock some things offensively and defensively that might work in the future.

Q. This is for any of y'all, but you guys are effectively playing a home game, just 30 minutes from campus. What kind of advantage does that give you not having to travel, being close to home?

THE MODERATOR: Kon, could you answer that, please.

KON KNUEPPEL: Yeah, it's just nice not to have to get on a plane, ride over here on a bus, not too long. Got in last night for a nice dinner. So not too much travel, soreness, and stuff like that.

Q. Tyrese, as one of the older veterans on the team, I don't know if you've already been asked this, but getting to be able to hopefully see or talk to Jeremy Roach, have you been able to see him? Just the excitement of being in the same city as him again.

TYRESE PROCTOR: I actually saw him as soon as we got off the bus. He was walking out, and I saw him and said what's up. It was good to see him, catch up.

Q. Kon, you talked about some things that you were able to unlock offensively and defensively. What were some of those things that you saw as you went through the absences?

KON KNUEPPEL: Without having Coop, we had to get a lot more off-ball movement and going to get guys open. I think a lot of that helped us offensively and could make us more dangerous going forward.

Q. Cooper, Rob Wright said that you may have sent him an eyes emoji whenever the brackets got released. Can you talk about that relationship? I know you have a game in front of you, but what would that be like?

COOPER FLAGG: Yeah, like you said, obviously we're focused on tomorrow's game, but definitely when we saw the selection show and I saw Baylor right in our bracket, it was kind of just a cool moment, having gone to school together last year and playing together, having that connection. So it was definitely a cool moment.

Q. To kind of follow up on the Monteverde line there, Liam is here also this weekend. How much have you kept up with all the Monteverde guys' seasons, and how much have you kept in contact with them?

COOPER FLAGG: I would say, whenever I get a chance to catch their games on TV, I try to tune in and watch for a little bit, but we're all really busy, going through the same thing. So it's hard to talk a lot or stay in fluent contact.

I definitely reached out a bunch of times, talked to the guys, and it was just a great year for all of us.

THE MODERATOR: Gentlemen, thank you very much. You're excused. Good luck tomorrow.

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