

# NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: Second Round - Baylor vs Duke

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Lenovo Center

## Duke Blue Devils

## Jon Scheyer

Media Conference



THE MODERATOR: We're a tad bit early, but we're going to go ahead and get it started. We're going to open it up for questions.

**Q. Jon, have you ever seen anybody dive on the floor as much as Kon? What is it about his way of doing things that he's always in that mindset?**

JON SCHEYER: He's up there for sure. The cool part, I was talking to Kon about it earlier this season, and he was talking about growing up, his dad would never talk to him about scoring points, wouldn't talk about making shots. It would be about rebounding and taking charges.

Obviously that lends itself to putting your body on the line, and he's got a knack for it. Just you feel when there's a scrum, you feel confident that Knueppel is going to come up with the ball. It's fun to coach guys like that.

Jared had a very similar things, McCain, with all those loose balls, broken plays, rebounds. Obviously the impact it has on winning is huge.

**Q. Of course you all played last year against Baylor, but I was curious of your memory of the game 15 years ago in the Elite Eight. What was your memory of that? Of course you had a really good game on the court.**

JON SCHEYER: Oh, man, probably the most important game I ever played in, to be honest. That was kind of the making of four years. To get over the hump for us of getting to a Final Four, that was a special thing.

I remember Baylor had a great team. Tweety Carter was on staff for them, Tweety was a great guard. LaceDarius Dunn, Ekpe Udoh. They're huge. Their front line was 6'10", 6'10", 7'. They played a zone.

I remember a couple plays. We hit a few threes late. Lance Thomas got an offensive rebound, kicked it to Nolan Smith, hit a 3. I hit one of them. I think Nolan had another just to put us up six.

I remember the whole game was back and forth. It was such a high-level game. Really for me it's the most memorable game I probably played in because of the respect for those guys, how good they were. Then the nature of the game, just how it went down to the wire. So special memories.

**Q. With your playing days in mind, there was a viral clip this week of Patrick Beverley, who said -- I want to quote him right -- you never ducked any smoke, and he called you "White Mike" back in the day. Given your résumé, are there times you have to remind players and recruits about your résumé?**

JON SCHEYER: They have completely disregarded the fact that I played at all. They think that I did not play whatsoever.

Isaiah last week, there was a picture of me in my playing days, black and white picture, he said it wasn't Photoshopped at all, like that's the way it was.

So I asked our guys a couple days ago to call me "White Mike." They refused. They're just going to call me Coach. But that's nice of Pat to talk about me that way.

For me, I take a lot of pride in the city of Chicago and going wherever there was a game, I'd go there to play. For him to talk about me that way -- I'm not sure "White Mike" was the name, but I'll take it.

**Q. As you put this team together, how much did you value versatility and depth? As you've been tested here with injuries over the last couple weeks, how much do you think that will help you moving forward?**

JON SCHEYER: I think it's a huge thing. Of course it's unfortunate, it's the third year in a row we haven't had our roster fully healthy, but that's part of it, unfortunately. So you have to be the -- you try to be as well balanced as possible. You want to have depth wherever you can while still having -- you don't want to have too much. You want



guys feeling like they have a chance to play all the time and all that.

I think the biggest thing with this roster was the versatility and the competitiveness. We wanted guys that weren't afraid of fighting for playing time. We wanted versatility where we could really switch a lot on the defensive end. That's been a huge strength of ours having the positional size and the versatility on defense.

**Q. Jon, Jeremy said that, when you guys decided that it was time for him to move on, it was a mutual thing, and it was best for both of you guys. How difficult, though, was that given your relationship with him going all the way back to high school and the fact that he stayed after you took over and all?**

JON SCHEYER: Look, Jeremy, we've been through a lot together. Just with Jeremy, though, I remember talking to him when he was 16, and he to me will look back on his time at Duke just being the connector with Coach K and myself and that transition, four amazing years. So Jeremy and I have had a lot of just honest, great conversations through the years.

I think with the COVID year and guys having extra years of eligibility, these types of things can come up. It was handled with love, honesty, and we just felt mutually both ways that it was the best thing for him in his career, and obviously just where we had to go because of that.

I have nothing but love for Jeremy, and our relationship is strong. He'll be a Duke guy forever.

**Q. Spencer has a really cool moment yesterday. With some rule changes that are coming, his path could become maybe less and less likely, just going from practice squad to walk-on to scholarship. I guess do you hope that even with the coming roster limits, that you guys can try to maintain those kinds of opportunities even with the way the sport is changing in so many ways?**

JON SCHEYER: It's something you may not think about all the time, but we've been really blessed with having an amazing scout team and having a guy like Spencer who, truly, you can ask our players, nobody likes to guard Spencer in practice. He gives us quickness, toughness.

Then when he comes in the game, he's the best points per possession than anybody on our team, the way he scores and does all that.

His attitude, he's been so unselfish. He came during a hard time where it was COVID, so we didn't add anybody

to the roster. So he was a practice player, and then he made it pretty clear he had to be on the team. He was just too impactful with what he did. But he's had an amazing attitude.

He didn't know if he was going to come back for his fifth year. I wanted him back. I'm glad he made that decision. Obviously to think about the moments he's had this year, it's been pretty special to think about.

**Q. Jon, Sion was in earlier. When asked about his role, the first thing he said was to let others shine and help them do that. Most coaches want that, and it makes them smile, but how do you know, especially when you're recruiting the portal in such a short period of time, that that's what you're indeed getting?**

JON SCHEYER: You don't fully know. You're praying. You're guessing a little bit. You try to really do your homework in a short period of time, and you think you know to the best of your ability, but that's something I think for us we really prioritized this off-season, like we really prioritized that with the guys we went after.

Everything we heard with Maliq, Mason -- obviously your question is about Sion, everything we heard about Sion was exactly what we were looking for.

As a guy in the transfer portal, you can look at your decision of where you go a bunch of different ways. You can think about just getting the most shots and minutes, or you can -- if you have a chance to play in the NBA, I felt like this opportunity for Sion would put him in the best light because it really replicates what he'd be asked to do at the next level.

So for him to have that maturity and understanding of how he can make an impact without just scoring -- and he's scored for us too, but it goes way beyond the scoring. It's been a luxury to have as a coach.

I've asked him to do a lot of different things -- guard every position, bring the ball up, screen, cut, shoot, pass, and there's no feelings with it. It's whatever you need. In this day and age to have a guy like that in his position has been an honor to coach that.

**Q. We got the news that Ryan Odom is officially the Coach of Virginia. It seems that all the empty vacancies have been filled. You know the guy at Miami pretty well. You played against Luke Loucks at Florida State. What relationships do you have with Ryan, Luke and even Will Wade?**

JON SCHEYER: I've known Luke for a long time.

Obviously I know Jay, but that wasn't your question. I haven't really crossed paths with Will, with Ryan. Looking forward to in the spring, though. I think it's really good hires for our league with where we need to go and the response we need to have moving forward.

But I can't say I've had a lot of interaction with those guys, but I think it's great for our league and looking forward to meeting those guys.

**Q. Do you think Spencer will become the next Duke great to become an assistant coach and maybe work his way into coaching?**

JON SCHEYER: Let's go one step at a time with Spence. Let's see about winning tomorrow, and then we'll go from there.

**Q. Jon, VJ was obviously a big part of your recruiting plans in the freshman class. What's it like to scout him now as an opposition, and what have you seen from him in this year and the growth that you probably thought he would have with you and now you're facing him?**

JON SCHEYER: Yeah, VJ, one, getting to know him in the recruiting process, great kid. Loved his family, the whole thing.

He's had -- I think the thing you've seen with him, just how his game has grown throughout the whole year with his offensive skill. He's always had it, but there's always an adjustment in college with how to get your shots off, attack the basket, and make the different reads.

His athleticism, I think, stands out, of course. I think that speaks for itself. Everybody can see that. His feel for the game, his passing, and his shot creation.

VJ's been a great player. To be their leading scorer in the Big 12, and he's getting everybody's best shot every night. I think he's had a great year. A ton of respect for him, and he's going to be a difficult matchup tomorrow.

You have to do your best to keep him away from the basket, but he makes it hard on you. He does a great job getting there.

**Q. Jon, you mentioned parenthetically when answering a question about where the ACC needs to go moving forward. Does it bother you to be the last team standing? This is the first time in the expansion era that only one ACC squad is in the final 32.**

JON SCHEYER: I take -- obviously I'm aware of

everything that's happening, and I take notes along the way of where we're at and what we have to do. Does it bother me? No, because we're planning to go to a Sweet 16 tomorrow, and that's where my focus and energy is.

There's no question for me after this season I want to continue to -- I want to help wherever I can in terms of the direction of our league moving forward. At the end of the day, I think this is a unique time. I think the ACC is going to bounce back. I think the hirings of these new coaches is going to help a lot.

But for me, I don't spend my energy, while we're making a run, about what any other team is doing, whether it's in the league or not. As long as we're winning and advancing, that's where my focus and energy is going to be right now.

**Q. Sorry if you were asked something like this. I missed the first question. But with the tallest team in the country, how much do you specifically focus on length and height and maybe specifically with your guards and kind of smaller forwards when you're recruiting and looking to the portal?**

JON SCHEYER: Honestly, this team is kind of a combination for me of year one and year two. Year one, we were really long, big. Couldn't really score as well as the typical team that we've coached. Year two we could really score, but we were undersized.

For us, there's a clear vision to me and a plan of how we were going to put together this team, starting with Cooper. When you have him and his versatility, it allows you to do other things maybe you couldn't do with the roster.

But for us going forward, I can tell you for next year, that's going to be the same vision we have of putting together a team that has great positional size, great versatility, great skill in shooting.

That's kind of the makeup, although we have some unique guys you're not going to get every year, but I feel we have some guys coming in next year that are very unique. And going forward, that's going to be the profile of how we try to put together a team.

**Q. You guys have coached against Norchad Omier several times over the years. How has his game evolved this season now that he's been at Baylor?**

JON SCHEYER: I think it's more of the same in terms of -- look, he was putting up crazy numbers in Miami. He was a handful there, and he's a handful now. He's as good of a rebounder to me as there is in college. He's got great touch around the basket. He spun the ball on the floor

maybe a little bit more than he did Miami from the perimeter. So one-on-one defense against him is important.

He's basically playing the whole game, so it's not like there's any break from guarding him, like he's doing everything for their team.

I think his rebounding is high level, and his game has just continued to grow in terms of putting the ball on the floor, shooting occasionally 3s. But he was a force then, and he's a force now.

**Q. Both Isaiah and Kon have talked to me about how playing this close to home, you don't have to commute, you don't have to take a flight. You get extra, extra rest, all that sort of thing. In terms of the crowd, though, being able to play this close to home and having 80 to 90 percent in your favor, how important is that in knockout settings?**

JON SCHEYER: Yeah, look, not getting on a plane was great. It's a little bit of a strange feeling, to be honest. You feel like you're away from home, but you're 25 minutes, 30 minutes away from campus. It's a different feeling, but I wanted our guys to feel the tournament atmosphere. That's why we're staying here and all that.

I thought the crowd was awesome yesterday, a great turnout, great response. I hope it's the same tomorrow. But at the end of the day, that doesn't get you any points. It doesn't get you any stops. The most important thing is our mindset and attitude.

But we love seeing our fans show up and support us. It means a lot to us and to me for sure.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you very much. Good luck tomorrow.

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