

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: Regional Semifinal - Arizona vs Duke

Thursday, March 27, 2025

Newark, New Jersey, USA

Prudential Center

Duke Blue Devils

Coach Jon Scheyer

Cooper Flagg

Kon Knueppel

Sion James

Sweet 16 Postgame Media Conference



Q. Cooper, you had 30 points, six boards, seven assists, three blocks. You're the first player since Dwyane Wade's triple-double in 2003 to hit threshold of at least 25 points, five boards, five assists, and three blocks in a tournament game. How did you do it?

COOPER FLAGG: I mean, I think just playing with really good energy, trusting our game plan, trusting my teammates. They put me in some really good spots tonight. Coach, as well, put me in some really good spots. I think just making the right play and just letting the game happen.

Q. Coop and Kon, this team is so young and plays with such poise and togetherness. Like Coach Scheyer mentioned, Arizona wouldn't go away, but you guys pulled it out. What is it about the brotherhood that turns young men like yourselves into the caliber of players that you are in just one season?

KON KNUEPPEL: Yeah, I think we just really embody our coach. He's always poised. He's always steady. So down the stretch, we're like him.

COOPER FLAGG: Yeah, and I think what I could add is it's a testimony to some of the guys that Coach brought in: Mason, Sion, and then having Tyrese come back. Those three older guys that have such wisdom and have been in some of these situations before and have so much game experience, they bring so much leadership to our team. And they've meant so much in those moments of being poised and keeping our heads on straight.

Q. For Cooper and Kon, those two threes that you each hit right before the half, can you take us through both of those plays? And, Cooper, you obviously showed a lot of emotion after that shot you hit at the buzzer. What were you feeling in that moment going into the half?

COOPER FLAGG: Yeah, I mean, I think it was a great rebound by Mason, just getting the ball. We were going through a little struggle at the end of that first half of coming up with the defensive rebounds. A huge rebound for him at the end of the half to close it out. He hit me on a run. Just went up and made a shot.

JON SCHEYER: I mean, look, a ton of respect for Tommy Lloyd, his team, Arizona, their program. I thought they were incredible tonight. I thought our guys made some big-time winning plays. A lot of game pressure. They just wouldn't go away, even with a 19-point lead. No lead really felt safe with them. I thought our guys hit some clutch free throws, made just enough plays. Obviously it was hard to get stops for anything in this game, but obviously that's sometimes how it goes. I couldn't be more proud.

Hats off to Arizona for the job they did, and proud to be moving on. It's a quick turnaround, obviously, so our focus tonight for us is go straight to the preparation. But we're going to enjoy this one, never take for granted going to an Elite 8. That's a special thing.

I'll let you guys talk to them.

Q. Sion, obviously before coming to Duke here, you spent some time at Tulane. I'm curious how your role there as a leader, growing and developing there at Tulane has prepared you for a role with this Duke team on a big stage like this?

SION JAMES: For sure. Everything I did over those four years whether I knew it or not was preparing me for moments like this. Throughout the whole time I was dreaming of being able to compete in the tournament and play in a Sweet 16. Now we get to compete in the Elite 8.

For me the big thing was learning to stay the course, and I feel like that's what we did as a team tonight.



KON KNUEPPEL: Yeah, we talk about inflection points, and the end of the half is a really big inflection point. So it was tie ballgame, and hit two threes gives us a bunch of momentum coming into the second half.

Q. Cooper, hindsight 20/20 what spoke to you when it came to Duke University in your recruitment? And now looking back on that and you're just a couple steps away from an opportunity for a National Championship, what that decision means right now?

COOPER FLAGG: Yeah, I think it's just a credit to Coach Scheyer, the vision that he laid out for me. It just really felt like the right place with the right people.

Q. Jon, can you frame the performance your team just put on in reference to the entire rest of the season? Did you see anything in particular from your guys tonight that maybe hadn't showed up until this point? If not, what you learned.

JON SCHEYER: I just thought it was great. In retrospect -- obviously in the moment, you want it to be as smooth as possible, but I thought the whole game, there were some uncharacteristic plays that Arizona made us pay for. And whether it's just the discipline you have to have off the ball, some of the loose balls we didn't come up with. I love the fact that we weren't perfect and you're not going to be necessarily perfect in these games. And just to hang tough.

I thought we did a great job -- somebody asked about end of half. That was critical in that moment.

Look, they just put a ton of game pressure on us. I think the clutch free throws and just to get one -- I thought Khaman's block was a big play at the end there.

Nothing necessarily new. We've been in some tough moments before. But when you feel the tournament in that way, a Sweet 16 game, I was just really proud of our guys who -- these three guys haven't been in that before. To be able to step up and just trust what we do, I think that's the biggest thing I've tried to emphasize to them.

Q. How do you prepare for a team that just scored 113 points and broke the record for three-point shots?

JON SCHEYER: Look, I'm not going to get into that. I haven't watched, I haven't seen. I see they scored 113 points. That's a heck of a performance. We know it's going to be a big-time challenge on Saturday. But we'll be preparing all night, and obviously I could give you a more informed answer on that tomorrow.

Q. Coach, it can be easy for young players to get emotional when they're in foul trouble, especially on a stage like this. How did you balance leaving those guys on the floor the way that you did?

JON SCHEYER: Well, I just -- look, we've built up an entire season of trust and teaching. And the lessons we've learned to -- really everything we've done from the off-season, from April 1st to now, has led to being mentally tough, physically tough, and together for these moments.

I thought our guys showed that poise. I think they showed that togetherness.

They're not afraid. You hope to recruit that, but until they get here, you don't fully know. I have a bunch of guys, man, they're killers. They're fearless, and they sure weren't afraid of this moment.

Q. Speaking about Cooper, big stage, huge performance. Do you think that this is a scene that he likes? Does he ever stop impressing you?

JON SCHEYER: It sure looked like that to me, that he enjoyed it.

The thing that's special -- that was one of the best tournament performances I've ever coached or been a part of. Just how he was with you guys, that's how he is. He just did what he was supposed to do, and he'll move on and get ready for Alabama. I think that's the beauty of it with him. He doesn't get caught up in all that.

I thought he just had -- what I've wanted from him is not to defer. I've just wanted him to fully be him, and I thought he was that. He was in his element tonight. He was him. He had just a great personality. He was loose, talking, competitive, the whole thing.

So yeah, he impresses me all the time. But we need more of that on Saturday.

Q. All these different conferences have a bunch of teams representing them, Big Ten, Big 12, SEC, and you're the lone ACC team still alone in the Elite 8. What's it mean to be the only ACC team still standing?

JON SCHEYER: Look, it means a lot. I've grown up in the ACC, so I take a lot of pride in what our league is capable of, what it's done in the past. I think I'm most proud of representing Duke in that way. But obviously the ACC has been something -- I don't know how many years, 15, 16 years I've been in this league as a player and as a coach. And just nobody -- the success we've had has been



incredible. So just to be able to represent and do that means a lot to us.

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