

Atlantic Coast Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Friday, March 14, 2025

Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

Spectrum Center

Duke Blue Devils

Jon Scheyer

Kon Knueppel

Tyrese Proctor

Postgame Press Conference



Duke 74, North Carolina 71

JON SCHEYER: I'm not sure I'm going to be able to give you the best rundown of that game. It's still a blur to me. I thought our team had incredible fight stepping up, Coop and Maliq being out, and I thought Tyrese and Kon in particular, they just had a great presence about them. Our defense was great in the first half. And then in the second half, we knew they'd put more pressure on their defense with their transition and probably had a couple turnovers we wish we could have back to get them going.

But you have to make enough winning plays, and tonight we made one more winning play than they did to get the win. But a ton of respect for them. We knew this would be a heck of a game, and couldn't be more proud of our team, but these two guys sitting next to me with what they did.

I want to say one more thing about both of them. Kon's two free throws were huge, puts us up three, that was a big difference. I thought Tyrese had the shot of the game. We were up four. We couldn't score. They were scoring down every time down. He had a pull-up to put us up six, where it rolled in. That was a big basket for us, to get some breathing room. But really proud of our team.

Q. Tyrese, can you talk us through the last defensive sequence out of bounds? Tyrese, I think you started on Davis and then you guys had to switch off of it?

TYRESE PROCTOR: So I had an out of bounds. We were just in our defense, and we were switching everything, and it was no threes, no fouls, and that's what we did.

KON KNUEPPEL: I was just guarding Powell in the corner, saw the guys out there switching pretty well, didn't look like much was open, so I settled for a Ven-Allen Lubin fadeaway three.

Q. For the players, what was going through your heads when UNC had that lane violation at the very end? What was the reaction from the entire team?

KON KNUEPPEL: I've never seen anything like that before, especially up one. That was very interesting. But yeah, we were obviously pretty happy. They didn't even get a shot at tying it.

TYRESE PROCTOR: I agree with everything he said.

Q. It was a 30-24 game and you guys finished on a 15-0 run. What was going well during the last five minutes of the first half? You were making everything. They were forcing turnovers, putting up tired shots, airballs. What was going well?

TYRESE PROCTOR: I think it was our defense. We were on every 50/50 ball. We were diving on the floor first, and that triggered our offense. Offense is contagious if we're playing our defense, and that's what happened.

KON KNUEPPEL: Yeah, we were just holding them to one shot, getting the rebound, and we were living in their paint, and that's something we want to do as a team all the time, and we did that very well in that run.

Q. When UNC finally gets it back within single digits, what goes through your head, and what mentality do you have to change into to keep them from taking the lead?

TYRESE PROCTOR: I mean, I think we're in the same mentality, just win the game. Coach always talks about find a way to win, and it was one of those games. It was a war, and I think we just found a way to win.

Q. What does playing in the ACC championship mean to you guys personally?

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KON KNUEPPEL: It's pretty sweet. Good to get two wins and play for the title tomorrow. We'll be ready, and it's a great challenge to get a second championship here this season.

TYRESE PROCTOR: Yeah, I won it freshman year, and it's a great feeling. Like Kon said, we're one win away now, so all our focus is on tomorrow.

Q. Pat obviously got a lot of time today. The lobs, Kon, it doesn't matter what big guy is out there? Does it take time to build that chemistry? There was a ton of them?

KON KNUEPPEL: Yeah, those guys are very good. They practice it a lot. Me and Khaman more so, especially in the games, but Pat is fully capable. He's got long arms. When the big guy steps up, I'm throwing it up there to him.

Q. You just beat a rival three times. How does that feel? Has it sunk in?

TYRESE PROCTOR: Feels great.

KON KNUEPPEL: Yeah, it's pretty sweet. Also, I don't think it's happened for a while. I'm very happy. Very happy with it, I guess.

Q. For the title game tomorrow, you'll be playing the winner between Louisville and Clemson, both very good teams. What's got to be the strategy in order to keep a clear head going into tomorrow?

JON SCHEYER: These guys haven't even seen them yet. I haven't even seen them. So, do what we do. You guys can answer.

TYRESE PROCTOR: Just play our game no matter who we play.

JON SCHEYER: Just don't predict a winner.

Q. Kon, you and Seth both grew up playing basketball in the Milwaukee area. What kind of a background do you have playing against each other and thoughts about him as a player?

KON KNUEPPEL: We played once in high school. He was a junior and I was a freshman. Actually, the game got postponed because one of my teammates collapsed on the court. Sorry for that.

But yeah, it was pretty sweet to have three games against him this year. We worked out at the same spots back

home, so it's very cool to see him always. He's a super nice guy.

Q. Can you describe the roller coaster of emotions the last two games?

TYRESE PROCTOR: Yeah, like you said, it was a roller coaster up-and-down. I think our guys were really level headed the whole way, and we all believe in each other and trust each other, and I think that's when we play our best basketball, when we're playing together.

KON KNUEPPEL: It's awesome for us to have this type of adversity. To be honest, we haven't had a bunch of it this season, so it's great. We don't want the injuries; that sucks. But having the close games, close battles down the stretch are big.

Q. Jon, the last 10 minutes of the game, last six minutes of the game when it started getting close, that's usually the time when you give the ball to Coop and let him carry you guys. How much of an adjustment was that, and is that where you missed him the most in that situation?

JON SCHEYER: Well, I think the thing we missed the most, we had some lineups in there we hadn't had. Isaiah starting, so Kon -- we were in a little bit different spots 30 games in. So some of the execution and the timing probably wasn't to the level I'd want it to be. It happened, such a quick turnaround. But overall, I thought our guys did a good job adjusting on the fly, and then we trust even when Cooper is out there, Tyrese, Kon, Isaiah, Sion, we have other play makers besides just Coop, but obviously, it's different not having him out there. I mean, of course.

Q. Yesterday you talked about when you play Georgia Tech in the tournament and after that game Coach Krzyzewski said that you were a player that played without fear. Do you coach without fear, and what does that mean?

JON SCHEYER: Well, for me, especially being the coach at Duke, you can't coach being afraid J where you're coaching not to lose. I think that's the biggest thing when you get in a tournament setting, especially if you're a higher seed or there's, quote-unquote, expectations on what you're supposed to do. I want our guys to go for it. That's how I've always been wired.

Along with that, there's been lots of failures along the way, man. But I embrace those, and I always try to win. That's what I want our guys to do, even though -- and it's hard to do in these moments, because when you have a lead, you can try to protect it and have that same mentality, and I



thought, obviously, some of those turnovers where they could get back in the game.

Especially now, mindset is the biggest thing, and I want our guys to have that mindset of going for it. Just go for it. I remind them all the time, you're right where you want to be. This is what you signed up for. You signed up for these hard moments, and I want our guys to embrace that.

Q. Administratively, is there any update on Cooper or Maliq that you can share with us?

JON SCHEYER: No. So Maliq re-dislocated his shoulder. We need to give it a couple days. We need to get back to campus and figure this thing out. Obviously, there's no expectation of him playing anytime soon. As far as Cooper goes, he's doing better. Sprained ankle, all the imaging came back negative. He sprained it pretty good, though. It's a good sprain. I'm not breaking any news. He's not going to play tomorrow. He can't play.

But our goal is to have him ready for the tournament. But we need to see how this weekend goes with the swelling and what he can do.

Q. That was a much longer answer than I was expecting.

JON SCHEYER: I'm generous tonight.

Q. That stretch in the second half, it seemed like you were struggling on offense with the turnovers, maybe finding your shots, and you seemed to throw up a couple lobs and that seemed to get things loosened up. Was that a period where you guys, under normal circumstances, might say, let's clear out for Cooper, or -- I mean, is that a time when normally you would find yourself saying, let's go to the big guy and see what happens?

JON SCHEYER: Well, of course second half winning time, Cooper makes so many plays for us. His ability to break down defenders, and teams don't usually want to switch him. So what happened tonight, they're switching everything, they did a great job jamming us, and they're athletic, man. Those guys, Trimble, Powell, those two guys in particular, Cadeau and Davis, can pressure the ball. They make it hard on you, so you have to make some plays to break down the defense.

I thought we did that. Just too many careless plays. We have to be stronger with the ball in the second half, and it's not just the fact you don't score. I would have rather had us punt the ball out of bounds a few times because at least we can set our defense. But once you give them the ball,

they're too fast in transition, man. They're going to make you pay.

Q. Obviously, Cooper's absence gets a ton of attention, but you look a week ago at the UNC game, Maliq was such a spark for you. Where did you miss him the most in a game like tonight?

JON SCHEYER: Well, our versatility on defense. We've switched these guys a lot the first two times we played them, and we didn't do that at all tonight. Maybe we should have in the second half in retrospect. But Maliq's defensive versatility, and then for us, he's been a guy on offense, we can just play catch with, meaning we can just hit him and get great cutting action off the ball.

So probably those two things are the biggest areas. But I'll tell you what, Pat and Khaman are two freshmen big guys, man, that combine for 25, and if my math is right, 25 and 12 between the two of them. I thought they were monsters. I thought they did a great job. If we could have kept them out of foul trouble a little bit better, but besides that, I thought they stepped up in a big way.

Q. Kon said he's never seen anything like the lane violation. You've been around a lot longer than he has. Have you?

JON SCHEYER: I'm not sure that's happened before. I'm trying to think back. I'm not sure in that setting, in that situation, where you saw that. But for our team, we've watched almost -- not almost. Every week, we've watched once or twice different game situations throughout the year, so we've seen a lot of stuff as a team, we just haven't experienced it necessarily.

I think for tonight, to go through the last -- the whole game but the last five minutes, I think we're going to learn so much from this moving forward.

Q. You mentioned that Khaman and Pat were monsters tonight. We've seen that from Khaman quite a bit, not so much from Pat. Did you kind of expect without Cooper that he was to have to play a bigger role tonight?

JON SCHEYER: Yeah, and obviously without Maliq, too. I told our staff, when Pat wasn't ready at the beginning of the year because of his health, so we were getting his health right, we had a great thing with Maliq and Khaman, great two men at that position where we could alternate them. Then Maliq got hurt, Pat had been working so hard where, really, we felt completely confident with Pat being in there.

Then Maliq came back, and I felt like, man, we've got a

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problem here because we've got three really good guys that can all play, but you want to develop where there's some continuity, and it's not two minutes playing.

So the confidence 100 percent with Pat is there. It's just a matter of the opportunity. So you don't want to see that happen with Maliq, but the progression that Pat has made the entire year, working on his body, doing extra, he's Coach Will Stevens' best friend. Every day, him and Coach Will are doing extra conditioning, extra stuff in the weight room, and he's really smart. Like really, really smart as a big guy. I love him, man, and to come through in that moment, just to be ready, he doesn't get shaken at all. He's got great poise.

Q. How has the team's chemistry evolved over the season and the tournament?

JON SCHEYER: A lot. I mean, a lot. For this team, we started the non-conference schedule, we knew it would be really challenging, and I think we grew so much from that, and to learn in the Kentucky game -- you have to go play at Arizona then, you play Kansas, you come back, play Auburn, I thought we really grew up in the non-conference.

To see guys that are genuinely happy for one another and to see guys that genuinely try to grow with what you're asking them to do, which doesn't always happen -- I'll use an example tonight. Isaiah didn't score. He had free throws. He didn't make a shot. He had a really good game because of how he guarded. If you just watch his defense tonight, he's switching, knowing the scouting report. To see that growth from day one of how far he's come, and obviously his shooting and all of that, but that's an example.

He comes into the Auburn game and our team couldn't be happier for him. Tonight, Caleb comes in, in the first half and our team is going crazy for him.

So I think just having that connection and then having that toughness along with it, it's been a special group to coach, man.

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