

# Atlantic Coast Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Friday, March 13, 2026

Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

Spectrum Center

**Clemson Tigers**

**Coach Brad Brownell**

**Nick Davidson**

**Butta Johnson**

Postgame Press Conference

Clemson 80, North Carolina 79

BRAD BROWNELL: Obviously a fantastic win for us. I'm really happy for our team. Our guys have been very resilient all year. Obviously our hearts were a little damaged in the second half yesterday when we didn't have Carter. Certainly today that's on our minds because this is the best time of year and guys worked so hard to get that opportunity. So guys were playing really hard, I think, for him in some ways.

I thought our defense was outstanding. Obviously they made some big-time shots late. It gets scary there when they bank one in on you there at the end. But I thought our guys were really good. We didn't turn the ball over against the press. They pressed us and were aggressive in it for the last two minutes of the game, and our guys got it up the floor. We broke it, got fouled, made big free throws.

Obviously Dillon Hunter, had six guys in double figures, and I thought maybe for the first 30 to 35 minutes, our defense was outstanding.

This was a big win for us. Excited for the opportunity to play Duke tomorrow.

**Q. For Nick, double-double, no Carter Welling. What was your motivation to play for Carter Welling after that tough injury yesterday?**

NICK DAVIDSON: Coach said it right. Our hearts go out to him. What a terrible injury and what a big part of our team. But our motto has always been everybody all the time. Tonight I happened to be the one that stepped up,



and yeah, willed the team to a win.

**Q. For Butta, you were really close to them when you played in Chapel Hill. What were you thinking you could take advantage of when you were that close last time and how did you come out on top?**

BUTTA JOHNSON: Yeah, being that close we just wanted to make a couple adjustments and also just wanted to -- last time we played them felt like they got the ball out pretty fast. So just had to keep my pressure on them, make them turn the ball over more. Just continued to play hard. This time of year anything can happen, so just play hard, play with confidence. In our meetings we called it playing with determination and playing for each other.

**Q. Nick, you obviously missed the free throw two seconds left in regulation. Was there any sort of discussion about missing the free throw intentionally to make it harder for them to advance up the court?**

NICK DAVIDSON: Definitely the second one. I'd like to say the first one, too, but just missed that one. They said soft touch, and I was able to miss it softly so they didn't get an advantage going the other way. But yeah, the second one was orchestrated by Coach Brownell.

**Q. Butta, all the guards finished with double digits today. When all of them are scoring so efficiently, how does it change the ceiling of this team?**

BUTTA JOHNSON: Yeah, it changes everything. All our guards are able to make shots, get downhill, create things for other players. It opens up space and opens up our offense a lot. Our main thing is defense. We play really hard. But if we're able to get our offense going, too, it's really hard to stop us.

All our guards played good tonight. Everybody was together on one accord. We were a couple men down but was able to step up and get revenge tonight.

**Q. At one point in the second half, up by 18. Just staving off any run that they had, what both**



**student-athletes can say about the resolve of this team and bending but not breaking.**

NICK DAVIDSON: We seemed to be in this position a couple times in year. One time it went bad, the other time it was a close call. And even honestly last night it got a little bit closer than we would have liked. I'm just glad we had the resolve to figure it out at the end. And with our experience in those situations, I think we were able to come out with the win.

**Q. Nick, you've said before that -- and all of you guys have talked about for this team it starts with your defense. How were you able to turn it around towards the end of that first half and shut them down going into halftime and after?**

NICK DAVIDSON: That's kind of like one of the main momentum things going into halftime on a good note. Think positive on the court, so I think that's good.

**Q. Coach, you obviously mentioned the press. What did you like about your team's late game execution as a whole?**

BRAD BROWNELL: You know, I just liked the way we handled it against the press. Butta did an unbelievable job. They've got Stevenson on the ball. He's terrific making decisions. Sometimes guys weren't open until three or four seconds into the delivery. And then I thought we looked up the floor, handled it well. Obviously Dillon made big free throws. Those were huge.

Then it's hard late game like that, North Carolina has so many guys that can make threes, and they did some nice action. Sometimes we were there, and they still shot them up and in.

That's hard. They're good enough to drive it to the basket, and give them credit for some real excellent late-game execution for sure.

**Q. At times it seemed like the Tar Heels offense was pretty stagnant. Was that something your defense was doing or a fault on their part?**

BRAD BROWNELL: Yeah, I don't know. They got off to a good start in the game. I don't think we were executing what we wanted to do very well. It's hard in a quick turnaround like this, you really can't -- it's hard to practice a bunch of the things you want to practice.

But I thought we made adjustments within the game, and then got a handle on what they were trying to do and guarded them much better. For the most part we kept

them away from the low post. I thought our transition defense was pretty good. Then I think some of that's a result of us scoring. When we score it just energizes you a little bit. It also makes them take the ball out of bounds and allows us to set our defense.

**Q. Bogavac lit you guys up the last time you played. How did you contain him tonight?**

BRAD BROWNELL: Yeah, I don't know that we did a lot different. They just have so many weapons. It's hard to concentrate a game plan on stopping everybody. You have to kind of pick your poison as a coach.

Obviously the big fella made shots tonight. It was unbelievable. But that might have been better than him scoring around the basket for us. Trimble is an unbelievable player in terms of getting to the paint and creating. I thought we did a decent job the longer the game went on stopping that, and then Bogavac is a guy that can really shoot it.

Sometimes when guys play against a guy like that and he's had a good game, it just wakes you up to be a little bit more alert, and there was probably some of that, as well.

**Q. Dillon Hunter at the end of the game, just what he was able to do at the charity stripe, how he went after the basket, and just the poise he had when they were hitting so many late game shots, and obviously this could have been different.**

BRAD BROWNELL: No, those are game-winning plays by a senior that's won 90 some odd games in his career at Clemson. That's what he's done. He's just one of those guys that helps your team win. There have been numerous games throughout his career where he's been in that situation to make big free throws, to handle the ball against traps. He got the ball a lot, whether it was the first inbound, and they're doubling it and he's getting it out of there. I thought he played terrific. He got to the paint three or four times and scored. He was huge tonight. There's no way we win that game without his senior leadership and his performance.

**Q. A little bit bigger picture, you've been in this league for a long time. The last couple years you haven't got as many teams in the tournament. What has been different this year about the depth of the league and the number of teams you might get in the tournament?**

BRAD BROWNELL: Yeah, the depth of the league is outstanding. I think there's been renewed commitment by some schools, which is what it takes. Administrations have to get involved in this new college world order that we're in.

So that's part one.

Number two, you have to hire good coaches, and sometimes you have to give them a little time to be able to establish their system. We've had some guys in the league that have done well right off this year, which is good. But there's no question that there was a renewed commitment.

We spoke about it as coaches in the league, obviously. Jim Phillips spent time with us. We've talked to our administrators about it, how important basketball is in this conference, the history and tradition of the league. I think we all understand that and want to do our part in upholding that.

Certainly this year, I think, our teams have done that. We've scheduled better. We've had more success in the non-conference, and universities have put more into their basketball again.

**Q. Since you were talking about the NCAA Tournament, you're going to have to play a third night, you might have to play four if you were to get to a championship game. Obviously you want to win a tournament but there's also the March Madness tournament looming. How do you balance that part of pouring it all out in this tournament to win versus trying to make sure your team is as refreshed and ready to go after this and not have this take so much out of them that they're not ready for the next one?**

BRAD BROWNELL: Yeah, we're pouring it all out. We're doing everything we can to win every game. I mean, that's what competitors do. You figure it out later, what's next.

That's the essence of competition is you're going to give your best. As you play better teams, you have to give your best when your best is needed most. That's what excellence really is.

I'm proud of our group. We've got a lot more work to do. Hopefully we've got a lot of basketball ahead of us.

We're ready to get back to the hotel, get rested up, recover and then get on to the next game tomorrow.

**Q. When is Carter Welling expected to get surgery, and what does he mean to Clemson on and off the court?**

BRAD BROWNELL: I don't know yet about surgery. My guess is it won't be this week because he'll want to go with us and we want him to go with us to the tournament. We'll just have to see. He obviously means a lot. He's had a heck of a first year with us. I think he's got a bright future.

He's got a lot of work ahead of him. But knowing him, the way he is, he'll attack it the right way and he'll have a big year.

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