

2018 NCAA Division I Men's Basketball Championship
Notes -- Midwest Regional – Omaha, Neb. – Friday, March 23, 2018
Duke 69, Syracuse 65



Duke Post-Game Press Conference Transcript
(Courtesy CBS Sports, Tracy Wolfson)

NCAA Men's Regional Semifinals and Finals: Omaha

Friday, March 23 2018

Omaha, Nebraska

Mike Krzyzewski

Grayson Allen

Marvin Bagley III

Duke Blue Devils

Duke - 69, Syracuse - 65

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Duke head coach Mike Krzyzewski and student-athletes Marvin Bagley III and Grayson Allen. Coach, an opening statement.

COACH KRZYZEWSKI: This was a heck of a game. I thought both teams played their hearts out. A great game to win, a really difficult game to lose, because Syracuse played such winning basketball.

And Jim's kids, that's their fourth NCAA game. They had won three, all close games. And you could tell, it was so close down at the end that they were very poised. And I was hoping our guys would match that poise, and they did. But we beat a really good team, a really good team tonight.

Battle is such a good player. And Jim is my dearest friend. I don't have a better friend in coaching. And he's as good a coach as there's ever been. So it was an honor to play him. We feel very good about the win, obviously, because we beat not only an outstanding team but an outstanding program.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Grayson and Marvin, can you describe the type of game this was in as much detail as you can?

GRAYSON ALLEN: It was a battle. It was a fight. We knew going in it was probably going to be close all the way down to the wire, especially with how good they've been playing defense recently. Their length and activity up at the top of the zone kind of disrupts your offense and what you're trying to do.

So it was really was a fight down the stretch and, you know, we didn't turn the ball over, which was tough against their zone and how long they are. And I thought that was really good for our team. And then Gary, obviously, hit two big free throws at the end to kind of seal the deal there.

MARVIN BAGLEY III: Yeah, to go off of Grayson, that was a tough game to be a part of. It came down to the wire, as we saw. But their zone, with how long they are, how wide they can be, when they put their arms out, it can be tough to score at times.

So they do that very well and we just have to find different ways to score the ball and penetrate against it and try to get easy points out of our offense from just how they were playing us. But they're a great team. They played their zone, like I said, very well. But our guys did a great job of, like Grayson said, not turning it over and just being smart at the end of the game and learning from our past mistakes in previous games we lost. So it was a great, hard-fought game tonight.

Q. Grayson, you mentioned don't turn the ball over, but how difficult is it to remain patient there when you're facing that zone, and even if a couple of jumpers don't go down you have to kind of keep working? How hard is it to stay patient?

GRAYSON ALLEN: A lot of jumpers didn't go down.

COACH KRZYZEWSKI: I was going to say more than a couple.

GRAYSON ALLEN: We just find a good look. We did a great job of moving the ball around. And really with Dell and Marvin in the middle there, when they were flashing up, they made great decisions finding open guys, and even hitting the shot in the middle which isn't an easy shot because you have everyone around you. And they finished at the basket strong. Really just getting strong passes in there and then great plays by the bigs in the middle there is what allowed us to be successful.

Q. Grayson and Coach, did you feel like maybe, I'll go Coach first, that Grayson defended the last shot with a 4-point lead a little too vigorously?

COACH KRZYZEWSKI: No, I think he did great, yeah.

Q. What is it about the zone that you think maybe, does it get into your head a little bit because you guys really seemed to attack it great and you had good looks all over the place?

GRAYSON ALLEN: We moved the ball around. We moved the ball around really well. It helps when we have the big guys that we do that can go up and get those lobs and make plays in the middle there because it makes the zone have a lot of attention on them and kind of brings the wing guys in or the big guy up. And that's what frees us up around the perimeter for open 3s.

Q. To start the first and the second half Syracuse was able to get the ball in the middle of the zone in the paint. What adjustments did you make to keep the ball out of the middle of the zone and keep them on the perimeter?

MARVIN BAGLEY III: We were just more active. The top two guys in our zone, they started being more active and closing up the middle a little bit. And it kind of made that pass harder as the game went on, as we started to adjust. And it wasn't getting in the middle as easy as it was in the beginning.

But we did a great job of communicating and continuing to stay positive through that, into that little stretch we had where we were playing terrible at one point in the game. But we did a great job, like I said, of keeping our head and staying poised and adjusting on the defensive end.

COACH KRZYZEWSKI: Yeah, he did a good job of that. I don't want to repeat what he said.

Q. Coach, how different was the Syracuse team than the one you guys saw in late February? And I mean, they were an 11 seed, a lot of people weren't sure they belonged in the tournament. Here they were in the Sweet 16 giving you guys everything you could handle?

COACH KRZYZEWSKI: We're both different. The game we played in Durham, I didn't think either team played very well. We were kind of at the end of an energy cycle where we had played a bunch of games in a row.

And they had lost some games. There wasn't a lot of energy in that game. And since then, like we talked about it a lot, like, we're both a lot better. They're better and we're better.

And they can beat anybody. They can beat anybody. Because they've got one of the greatest coaches of all time and they understand -- they understand what they do well. And hopefully we've got a pretty good coach, too, and our guys understand that too.

This was a heck of a game. This was a really outstanding game, because points were tough to come by. We're both better teams now than we were in February.

Q. Grayson, you obviously grew up a Duke fan before slapping became something that's been sort of traditional. Grant Hill asked in the broadcast, can you slap the floor in a zone. Is there a conflict between old Duke and new Duke?

COACH KRZYZEWSKI: No, I mean we did it. You can do it. It's about energy and intensity and showing some togetherness on the defensive end and getting a stop.

COACH KRZYZEWSKI: I always thought that Hurley and Laettner had to make Hill slap the floor. So he was a reluctant slapper.

Q. Could you elaborate on Tyus Battle's game and Oshae Brissett specifically?

COACH KRZYZEWSKI: Battle is one of the best players in the country. And I thought he really kept them in the game in the first half. And he's poised. He's a big-time player. I love Tyus. And he can play really any position.

And he allowed, even though he had a great first half, he got Brissett going because in the last -- since our last game Brissett has just gone up. He's averaging 18 and 10. And just a poised player.

All of Jim's kids get better, and Brissett is a great example of just how much they get better. And they're so big. They're so big. And I love their team. I love their coach even more. He does a great job with them.

Q. Looking ahead to Sunday, you guys have had some battles with Kansas over the years -- '91 comes to mind. What do you remember about that game?

COACH KRZYZEWSKI: I don't remember anything except this game right now. I'm 71. I have a hard time -- what's my wife's name? You are my wife, right, still for 48 years. I'd rather answer those questions tomorrow about Kansas and give Syracuse the respect that needs to be given for this game. This was a hell of a basketball game and we're ecstatic about going to the Elite Eight.

Q. Grayson, I'm sure you've thrown -- you threw a couple of lobs to Marvin today. I'm sure you've done a lot of them. But that one, it was pretty high, right? He had to go up and get it. Did you think that maybe you led him a little too far on that one in the second half?

GRAYSON ALLEN: No, I have a ton of trust in him. That's why I've been throwing lobs from, like, half court this season. I know if I get it somewhere around the square, he'll make the pass look good for me. And he did it again obviously there, even with two people coming to try to contest it.

MARVIN BAGLEY III: I appreciate it, bro. Appreciate the lobs. No, it was a great pass. Grayson sees the floor so very well, and he threw a great pass and I just tried to finish it for him.

Q. I wonder what goes through your mind when your team is executing and missing all those jumpers you referenced earlier.

COACH KRZYZEWSKI: Just to tell them to keep shooting. I think over the years I've been really good about letting guys shoot. And I just tell them, I just say, shoot it. And then I would add: And it's okay if you hit a few, too. But I won't be mad about that.

But the main thing is not -- the next shot is the next shot. You don't win by thinking back on a shot you missed; you have to be positive. And our guys are. They are.

And like in Grayson's game, Grayson didn't shoot well from 3. But it didn't affect his floor game. He had eight and one. And if you start worrying about your shot, if you miss, it affects everything about your game. So next shot is next shot. And we'll take whatever the consequences are from that.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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