

# Atlantic Coast Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Friday, March 11, 2022

## Miami Hurricanes

Brooklyn, New York, USA

Barclays Center

## Jim Larranaga

## Kameron McGusty

## Sam Waardenburg

## Postgame Press Conference



achievements and accolades don't really matter to me at this point.

**Q. Sam, can you just talk about the mood of the team. To the outsiders, they must think, oh, they must be really proud. They got close to beating Duke. What is the mood of the team tonight, and how would you assess the game tonight?**

**SAM WAARDENBURG:** Two great teams fighting. It was a great college basketball game. Big props to Duke for how they pulled it out. None of our guys putting our head down. We know we have a lot more basketball to play. We'll see where we're at on Sunday. We're going to get back to work and get ready for that.

**Q. Kam, A.J. Griffin only had 10 points the first time you played him, he had 20 tonight, knocked down a couple of late free throws and sealed the game. What was so difficult about playing him today? You guys did a much better job in the second half limiting the looks he was getting?**

**KAMERON MCGUSTY:** He can really play. All their guards and guys can really play. He's a great shooter. He has a nice body and frame. Strong, gets to the basket. He's an all-around player. He had a heck of a game. He definitely helped them out this second half of the season and helped them out. Credit to him and credit to his teammates for getting him the ball.

**Q. Duke's obviously super talented and has a little bit of a size advantage on you like a lot of teams. How would you rate your defensive performance in terms of the way you guys were covered up for doubles on Banchemo and the scrambles you like to play.**

**JIM LARRANAGA:** One of the adjustments in this game, it was very, very hard to get traps on their ball handlers because they run an offense -- we actually run it too -- where they're sprinting off of ball dribble handoffs, and then the screener is not standing still. He's coming on the move. So our guy had a hard time getting out there and trapping.

Duke - 80, Miami - 76

**THE MODERATOR:** Good evening, everyone. We're ready to begin the Miami press conference. We're joined by head coach Jim Larranaga. We have student-athletes Sam Waardenburg, and we also have Kameron McGusty. We'll ask Coach for an opening statement and then open it up for questions.

**JIM LARRANAGA:** I thought that was a great college basketball game by two very good basketball teams, teams playing very well at a very high level. The game sometimes comes down to some very, very simple things. In this case, it was free-throw shooting. They went 17 for 22, we went 6 for 12. We normally are a 70 to 75 percent free-throw shooting team, and we missed some early, and that obviously made a difference.

But our guys played as hard and as well as we possibly can. Duke is a terrific college basketball team. Those guys played great, 29 for 58. They ended up shooting 50 percent from the field and 77 percent from the foul line. That was the difference.

**Q. Kameron, 24 points on the night, 7 rebounds. Is that something you can take home being happy tonight, in spite of the loss?**

**KAMERON MCGUSTY:** Honestly, I can't. I've been through a lot in my college career, I've only been to the tournament one time. Never made it this far in the conference tournament. It really broke my heart that we couldn't get it done tonight. Our guys fight so hard. We've been through a lot as a program, so the personal

So late in the game, we just decided just to switch, but then that gives them the advantage, the size advantage inside when our guards end up on their big guys and we end up fouling them, and that's how they made all those free throws. Normally, we'd like to have turned them over more. They had ten turnovers. We'd have preferred it be 15, 16 turnovers. That would have given us a much better chance to close out the game.

**Q. Kam, early in the game, you guys were getting everything going offensively, really exploiting Duke on that end. What was working, and what kind of changed in the second half down the stretch?**

KAMERON MCGUSTY: I think we came out with a lot of energy. They made some adjustments. Obviously, we got a couple steals. Sam got a steal and a dunk. It's just part of our defense and our identity, but that's a basketball game. Teams go on runs, they make adjustments, and you know, that's the game.

**Q. Sort of a followup to that question about the last five minutes, what allowed Duke to separate themselves from you at the end of the game?**

KAMERON MCGUSTY: I think they just made good plays down the stretch and made big free throws. If they miss a couple of those free throws, we have a chance to be in the game. But they're a great team. They execute well. They have a lot of discipline. Props to them.

**Q. Coach, 6 of 12 from the line, and they outrebounded you 40-31. Which of those two were keys?**

JIM LARRANAGA: The real critical things are the free throws. The rebounding is part of our -- you know, we're just not that big. They're so much bigger. A guy like Mark Williams is three inches taller, he's long, he's heavy. We have a hard time on those backboards. I think they got four offensive rebounds in the first two or three possessions.

But what we've been able to counter that with is forcing turnovers, but today they handled the ball, and they handled the pressure very, very well.

**Q. Coach, your team only shot 12 free throws from the line whereas Duke shot 22. Did you have any issues tonight with how the referees were calling fouls?**

(Laughter)

JIM LARRANAGA: I think I have a hard job. Ain't nearly as hard as being an official in that environment where

everybody thinks they know if your calls are right or wrong. I had no problem with any officials at any time because they do a great job.

What we try to express to our players is are they going to get every call right? No. We don't make every shot either. We make mistakes. Officials are bound to make mistakes. They're human. I would have liked for them to make a few mistakes that helped us, but I don't think that happened today.

**Q. Coach, do you think Duke has the talent to win it all in the NCAA Tournament, and if so, why?**

JIM LARRANAGA: Well, you answered your own question. They've got perhaps the best talent in the country. I mean, I follow the NBA pretty closely. My son's an assistant coach in the NBA, and I look at the NBA mock drafts and stuff like that. They're probably going to have five guys drafted, maybe two or three lottery picks. That's pretty good talent, if you ask me.

**Q. Coach, you beat Duke the first time, you played them down to the wire today. They're in the top ten all season. You guys have been outside the rankings. Is there a perception problem with the league?**

JIM LARRANAGA: I definitely think so. The issue with our league -- and I wish everybody could understand that we're much different than almost every other league because of the number of terrific, great talent we have in the younger classes that leave, and now you've got to start over again.

Like I said, Duke's going to have a bunch of guys drafted. Virginia's had a bunch of guys go to the NBA. When you bring in new talent, especially transfers who have played someplace else in a different system, you're trying to get them to adapt to your new system. Our transfers have done a fantastic job, Charlie Moore and Jordan Miller.

But there have been some teams in our league that they had to bring in five transfers and then play them a bunch. You don't normally just do that and snap your fingers, and they're going to be the team that they're going to become when you start the season in November.

It takes you a month, and then during that month you might lose a few games to even low major, mid-major, quad four, quad three teams when you're making the adjustment because not only are the players making the adjustment, the coaches as well. You say, don't other leagues have that? No, not like we do. We had 57 transfers come into our league. It's like half the league is brand new. So it takes a little time.

I hope the people who really make these decisions understand that because we faced -- the teams in this league, almost every one of our games has been like that. This is the 17th game decided in the last minute. Actually, maybe even though the game ended up, what, four? If they miss a free throw, we have a chance to tie it. So it's like a one-possession game except he made the free throw.

**Q. Coach, is there anything really different you see in this Duke team now versus in January when you first played them?**

JIM LARRANAGA: Yeah, there's a bunch of differences. The main two in our observation is Jeremy Roach is playing really, really well right now, and A.J. Griffin is healthy and playing really well. When you have two of your best players, who at the time we played them the first time, A.J. wasn't in sync yet. He had missed -- I don't know if it was injury or COVID or something, but they had missed some time. And now they are clearly in rhythm.

The basket that -- Jeremy Roach at the end of the half, where he went coast to coast and laid it in, that's a helluva basket. And then A.J., he got them going in the first half. We were up -- I don't know, what did we lead by at the most, eight? Then A.J. Griffin started. Well, those guys didn't do that back in January.

Those other guys were terrific, but they've added two really good weapons.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports