



2023-24 DUKE BASKETBALL  
**CLIPS FILE**

## From Worcester Academy to Duke, TJ Power and Oluchi Okananwa have been through it all together

By Garrett Spooner & Mackenzie Sheehy, The Chronicle (March 21, 2024)

It's 7 a.m., an hour before school starts at Worcester Academy. The varsity boys' basketball team is in the gym for one of its open early-morning pickup games. Duke commit TJ Power takes the court with his teammates to pick up the extra practice.

In the stands, another future Blue Devil – Oluchi Okananwa – is watching.

"We were always trying to pull Oluchi out of the stands," Power told The Chronicle. "She was good enough to hold her own and compete with us."

"I would work out with those guys," Okananwa added. "They were just all extended brothers to me."

Now, Okananwa is out of the stands and dominating on the court as she and Power prepare for their first postseason as Duke freshmen. However, amidst the new obstacles and adjustments that come with the transition to Division-I basketball, the friendship that formed in Worcester, Mass., is guiding them through it all.

### All roads lead to Worcester

While the private high school is the birthplace of their friendship, neither Power nor Okananwa started out there.

For Power's part, the transition to playing at Worcester Academy was an inevitable one. His older sister Lauren attended first, which helped the family form a crucial relationship with varsity boys' basketball coach Jamie Sullivan. The Curry College graduate made his gym available for Power to hone his craft through his middle school years, hoping to eventually woo the growing talent to his team.

"I always kept my eye on him ... and I always knew that he would come to Worcester Academy," Sullivan said. "It just depended on when."

The "when" turned out to be after Power's sophomore year concluded at St. John's High School, where he averaged 18.1 points and led his team to the state Division-I semifinals. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, the time came for Power to take his seemingly rightful place on Sullivan's squad. Power decided to reclassify and repeat his sophomore year.

After a year to get his feet under him, Power made a splash on the prep school scene as a Hilltopper. In 2022, he won the Massachusetts Gatorade Player of the Year after a monster junior season, averaging 13.1 points and leading his team to a NEPSAC Class AA championship. Worcester Academy fit him like a glove.

Although she began her career at Peabody High School and then New Hampton School, Okananwa cashed her final two years of high school eligibility at Worcester, playing under head coach Sherry Levin. Differing from Power, Okananwa boarded at Worcester Academy, fully immersing herself with the school and Levin's program.

"[Levin] is the only reason that I went and I played for Worcester Academy," Okananwa said. "Coach Sherry pushed me in ways that I'd never been pushed before."

Named team captain in her senior year, Okananwa earned an All-NEPSAC First Team selection and led Worcester Academy to an 18-7 final record. Okananwa's time with the Hilltoppers, coupled with an impressive AAU showing with Mass Rivals, earned herself a McDonald's All-American Game nominee selection as well as a late rise to No. 27 overall in ESPN's Class of 2023 ranking.

### The friendship begins

While the Hilltoppers' boys and girls varsity basketball teams rarely interacted due to their often-conflicting schedules, Okananwa was different. As Sullivan remembers, the Boston native was always around his program.

"Oluchi lived in my office," Sullivan said. "[She] was in here all the time hanging around with the guys, and Oluchi and the boys were very close."

"I would be in his office every single day," Okananwa joked. "All I was missing was to be a boy."

Despite the fact that Okananwa was often around the team off the court, Power's respect for her came from her work on it. Both self-described "gym rats," their closeness came from a mutual commitment to effort and extra reps outside of practice. The friendship even persisted when Okananwa stole Power's hoop – more than a few times.

"There were a lot of times where ... I'd show up to the gym, and she's already at my hoop," Power said. "Now I'm getting kicked off my own hoop because she's working out 30 minutes before me."

Perhaps Okananwa's dedication toward her craft wasn't just a small nuisance to Power, but a driving force in him and his team's successes. Sullivan recognized that. After all, Worcester Academy's boys program earned back-to-back NEPSAC Class AA titles in both of Okananwa's years at the school.

"When they won their championship ... they gave me a championship shirt," Okananwa said with a chuckle.

### Committing to Duke

When the decision to play in college came around, it was Power who first set off down the path toward Duke. While he was recruited by schools such as Kansas, North Carolina and UCLA, the Blue Devils quickly caught his eye. He took a visit shortly after receiving an offer from Duke on July 14, 2022. Clearly something in Durham struck a chord as Power committed less than two months later. However, his high school coach predicted his future much earlier.

"I told the family he was going to be a blue blood," Sullivan said.

Even though Power was the first to sign on to the Blue Devils, it was Okananwa whose dream it was to don Duke blue.

"I remember she made this vision board ... in one of her classes at school, and I think it had a Duke logo on it," Power said. "She was talking about how

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her dream was to play at Duke.”

As she went on several college visits, Power kept encouraging Okananwa to be patient and wait for an offer from the Blue Devils, hoping that his high school friend would join him in Durham. He'd consistently text her on her visits and try to see where her head was while subtly trying to keep Duke at the forefront of her thoughts.

“He went on an official visit ... and I get a call in the middle of night, and it's from him,” Okananwa recounted. “I'm like, 'hello,' and it's just him listing a bunch of reasons why I needed to commit to Duke.”

“I might be giving myself too much credit, but I was telling her like listen ... just wait till you see Duke,” Power said.

“He always liked to say he recruited me,” Okananwa said.

Nonetheless, when head coach Kara Lawson brought Okananwa in on an official visit, Okananwa didn't need much convincing from her future Blue Devil friend. After forcing herself to take a mere 48 hours to reflect after her trip to Durham, Okananwa's mind was made: She was going to be a Blue Devil.

“I knew I wanted to play for Lawson, and I knew I wanted to play [at Duke],” Okananwa said. “This is a really special program and a special university, so I knew I couldn't pass up this opportunity.”

### Freshman year

While the stage has gotten bigger and the lights have gotten brighter, Okananwa and Power continue to support each other in college. It's not unusual to see him cheering her on in the stands at home games or reposting her stats on Instagram. He even streams the games when she's on the road, making sure his former high school teammates do the same.

“The first game of the year [against Richmond], she had that huge game,” Power said. “I remember I was sitting in class, banging on my desk every time she scored.”

Off the court, the two are there for each other as well. Living in the same freshman residence hall has allowed them to help each other through the highs and lows of the first year of college.

“We had someone to talk to about this whole transition and ... struggles that we've gone through, the highs and lows,” Power said. “And we had each other's backs ... if one of us is struggling, we're gonna check on each other.”

“I remember in the summer, we would check in with each other to make sure we're doing good,” Okananwa said.

There is an undeniable bond between the two programs' freshman classes. Nicknamed the “Crazy Eight” for their eight total members, Okananwa and Power, joined by their freshman teammates on both rosters, enjoy a special friendship.

“The relationship between the guys and girls' team is truly one that I cherish,” Okananwa said. “It's basically one big friend group, and we all care for each other.”

Power and Okananwa now face the next challenge in their collegiate careers – March Madness. He will head north to Brooklyn, N.Y., while she will journey west to Columbus, Ohio, for their debuts at the national tournament. Power assumes a greater offensive burden in the absence of fellow freshman Caleb Foster, while Okananwa has been Lawson's spark plug since the moment she suited up in blue and white.

Yet even with the miles that will separate them and the vastly different responsibilities they will hold, the friendship that was fostered in the gyms of Worcester Academy and cemented on the hardwood of Cameron Indoor Stadium will carry them through as they cheer each other on from afar.

## Lasting legacy: Duke's Jeremy Roach spans two coaching tenures, chases more banners

By Steve Wiseman, Raleigh News & Observer (March 13, 2024)

During the week following Thanksgiving, Jeremy Roach delivered the first two 20-point performances of what would become a stellar senior season for Duke.

The Blue Devils lost both games, one at Arkansas and one at Georgia Tech, which in Roach's mind rendered his performances close to useless.

"What can I do differently?" Roach thought, he said. "What can I do to be a better leader? Leading the team, like, I don't have to just score the ball. I think my legacy will be that I have a bigger legacy if I impact winning rather than just scoring the ball and stuff like that."

That, Roach said, is when his mindset shifted this season, a campaign where the senior guard has led the No. 11 Blue Devils (24-7) to the No. 2 seed in this week's ACC Tournament and a certain NCAA Tournament bid.

Now is when Duke players cement their legacies by winning championships and earning new banners for Cameron Indoor Stadium. ACC championships, Final Four appearances and national championships are available.

Roach started on Duke's Final Four team in 2022 and again last season when the Blue Devils won the ACC championship.

For Roach, all the lessons from his career – from missing his junior season of high school to a torn ACL to winning a state title the following year, from a subpar freshman season at Duke to Final Four and ACC title seasons – have led him to this point.

He has regularly used his actions on the court and off to push his teams to success, which in Duke coach Jon Scheyer's opinion sets him apart.

"For me," Scheyer said, "what Jeremy's done in his approach, being a team guy, being a Duke guy, his legacy is gonna be felt in a big way."

### ROACH'S LARGER IMPACT

Since losing 80-75 at Arkansas on Nov. 30 and 72-68 at Georgia Tech on Dec. 2, Duke has gone 19-4. That includes winning streaks of eight and five games while never suffering back-to-back losses again.

Now Duke needs a three-game winning streak this week at Capital One Arena, in Roach's native Washington, D.C., to win another ACC championship. A six-game winning streak in the NCAA Tournament would bring the sport's ultimate prize.

Roach, named to the all-ACC third team this week, averages 14.3 points per game. That's the best scoring average of his Duke career. He's also made a career-best 44.2% of his 3-pointers.

In addition, his 1.2 turnovers per game are a career low. With 93 assists and 37 turnovers, his 2.5 assist-to-turnover ratio is a career best. It was 1.3 last season when he had 99 assists and 71 turnovers.

But those are just stats. Roach said he's just as intent on "trying being a pest on defense," and a better leader and playmaker.

Scheyer speaks to a larger impact, the one that Roach sought when he realized scoring wasn't the only thing the Blue Devils needed this season.

Scheyer and former Duke coach Mike Krzyzewski first saw it while attending the Nike Peach Jam event one summer when Roach played for Washington, D.C.-based Team Takeover.

"He hardly scored," Scheyer said. "Like literally, he hardly scored. He didn't make any shots. He probably had one of his worst games, in his mind. But Coach K and I loved him because we saw his competitiveness. He picked up and defended full court. His team won. He had other really good players around him that he made better."

Thus Duke's recruitment of Roach began in earnest.

### 'IT WAS ... A BUMMER'

Team Takeover won the Peach Jam, then Roach played on a USA Basketball under-17 team that won a World Cup title in Argentina. And then.....

"Everything was rolling," Roach said. "Coaches were calling and then bam, I tear my ACL and I was like a bummer."

That injury wiped out his junior season at Paul VI Catholic High School in Chantilly, Virginia. But, with his basketball future uncertain, Roach received a phone call that solidified his future.

"Coach Scheyer was the first one to call me after that situation," Roach said, "so that kind of stuck out to me. Just really the interest that he had to me, the confidence and the belief that he had that I was gonna get back to the player that I once was. That meant a lot to me for sure."

What Paul VI coach Glenn Farello saw that season was a glimpse at the leader Roach would become for the Blue Devils.

"He did a great job that year as an assistant coach," Farello said. "We kind of laugh about it. I fired him the next year."

That's because Roach returned to play and, as a senior, joined his future Duke teammate, Trevor Keels, in helping Paul VI win a state championship.

Roach's work the season before, as a so-called assistant coach, brought valuable lessons that are helping the Blue Devils today.

"Jeremy just made sure he was engaged that year," Farello said. "He got a chance to view the game in different ways, for sure. So when he came back his senior year, I thought he was a much more polished version of himself."

More hurdles lie ahead, though.

### SETBACKS AREN'T PERMANENT

He arrived at Duke in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic. His freshman season was played with no spectators at Cameron Indoor Stadium and a few hundred or so in some road venues. The Blue Devils, in what would be

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Krzyzewski's penultimate season as their coach, struggled to a 13-11 record and missed the NCAA Tournament for the first time since 1995.

Krzyzewski announced his retirement plans that following spring, with Scheyer picked to take over as his successor following the 2021-22 season.

In and out of the starting lineup as a sophomore, Roach produced 8.6 points per game while hitting 32.2% of his 3-pointers and just 41% of his overall shots.

But Krzyzewski and Scheyer saw something in him.

When the NCAA Tournament started, Roach returned to the starting lineup. He scored 15 points when Duke beat Michigan State, 85-76, in the second round another 15 in a 78-73 win over Texas Tech that pushed Duke into the West Region final.

In both cases, Roach sank big shots in the game's final minutes to propel the Blue Devils on their journey to the Final Four.

"When that happened, my confidence skyrocketed," Roach said. "And I knew I could play with pretty much anybody."

Roach endured a turf toe injury from November on last season, missing four games and playing compromised in several others. He hit 34% of his 3-pointers while scoring 13.6 points per game. That included 23 when Duke beat Virginia, 59-49, in the ACC Tournament championship game.

After Tennessee eliminated Duke in the NCAA Tournament's second round, Roach declared for the NBA Draft but ultimately didn't go through the evaluation process. Instead, he allowed his toe to heal before embarking on summer workouts to further hone his game.

He proved once again that setbacks aren't permanent. Keith Stevens, who coached Roach for Team Takeover, said that comes with the Roach family DNA from Jeremy's parents, Joe and Carole Roach, and Jeremy's older siblings, Chloe and Jordan.

Joe and Carole Roach have been regulars at every Duke game, home and away, the past two seasons.

"I just think they constantly motivate and support each other," Stevens said. "They just make sure whatever adversity comes in, how they can figure it out and get through it."

### BECOMING DUKE'S LEADER

Scheyer kept encouraging Roach to shoot, even though he was a 32.7% 3-pointer shooter over his first three Duke seasons. Duke assistant coach Jai Lucas worked with him heading into this season and Roach has been a student of skills coach Darren McLinton back in the Washington, D.C., area for years.

It was all about rhythm and confidence. Roach expects them to go in and that's happened more this season.

"I was doing a little bit my freshman, sophomore and even last year," he said, "shooting open shots but not really thinking I'm gonna make it every time. Just having that confidence in that same rhythm every time. So I think that's why my shooting percentage has gone up this year."

Still, remember, it's about more than scoring for Roach.

As Duke heads into the postseason, he's the one guy remaining who was recruited by Krzyzewski and who started in the Final Four for Krzyzewski. Roach forged that solid bond years ago with Scheyer and wants desperately to add to the strong start to his Duke head coaching tenure.

Count Scheyer as supremely appreciative.

"I don't know if there's a guy in our program's history, from the timing that he's been here and what he's seen, that's as important with the impact that he's made," Scheyer said.

That includes the early season pivot Roach made this year – a result of back-to-back losses – that's made him a scorer and a whole lot more.

The Blue Devils have followed his lead.

"I think that's where this team kind of shifted, too," Roach said. "We just keep learning every day. Keep getting better every day. We're growing, we're learning. We're coming together as one right now and March is the best time for us to do it."

## At Duke, basketball provides the perfect backdrop to salute 'kid captains' facing medical battles

By Aaron Beard, Associated Press (March 1, 2024)

The action had stopped in Duke's rowdy Cameron Indoor Stadium for a timeout. For 10-year-old Samantha DiMartino, the most exciting part of the night had arrived.

She smiled while walking to midcourt alongside Marcelle Scheyer, wife of Blue Devils coach Jon Scheyer, as the arena announcer told her story. Samantha has been a patient of Duke Children's Hospital since 2017 with an inoperable brain tumor, previously completing 15 months of chemotherapy and last summer becoming the pediatric neuro-oncology department's first patient to complete a new clinical trial.

Cheers grew louder from the blue-painted and costumed "Cameron Crazies." Fans in upstairs sections stood to join the rising volume. As Samantha waved, the noise approached in-game levels to salute a courageous fourth-grader who loves dance, running 5Ks and, oh yes, Duke basketball.

This was a snapshot of a gameday tradition in its infancy here, tied to two of the biggest brands in major college sports: the storied program with five national championships on the court and the famous student section known for its antics off it. The moment is one of encouragement and tribute, acknowledgement and hope – and it stands out amid Cameron's constant chaos.

"I'm just so proud of her for everything that she's gone through," said Lauren Brill, Samantha's mother, after Wednesday's ceremony during the Louisville-Duke game. "And just to see this crowd celebrate these accomplishments with her – it means the world to see everyone behind her and encouraging her."

That's all Marcelle Scheyer could have hoped for in launching the Scheyer Family Kid Captain Program last season, her husband's first as successor to retired Hall of Famer Mike Krzyzewski. The aim was bolstering existing ties with the renowned hospital to give patients an up-close look at the program; Saturday's game against Virginia marks the sixth kid captain this season and 11th overall.

Kid captains attend the gameday shootaround, followed by getting the chance to dribble around or shoot on the Cameron court as a photographer documents everything so the families can just enjoy the moment instead of trying to capture it.

The highlight comes during a first-half media timeout, reminiscent of "The Wave" at Iowa in which football players and fans wave at patients watching from the windows of the nearby children's hospital after the first quarter.

In-game stoppages typically feature distracted fans chatting amongst themselves or scrolling through their cellphone. Not this one. Fans watch closely as they do during game action, with the Crazies sometimes chanting the kid captain's name and fans of the opposing team joining the cheers.

Scheyer hopes it creates a brief escape for kids and families in need of one.

"The players may be inspiring to these kids and giving them strength and something to look forward to," Scheyer told The Associated Press. "But I always say, they're just as inspiring to us and to our team, seeing the strength that they have and their fight and their joy. The way they look at the world is inspiring."

Scheyer has generally preferred a behind-the-scenes profile. But the chance to "celebrate and honor" kid captains and their families is a natural pull for the nurse practitioner and mother of three, all 6 or younger.

"I definitely get teary-eyed and choked up, but I also cry all the time," she said of joining them at midcourt. "I'm such an emotional (person), especially when it comes to kids. I have three kids of my own, and thinking about what these parents and families are going through, it's just unthinkable. I feel so honored to be able to be a part and to lead this program. I wish we could do it a million times over."

The impact from the thus-far limited sample size resonates all the same.

There was 10-year-old Harper Harrell from Durham triumphantly ringing a bell to signify the end of more than 800 days of chemotherapy for leukemia. That early-February scene moved some fans to tears amid rousing cheers, while also raising awareness of Harper's own nonprofit (Harper's Home) to provide affordable housing for families with a child being treated at the hospital.

There was the feeling Caroline Giguere from Greenville, South Carolina, had as her 5-year-old son Row was honored during a January game against Clemson. Row is blind due to a rare genetic disorder called KIF11 and underwent multiple eye surgeries.

"He was like, 'Everyone cheered for me,'" said Giguere, co-founder of the KIND of the Upstate nonprofit advocating inclusiveness for those with disabilities. "I don't think he really understands how many people are in there. He just understands it's loud. But I think he moreso was just in love with the fact he was being celebrated."

He still proudly shows off his autographed basketball from that day, too.

"The second you say, 'Hey Row, what's on your ball?'" Giguere said, "he's like, 'Dream biggest. Coach Scheyer wrote it.'"

Dr. Ann M. Reed cherishes those stories as physician-in-chief of Duke Children's Hospital and chair of the university's Department of Pediatrics. Reed said kids and families often feel isolated while facing endless treatments and tests as the world goes on without them outside the hospital.

The program offers an uplifting confirmation: the world still sees them.

"It allows this child and family to not just focus on the illness," Reed said. "Often, if you've ever had a child that's ill, families can get so focused on the illness they forget about everything else. It's all-consuming. ... But it allows them to get away from the illness side and be able to have another experience that's not around their illness."

For Samantha, that meant joining her family from nearby Apex in second-row seats underneath the basket. She soon joined Scheyer at the end of the press-row tables as her moment drew near, with Scheyer attentively leaning in to talk to her and join cheers.

"She's beautiful with it," Reed said of Scheyer, adding: "She really needs to get credit, I think, for what she's been doing."

Scheyer prefers naming numerous people with the hospital and Duke athletics that turn plans to reality.

"Behind everything," she said, "there's a loving, caring person."

Samantha clearly felt that. She ended her captaincy duties by walking to the front row of Crazies and giving a line of high-fives on her way off the court. Some press-row media members joined the mass of outstretched arms, while game referee Keith Kimble walked over to join what amounted to a big virtual hug.

Amid an uncertain future, moments like this are reminders that there can be plenty of good days ahead, too.

"I love how everyone was so supportive of me for having a disease like this," Samantha said with a smile. "Because sometimes people think of it as an insecurity, and I love how they just support everything and that they tried to make you embrace it. So it's really cool."

## Seeing It Happen: Visualization and Mediation are Prominent Elements in Jared McCain's Toolbox

By Meredith Rieder, GoDuke The Magazine (January 25, 2024)

Jared McCain knocks down a dagger three from the left corner in front Duke's bench. The crazies inside Cameron Indoor Stadium erupt in pure elation as the Blue Devils wrap up yet another victory inside the historic college basketball venue. In the privacy of the home locker room, it's unabashed joy shared by each member of The Brotherhood.

At least that's how the rookie sharpshooter visualizes it happening. Coupled with an incredible work ethic and innate talent, McCain's practice of visualization has the freshman guard shooting 41.6 percent from long range, averaging 12.2 points per game and the Blue Devils ranked No. 12 with a 14-4 record.

"The visualization and manifesting everything in my life came probably my senior year [of high school]," said McCain. "I watched a movie with my mom when I was younger called *The Secret*. It talks about the law of attraction and really believing in yourself and seeing your future before it happens, and I've just been doing it ever since. It's fun. It's fun visualizing me hitting shots in big games."

McCain talked briefly earlier in the season about his commitment to visualization after he knocked down a crucial three-pointer to extend Duke's lead down the stretch in the thrilling 78-70 win over No. 10 Baylor inside Madison Square Garden. McCain finished the night with 21 points on 7-of-11 shooting and frustrated the Bears' guards all night with his tireless defense.

"I visualized that exact shot I hit in the Baylor game before it happened," McCain said.

The mental aspect of McCain's game isn't new to him, but like everything with basketball, he has worked hard at honing it. McCain is self-aware, he knows he isn't the fastest player or one who can jump the highest, but his desire to work and succeed is where he is confident he can't be beat. He won't be outworked.

"I'm definitely not the most athletic jumping wise, laterally or anything like that, not the fastest, but I just learned to work hard and find those moments when I can work harder than someone else," McCain said.

McCain, of course, grew up with basketball, joining a team at age four after he passed his dad's test of making a basket on a 10-foot rim. He played up with his brother, Jayce, who is four years older, for much of his childhood, which also has proven to be beneficial as his career continued.

It wasn't all smooth sailing though. The first points McCain ever scored were on the wrong basket. It was all uphill from that point on.

McCain, despite playing competitively at such an early age, didn't specialize in basketball. He loved baseball as a kid, and he also played soccer and some football.

"Baseball was one of my favorite sports when I was younger," McCain said. "I actually have a drawing where I wanted to play in the MLB and basketball was my second sport. I picked basketball in eighth grade."

Coincidentally or not coincidentally, eighth grade is also when he realized he was getting pretty good at the game invented by James Naismith in 1891.

Another source of motivation came from seeing first-hand how much recognition his cousin, Devin Askew, was getting and McCain thought to himself, "Oh, if he can do it. I can do it." Askew went to play at Kentucky and is now a senior guard for the Cal Bears.

McCain moved down to Los Angeles to live with Askew, working out with his cousin hoping to match his success. Along the way, McCain learned working hard was going to be his ticket to success. "I was working out with [my cousin] and I learned that working is the easiest way to get where I wanted to go," McCain said. "The hard work will always pay off. I started watching a lot of Kobe stuff and just learning that mentality of working harder than everybody else."

McCain's work ethic - you can catch him in the gym after practice working on his game individually - along with his other three classmates jumped out immediately to head coach Jon Scheyer. It was in the summer workouts the second-year head coach realized he had an exceptional group with McCain being a leader among them.

"The motivation they have is greater than any freshman class I've been around in terms of being hungry and being hardworking," said Scheyer. "It's very rare that you have a whole group of individuals that come in and are in the gym every day at 6 a.m. They want to come in and work. They want to learn."

With talent, drive and the full support of his family, McCain continued to develop his game and started turning heads and getting college offers the summer of his sophomore year.

"COVID was my freshman year for summer basketball," McCain said. "I came back for U16 my sophomore year summer and that's when I started getting the offers and that's when I was like 'Wow, I think I'm good at this, really good at this.'"

After starting to dabble in yoga and meditation a couple of years prior, McCain committed to the practice in high school. It started

## Seeing It Happen: Visualization and Mediation are Prominent Elements in Jared McCain's Toolbox (cont.)

By Meredith Rieder, GoDuke The Magazine (January 25, 2024)

to help the physical side of his game and has since evolved into allowing him to be present and centered in his everyday life.

"I have really tight hips, so I knew with yoga it was going to help me physically," McCain said. "Once I started reading more about it and listening to how they speak about yoga it was more the breathing and being centered and finding balance in your life off the mat. I think that's been one of the hardest things to do I think - is find the breath and being present off the mat, but I think I've gotten really good at being present. That's my biggest accomplishment."

McCain doesn't have a set schedule of when he goes through the processes, rather it happens organically throughout his days. Everything from when he's in the shower to brushing his teeth and of course every night when he's going to bed. That's when he visualizes all the fun things that could happen. On basketball gamedays McCain turns his focus to the game in front of him.

"On gamedays, I do take some time to visualize, close my eyes and lock into the game and what I think is going to happen," McCain said. "Making a defensive play, hearing the crowd, really specific things - coming back into the locker room after the game and celebrating, just different things like that."

McCain's focus on remaining centered and practicing gratitude for every day - a major theme within yoga - has allowed the young 19-year-old to be incredibly grounded. And perhaps, his strongest gift is his commitment to being his authentic self. That's central to McCain. He can't imagine being any other way.

"Just being myself has always been key for me and huge for me," McCain said. "I write it down in my journal every single morning. I think the question is - 'What are three things that will make today great?' The first thing I write down is just being myself. That's been huge for me, especially coming to Duke and being put into in new environments, always trying to be myself."

Scheyer recognizes the challenges of being a young player and especially what can happen when the Blue Devils lose a game. It hasn't phased McCain and the other younger players in Scheyer's eyes, and that persistence and fortitude are paying dividends.

"College basketball can be so up and down," said Scheyer. "And I think Jared heard it early on, just the reaction that people can have of Duke losing. And for us to be in some big-time games right away, and we didn't play our best in a couple of those. We didn't finish in two of them. We have two wins right there and we didn't finish. But we went through some stuff together. I give them credit for just putting their heads down and working."

When you sit down and speak with McCain, you leave a little in awe. This young man is so mature and confident in who he is and what he is capable of you find yourself asking - How is this young man able to brush off the comments people make about him painting his nails or those who criticize him about spending time on TikTok - where we must note he has over two million followers?

The answer isn't simple. But his family is certainly paramount to how McCain landed at Duke.

Who was there when the 6-3 guard was working to follow in his cousin's footsteps? None other than his older brother.

"My brother has always been my biggest supporter and he's always told me 'It's gonna happen. You're going to get your moment,'" McCain said.

His parents were steadfast in their support of anything he did, including him painting his nails. He always felt their love, allowing him just to be himself. His family is the backbone to his success, and he is fortunate enough to have them close by now with Jayce serving as a graduate assistant for the program and his parents moving to the area to be around both of their sons.

"It's been the best thing that can happen for me," McCain said about having his family here. "Having my brother with the team talking to me and encouraging me. There's obviously ups and downs as a freshman so just having him here to be able to instill confidence in me at all times has been [the best]. He'll drop anything to help me, and I thank him so much for that."

McCain has plans to repay his family and everybody who has helped him to get to this point. He's constantly working and picturing himself reaching new goals and doing it all while taking in each moment with joyous ease.

"I'm grateful for each and every day," McCain said. "Every time I wake up, I'm talking out loud. I have gratitude for the day. I'm grateful for a new day. Obviously, I want to reach goals I haven't achieved yet, but it's very simple to be happy and have joy with everything I do. I'm always talking to myself and telling myself how grateful I am to be here. Trying to reach my goals and repay my family and everybody who has helped me get to the point where I'm at today."

## Why a ‘wired differently’ Jared McCain’s ability to hit shots has Blue Devils on a tear

By Steve Wiseman, Raleigh News & Observer (January 4, 2024)

Jared McCain arrived at Duke with style and flair, armed with a magnetic, easy-going personality that belies his serious work ethic

Over the past month, that has come together magnificently on the court, and the No. 14 Blue Devils have benefited.

A freshman guard, McCain is averaging 19.4 points per game during Duke’s current five-game winning streak, including Tuesday night’s 86-66 ACC win over Syracuse at Cameron Indoor Stadium.

McCain led Duke’s dominant second half by, making four 3-pointers, on the way to an 18-point scoring performance. The 6-3 shooter has topped the 20-point mark three times during his stretch, including a career-best 24 points when Duke pounded Queens, 106-69, last Saturday.

It’s the kind of output the coaching staff hoped for when they recruited McCain, who was named California’s Gatorade Player of the Year the past two seasons while playing at Sacramento’s Centennial High School.

Just as importantly, McCain envisioned this for himself when he joined the Blue Devils this season.

“I feel like I’ve worked so hard for these moments,” McCain said. “When I get in the moment, I just trust my work and my stamina. Being in the gym late nights, early mornings, being in those moments and just being able to embrace them. I feel like I’ve worked so hard for these moments and it’s the perfect time for me to just have fun.”

### ADDING SUBSTANCE TO STYLE

With his painted fingernails and dance moves that attracted nearly two million followers to his TikTok social media account, McCain exudes fun.

But getting to this level of play so quickly in his college career didn’t come easily. As freshmen tend to do, McCain struggled with consistency. He made just 3 of 10 shots, scoring six points, when the Blue Devils lost, 72-68, at Georgia Tech on Dec. 2.

That was one game after McCain hit just 1 of 7 shots in Duke’s 80-75 loss at Arkansas on Nov. 29.

Those losses led to some tough practices for the Blue Devils in early December. When that work was done, Duke beat Charlotte, 80-56, on Dec. 9, with McCain scoring 21 points on 7 of 13 shooting.

“For Jared,” Duke coach Jon Scheyer said that day, “he goes through probably the worst shooting stretch he’s had in his life. He hadn’t played as well. We lose and there’s a lot of attention on it. For him to come out the way he did, it talks about his character. He’s just tough minded.”

Fast forward another 11 days to Dec. 20 at New York’s Madison Square Garden, where Duke survived a back-and-forth game while defeating Baylor, 78-70. McCain hit three 3-pointers, scoring 21 points.

After that win, McCain said he put his social media accounts aside. The negativity aimed his way from his earlier struggles remained toxic. His large TikTok following draws him considerable income. So his brother runs things and they post videos McCain shot months ago.

“I knew it was going to come so I already had a plan,” McCain said. “Yeah, just staying away from that.”

It’s working. Including the Syracuse game, he’s hit at least three 3-pointers in each of the past five games. He’s hit four 3-pointers in back-to-back games.

### ‘DUKE SHOTS’ THAT BURY THE OPPOSITION

Duke senior guard Jeremy Roach saw McCain’s confidence growing as he gained experience over the season’s first two months.

“I think he knows where he wants to go on the floor,” Roach said. “He knows what to expect now. As a freshman you are going to have those ups and downs but I think he’s kind of figuring out his role and figuring out what he needs to do on a daily basis.”

Scheyer said McCain is joining the list of great shooters the program has produced by hitting what he called a “Duke shot.”

“Jared McCain had some back-breaking 3s,” Scheyer said after the Syracuse game. “It’s a Duke shot, that transition wing 3. Those are 3s I grew up watching JJ Redick take, Trajan Langdon.”

Transition 3-pointers and 3-pointers off an offensive rebound and kick-out are Duke shots, in Scheyer’s lexicon. The Blue Devils are thriving in that area of late.

“Jared, he’s just wired differently,” Scheyer said. “He’s wired that way. We talked about those shots, and he has my full blessing to shoot them because he’s a really good shooter. But, also, it’s who we are as a program. Those are our shots.”

Sophomore forward Kyle Filipowski is Duke’s leading scorer at 17.5 points per game. But Duke’s offense is now more than just getting the ball to the preseason ACC player of the year.

Together, Roach, McCain, Tyrese Proctor, Caleb Foster and reserve Jaylen Blakes give Duke the kind of backcourt firepower and toughness needed to win big.

Averaging 14.5 points per game, Roach has made 48.8% of his 3-pointers this season.

McCain’s season scoring average is 12.2 points, still weighted down by his struggles earlier this season. But he’s made 46.9% of his 3-pointers.

Looking deeper, McCain is adept at putting the ball in the basket in a number of ways. He’s made 47.2% of his shots inside the 3-point line and 90% of his free throws (18 of 20).

Using an advanced statistic known as true shooting percentage, which takes into account all those shots, McCain is at 62.5%, according to KenPom.com. That’s currently No. 138 nationally but he’s rising up that list rapidly as he stacks one strong performance after another.

Roach is even better at 63.7%, which is No. 92 nationally.

The top two players nationally are Syracuse’s Maliq Brown, who is at 76% after scoring 26 points against Duke on Tuesday night, and Kentucky’s Reed Sheppard (75%).

If Duke keeps playing like it has the past five games, with McCain and Roach scoring like they have, those two will continue to rise in that statistic’s national rankings.

Roach, the sage veteran, has the knowledge, experience and talent to lead the Blue Devils far. McCain is proving to be equally as valuable despite being a comparative college basketball neophyte.

That’s been scary for Duke opponents of late.

## His Duke basketball career ended abruptly. Now he's returning to Jon Scheyer's staff

By Steve Wiseman, Raleigh News & Observer (November 30, 2023)

A popular former Duke basketball player whose career ended in a unique fashion is returning to the school.

Justin Robinson, a walk-on who became a key player in the final games of his career in 2020, was hired Tuesday as Duke basketball's director of player development on coach Jon Scheyer's staff.

"This is an incredible opportunity, to be a part of the team that coach Scheyer is building and the program that I have such a deep connection to," Robinson said in a statement. "My main goal is to help players grow - on and off the court."

The 6-9 Robinson, the youngest son of Naismith Basketball Hall of Famer David Robinson, agreed to come to Duke in 2016 without a scholarship to play for coach Mike Krzyzewski. He was awarded a scholarship the following year but played sparingly over his first three seasons.

Named a team captain as a senior, Robinson didn't play in more than nine minutes in a game over the 2019-2020 season's first 27 games. But in regular-season wins over rivals N.C. State and North Carolina in March, Robinson became a force.

He played 14 minutes, scoring 10 points, when Duke beat the Wolfpack, 88-69, on March 2, 2020. Five nights later, he hit four 3-pointers while scoring 17 points as the Blue Devils beat the Tar Heels, 89-76.

But that was the last game Duke played that season as the COVID-19 pandemic shut down play on March 12, 2020, causing the ACC and NCAA tournaments to be canceled.

"Justin Robinson embodies the values of our program as well as anyone," Scheyer said in a statement. "His work ethic, knowledge of Duke basketball culture, and professional experience will be invaluable to our current players. This is the perfect example of what the Brotherhood is all about. I'm excited to have him back at Duke."

The 27-year-old Robinson returns to Duke after playing professional basketball in the Israeli National League. Robinson most recently played for Elitzur Netanya before the Israeli league halted its season after the Hamas terrorist attacks on Oct. 7 led to the ongoing Israel-Hamas War.

Robinson visited Duke last week, attending the Blue Devils' 95-66 win over La Salle at Cameron Indoor Stadium on Nov. 21.

"It's unfortunate what happened with Jay Rob," Scheyer said that night. "He's in Israel when everything happened on October 7 and his season got postponed. He's been back in San Antonio, so he came

back yesterday.

"He's a guy when he's around, you're happy. It was great to have him here tonight."

Robinson's role at Duke is a support role that, under NCAA rules, doesn't allow him to recruit or work with players on the court. Past Duke players have returned to the school in the director of player development role before being promoted to coaching positions.

Amile Jefferson ended his professional basketball career to become director of player development in July 2021 and worked in that role during Krzyzewski's final season as Duke's coach. Jefferson became an assistant coach in April 2022 and left to join the Boston Celtics coaching staff last June.

Nolan Smith was Duke's director of basketball operations and director of player development beginning in March 2018 before becoming an assistant coach in April 2021. Smith is now in his second season as a Louisville assistant coach.

## Caleb Foster is the breakout star of Duke basketball's win over Michigan State

By Brendan Marks, The Athletic (November 27, 2023)

Only a mother could know.

Or, maybe more fairly, only a mother would look. Who else is studying her son's pregame facial expressions, interpreting every stare or scowl from a simple shootaround? It's a list of one. What else would Yvonne Foster do an hour before Duke's Champions Classic opener against Michigan State? So from her United Center seat, some 15 rows off the court, she watched her son, Caleb, like a hawk. His makes. His misses.

His face, mostly. And that's where she saw it.

"He just had that look," Yvonne told The Athletic. "Same look on his face that he did when he played the state championship in Sacramento."

She's talking about last March, Caleb's final high school game. How'd he play? Oh, you know: Just 33 points – a Division I California state championship record – six rebounds, six assists, nine fouls drawn... and most importantly, the win.

And that's the same look she saw pregame on Tuesday?

"I kind of knew," she adds, "it was going to be a special game."

As she says so, seconds after No. 9 Duke's 74-65 win, she smiles like someone who just shared an especially juicy secret. Except, well, her son's a secret no longer.

"The Foster kid," Tom Izzo lamented postgame. "He was the best player ... He was the difference."

And while Izzo meant it just in the context of Tuesday's contest – rightly so, after Foster scored a team-high 18 points, including four of his five 3-point tries – what if there's .... more here? After all: Foster was a five-star, top-25 national recruit. (At one point in his high school career, before he transferred from Oak Hill Academy to Notre Dame High in California, he was considered among the top five or so players in his class.) He is, in theory, exactly what every college and professional team is looking for: A 6-foot-5 lead guard, with natural scoring instincts and equally legitimate passing chops.

But theory is different from reality. Humans are not hypotheses. There is greater context to consider: Like, for instance, that for as good a recruit as Foster was, he joined a Duke team this summer that returned both its starting guards – one a senior with Final Four experience, and the other a projected lottery pick. (And that's without mentioning fellow five-star freshman guard Jared McCain, who has started each of Duke's three games this season.) Plus, if we take Foster as a human being, instead of a budding commodity

in the basketball meat market, he's still a freshman. Nineteen years old. Small-town kid, from Harrisburg, N.C. (Population: under 20,000 – or, barely more than Duke's enrollment.) Scored 15 points in Duke's opener... and then didn't attempt a single shot in the Arizona loss.

"I was definitely mad that we lost," Foster said, "but one thing my dad always told me is to stay steady. There's going to be ups and downs throughout the season, so just keep your head up and keep working."

Easier said than done – but the look Yvonne saw pregame Tuesday was promising, if nothing else.

It turned out to be prescient.

Not early on, though. In a first-half stretch that set modern offense back a few decades – Duke and Michigan State started the game a combined 2-of-17, and the Blue Devils had eight turnovers in the first 10 minutes – Foster looked like a JAG: Just A Guy. In his first five-ish minutes of work, he made a bad pass that led to a turnover, traveled, and had one assist.

In the second half? Foster must've remembered what his dad told him, but also what his coach did. Jon Scheyer said postgame, walking through the halls of his hometown arena, that his message to Foster pregame was simple. Two words.

"Be aggressive," Scheyer said. "Be aggressive."

Fast-forward, then, to just shy of five minutes into the second half, when Foster caught a Jeremy Roach pass on the left side of the 3-point arc. Michigan State's AJ Hoggard – a 6-foot-4 senior who has at least 15 pounds on Foster – was right in his grill, arm extended, hand up. No matter; Foster took one sidestep dribble to his left, and launched a parabola right over Hoggard.

Swish.

Maybe, the United Center crowd realized at this point, this kid should have the rock.

Three possessions later, same story. Tyrese Proctor hit Foster at almost the same spot on the floor that Roach had, only this time, an immediate pull. Good, again. Next possession, Foster – at the same spot – started driving, stopped on a dime with both feet, and fired a silky smooth stepback from the free-throw line. Bang. Not even three minutes later, Kyle Filipowski – unquestionably Duke's best player, who finished with 15 points, eight rebounds, and three assists – missed a 3 ... and guess who was there, out-leaping MSU's 6-foot-9, 250-pound senior center, Mady Sissoko, for a one-handed putback

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off the glass?

In that roughly five-minute second-half stretch, the scoreboard read as follows:

Caleb Foster 10, Michigan State 9.

Asking Yvonne about that sequence, and her son's stupendous shot-making, she proudly interrupts: "Then it's on," she said, beaming. "You couldn't stop him."

Foster was quieter, then, for a few minutes, until Duke needed a closer. With about three minutes to play, clinging to a six-point lead – and Michigan State, suddenly, unable to miss, spurred on by a densely-populated Spartans section of the crowd – Filipowski got doubled in the post and looked stuck. Then, the escape: a pivot, a left-handed bullet of a pass to the far right corner, where Foster was waiting wide open.

Another make, this time to send Michigan State teetering.

And then the knockout punch: next possession, same spot, a Proctor kick-out and a perfect catch-and-shoot opportunity. A six-point struggle of a lead, poof, turned into 12, with under two minutes to play.

Ballgame.

"It was amazing to watch him do what I know he could do," Yvonne said. "Get comfortable, find his rhythm – and just produce. That's what he does. It was wonderful."

In the end, Foster was the only Duke player to make a second-half 3. And considering that Michigan State got things as close as that – three points, one possession – the Blue Devils were fortunate Foster fired as well as he did.

Now the question is how, and if, that continues. Two seasons ago in this very event, another highly-heralded freshman guard, Trevor Keels, dominated en route to a Duke victory over Kentucky. It was his arrival on the national stage... but also, arguably, the highlight of his lone season in Durham. For this Duke team to reach its full potential – to follow in the footsteps of that one, really, by making it back to the Final Four – it'll need Foster to follow a different trajectory. A longer one, to be blunt.

Can he?

"It's whoever's night – we feed into that. We're just throwing ourselves into winning," Foster said. "It's the end goal and we do

whatever it takes to get there."

After Tuesday, that "whatever" seems far more likely to include far more of Foster – but remember, this thing is not linear. Not logical. For every Michigan State game, there's an Arizona, right in the rearview mirror or tucked around the corner.

The trick, then, is balance. Staying aggressive, even if shots don't fall. Finding teammates when they have their eruptions. And like Foster's father says, taking this all in stride – never drinking too much of your own Kool-Aid ... or the angstier alternative.

Unlike Keels, or many of Duke's other recent freshman stars – Filipowski, Paolo Banchemo, and so on – Foster isn't flashy or outspoken. Big-time introvert. He said, per the official transcript, a whopping 122 words to the media, after the best game of his young college career.

Small-town kid.

But, clearly, a big-time player.

Just how much of one, in the long run, is the unknowable question. But on this night, Foster delivered – and in doing so, planted the seed in college basketball's collective consciousness that he could continue to.

Or as his mom said, before disappearing out of the stands and into the bowels of the United Center:

"He's ready."

## 'Let everybody know who you are': Jai Lucas builds on his family's hoops legacy

By Brendan Marks, The Athletic (November 27, 2023)

Jai Lucas needed to make one final call.

It was April 2022, and the Kentucky assistant coach was debating whether to leave one blue-blood basketball program for another. He'd been offered a job at Duke, under first-time head coach Jon Scheyer.

As he called his inner circle – including head coaches such as Marquette's Shaka Smart, Texas' Rodney Terry and SMU's Rob Lanier – he gradually realized the stakes. Duke rarely hires an assistant coach who didn't play there; that hadn't happened in over two decades. Plus, in the wake of Mike Krzyzewski's retirement, Lucas knew he'd be getting in at the onset of a new era and the kind of career springboard that could be. But was he really going to leave Hall of Famer John Calipari to work for a rookie head coach?

Torn, he called the person he knew would set him straight.

To the rest of the world, John Lucas II is known for being the No. 1 pick in the 1976 NBA Draft and later the head coach of the San Antonio Spurs, Philadelphia 76ers and Cleveland Cavaliers. A veritable hoops icon. "In basketball circles," Terry says, "you're gonna know Big John."

But to Jai, that basketball legend had always been just Dad. So he called, spelling out his rationale in meticulous detail. It wasn't until Jai went silent that his father finally spoke: "I don't even know why you called me. It sounds like your mind's already made up."

Jai chuckles now, retelling the story from his fifth-floor Duke office. "That was the whole conversation," he remembers. It was also all the confirmation he needed.

Jai took over Duke's defense in Year 1 A.K. – After Krzyzewski – and orchestrated a top-20 unit nationally, per Ken Pomeroy's ratings. Then in June, just 14 months after Jai arrived, Scheyer promoted the 34-year-old to associate head coach, making him second-in-command for the nation's second-ranked team. "He always tells me the truth," Scheyer said this summer, "and that's what you need when you're a head coach."

If the Blue Devils play to their potential this season, that may be where Jai finds himself soon. But taking the Duke job wasn't merely about professional considerations.

It was about family. Getting back to his roots. "The opportunity," Jai says, "to kind of keep the name legacy alive here."

Almost 30 years later, Debbie Lucas' one-liner still endures.

This was Philadelphia, March 1995, and John Lucas II's wife had just returned home from picking up their daughter, Tarvia, after high school basketball practice. John – in his first season coaching the 76ers – was watching TV with his sons, John III and Jai. That's when Debbie turned to her husband and said:

"I think I've seen a better high school basketball player than you."

Impossible. John had been Mr. North Carolina, breaking "Pistol" Pete

Maravich's state high school scoring record while at Hillside High School in Durham. John earned more than 300 college scholarship offers before becoming an All-American in basketball and tennis at Maryland, and then the first point guard ever drafted first overall in the NBA. So the idea that someone was better than that? "Excuse me," John remembers thinking, "but you're out of your f-- mind."

He had to see. John loaded his sons into his wife's white Land Cruiser and drove to Lower Merion High School, just minutes before that night's game. Walking in, John spotted Joe "Jellybean" Bryant, one of his former NBA peers who was coaching at nearby La Salle. He inquired why he was there that night.

"To see my son play," Jellybean responded. "His name's Kobe Bean."

As in, Kobe Bean Bryant.

John and his sons took their seats, right as Kobe – then a high school junior – walked to midcourt for tip-off. "He won the jump ball, he outran the big, they threw the ball ahead to him, and he did a windmill dunk," John III, Jai's older brother, remembers. "The first play of the game."

That one game was all any of the Lucases needed to see. John, recognizing the guard's supreme talent, invited Bryant to practice with his 76ers. And as for the boys? "I say my love for basketball started then," Jai says, "because we lived five houses from Kobe."

Bryant became close friends with Tarvia, the Lower Merion team manager, and like an older brother, of sorts, to John III and Jai, coming over for family dinner, swinging by in the morning before 76ers practice to pick up John, or even sneaking the boys onto the Lower Merion bus for away games, hiding them under baggy letterman jackets. "We'd been around, like, star players," John III says, "but watching him as kids, we're like, oh, sh--" Even for kids who learned the finger roll from George Gervin, who had had dinner with Michael Jordan and played in the driveway with Larry Bird, growing up in Bryant's atmosphere was transformative.

This, as much as anything, was Jai's introduction to basketball. Even at 6 years old, Jai watched everything Bryant did, soaking it in. It was one of the defining relationships of his life.

The others? Well, those were back in Durham – the place the Lucases made their name.

When John Harding Lucas returned from the Asiatic-Pacific Theater at the end of World War II, it wasn't long before Hillside came calling, hiring him as principal in 1962.

Before desegregation and two years before the Civil Rights Act, Hillside was one of the oldest Black high schools in the South. It was John Sr.'s job to integrate it. John still remembers picketers demonstrating outside his childhood home on Fayetteville Street, across from well-known HBCU North Carolina Central University.

Before long, John Sr. became a major player in desegregating not just

## 'Let everybody know who you are': Jai Lucas builds on his family's hoops legacy [cont.]

By Brendan Marks, The Athletic (November 27, 2023)

Hillside, but all the state's schools. It was his idea to form a new, integrated education organization, rather than merging the two racially segregated ones that existed at the time. The North Carolina Association of Educators (NCAE) was founded in 1970 – desegregating Hillside while John II was attending. “The first year of integration was almost integration in reverse,” he says. “Hillside was 90 percent Black, 10 percent White.” Already a budding basketball star by then, John's Hillside team played Durham High (a predominantly White school) at Cameron Indoor Stadium in one of the first integrated games in state history.

After John left for Maryland, his father continued his mission; he was named the fourth president of the NCAE, and later interim president of Shaw University in Raleigh. John Sr. was also heavily involved in the contentious merger of Durham's city and county school systems, which operated with separate – and racially aligned – funding until 1992. For his efforts, John Sr. earned several lifetime achievement awards – including the prestigious N.C. Award for Public Service in 2013 – but one honor stands above the rest:

Having a school, Lucas Middle, named after him in 2012.

“When you get older, that's when you really start to realize it,” Jai says of his grandfather, now 102, who still lives less than two miles from Duke's campus. “He started to get all these awards and he started to get all this recognition, and then you started to understand his impact on the community.”

Every summer, John brought his children back to Durham.

“It's where our family's at. It's our roots,” John III says. “It's who my parents are, it's where they come from. I think Durham raised my dad and my mom – and you never forget where you come from.”

Durham, in a way, became a reprieve from basketball. Because everywhere else? Be it in Philadelphia, Cleveland – where John earned his third head-coaching job, five years after leaving the 76ers – or the family's de facto home base of Houston, hoops was the priority.

Though Jai was too young in Philadelphia to seriously train with Bryant, in the years after the family left, he committed himself to basketball as relentlessly as his idol had. Some of that came back in Houston, where John let Jai join the NBA workouts he ran, as part of his player development and substance abuse clinic, John Lucas Enterprises. More came in Cleveland, when Jai joined the Akron Shooting Stars AAU program, coached by LeBron James' former high school coach.

But it wasn't until 2003, when John was fired by the Cavaliers and the family moved back to Houston, that Jai got the full experience of being coached by his father.

At that point, Jai was entering high school. John wanted to be there for his son – and so he took a break from the NBA (although pros continued to flock to Houston for his infamous conditioning and skills training). “I told him I wanted to play,” Jai says, “and then he really invested in me and my basketball.” John treated Jai just like any of his pros. Suddenly, teenage

Jai was playing against the likes of T.J. Ford and Damon Stoudamire, two smaller yet highly successful guards. John had done the same thing with Jai's older brother, John III – pitting him against pros, clipping at the edges of his comfort zone – but he immediately noticed the difference in his two sons' approach. “John had a Kobe mindset: Bravo-y, in your face,” their father says. “John's gonna talk to you and tell you what's going to go on with him; Jai's just gonna do the work.”

It didn't take long for John to realize that was just his sons' opposite personalities manifesting on the court.

“I always used to get on Jai,” John III says, “like c'mon, you gotta let everybody know who you are – because that's how I played. I was the smallest, so I felt like I always had to be the loudest. But Jai's quiet; his personality, how he is now – in the real world – that's how he played.”

John attributes some of the personality difference between his sons to one specific part of their upbringing: his drug use and subsequent recovery. John's career was marred by alcohol and drugs, a matter he's been open about since getting sober in the late 1980s.

“My discipline through my recovery is what Jai knew, and my attention to detail. Always aware of my surroundings, always trying to be accepting of others, believing in something greater than myself, and learning how to care about others unconditionally,” John says. “John saw a different dad, one that had to pick himself back up. Jai just saw the other side – the results of picking yourself back up.”

The similarity, then, was in how John prepared them both. How they'd go to the gym with their dad every morning, and not leave until they'd made 500 shots. Jai's father treated him like he would his NBA pupils. “He always told me, whenever we're in the gym, I'm not Dad; I'm Coach,” Jai remembers. “When we leave, I'll be your dad again.” It was intentional tough love, from a man who knew how difficult it was to achieve basketball greatness.

“Jai and them hadn't ever seen a tough day in their lives. I told them, if you're going to play basketball, you've got to get an edge and a hunger. ... These (other) kids are fighting,” John says. “So the competitive level you've got to get to, has to match them. And because of your last name, every time you get out there, their dad is telling them, ‘You measure yourself by that Lucas boy; you kick his a-’”

So John always told his sons one thing, the same thing he'd learned from his father back in Durham:

“Protect the last name.”

It was an offhand comment, facetious even, but one Jai took to heart. He was at Rob Lanier's house during his freshman year at Florida, when Lanier – then an assistant on Billy Donovan's staff – let it slip:

“I'm gonna hire you one day ... when you're done playing in Switzerland,” Jai remembers Lanier saying. “I'll never forget the statement, because I'm still thinking I'm going to the NBA.”

## **‘Let everybody know who you are’: Jai Lucas builds on his family’s hoops legacy [cont.]**

By Brendan Marks, The Athletic (November 27, 2023)

It wasn't a far-fetched idea. Jai had turned himself into a top-25 national recruit; per ESPN's rankings, he was one spot behind Blake Griffin, and two ahead of James Harden, in the Class of 2007. He arrived at Florida on the heels of consecutive national titles by the Gators, and almost immediately became a starter. Yet Lanier already had an idea of the long-term path Jai was on.

"I thought he would have a better coaching career than a playing career, quite honestly," Lanier says, "but that has more to do with how good of a coach I thought he could be."

All the things that made Jai an attractive recruit and player – despite his 5-foot-9 frame – carried over to the coaching world. "If you didn't like Jai," says Smart, who briefly coached Jai at Florida, "then there was something wrong with you, not him." Emotionally, he was mature beyond his years. "He watches, he analyzes, he processes – and then he figures out a solution," John III adds. "It's very strategic."

He also knew the game. In his father's gym in high school, Jai was sometimes responsible for teaching drills to younger players, tweaking their missteps and offering advice. John wasn't sure his youngest son was taking to coaching – until Jai's freshman year of high school, when he wore a suit to his first fall league game, same as his dad had in the NBA. "Because," John says, "he respects the game." Jai was named to the SEC's all-freshman team that year, despite the Gators missing the NCAA Tournament.

Then, after his freshman season, Jai transferred closer to home, to Texas; Terry – then an assistant on Rick Barnes' Texas staff – was his lead recruiter. He saw in Jai what Lanier had. "Jai was always cerebral, you know?" Terry says. "He wasn't the most athletic guy, things of that nature, but (his game) really wasn't about that."

Jai barely played his final two seasons at Texas – one start in 58 appearances, and less than 12 minutes per game – but still pursued a professional career. His first stop was overseas, in Latvia. John knew Jai's uphill climb to the NBA would be steep.

He gave the tough advice only a dad can: Maybe it's time to start a new dream.

And then a call came. It was Lanier, now at Texas. He was keeping his promise.

Jai re-joined the Longhorns as a special assistant in 2013 and quickly endeared himself to Barnes' staff. When Lanier asked him for anything, even something as small as a video cut-up of a player, Jai did it exactly as instructed – despite never taking notes. "It always got done the way I asked it," Lanier says. "Always." In 2015, Barnes left Texas for Tennessee, and Jai opted to stay, becoming the director of basketball operations on Smart's new staff in Austin. Before long, Jai's connections started paying dividends on the recruiting trail; Smart promoted him to assistant in 2016, and Jai soon helped UT land lottery talents like Jarrett Allen, Mo Bamba and Jaxson Hayes. In 2020, Kentucky offered Lucas its recruiting coordinator position.

Not even two years later, it was a battle of the blue bloods for Jai's services.

"Being able to be selective in this business is a real luxury, and he has that," Lanier adds. "So he can really be true to who he is."

Jai doesn't take that for granted: that his cousins compete for Duke tickets, that they're 10-deep behind the Cameron Indoor bench, that he's liable to see a family member on any Target run. But the most special connection of them all? Jai's 5-year-old son, Jaxin, spending time with John Sr., the family patriarch – bookends on four generations of Lucases.

Back in his office, Jai is asked if he feels like he's earned a branch of the family tree yet. He pauses.

"Not yet," he finally says. "I think the branches on the tree have already been established ... and my part is almost like watering it. Just making sure I'm taking care of it."

## For Duke basketball, teamwork more important than ever in Jon Scheyer's second year

By Steve Wiseman, Raleigh News & Observer (November 21, 2023)

Though his first Duke basketball team won an ACC championship, head coach Jon Scheyer built the second edition of the Blue Devils since Mike Krzyzewski's retirement to, in his words, "play differently."

Roster construction is a big part of the reason why. The No. 9 Blue Devils don't have an elite, 7-1 shot-blocking and rebounding presence like Dereck Lively this season – he's now in the NBA.

Lively's absence was glaring when the Blue Devils saw Arizona secure 12 more rebounds in a 78-73 Wildcats win at Cameron on Nov. 10. But Scheyer – and his players – refused to let that be the norm.

The Blue Devils won the rebounding battle, 35-33, four nights later, when they beat Michigan State, 74-65, at Chicago's United Center in the Champions Classic. Duke followed that up three nights later, albeit against overmatched Bucknell, by gaining a 46-27 rebounding edge in a 90-60 win.

Teamwork, Scheyer said, will be the key for Duke not only in rebounding, but in half-court offense. To reach this season's potential, the Blue Devils need to win the rebounding battle, collect plenty of assists and keep their turnover number low.

"I think that's how we can play," Scheyer said.

### PULLING DOWN THE BOARDS

Team rebounding is important. Scheyer and the Blue Devils need all five players securing rebounds, rather than counting on one player to grab 10 or 12 every game.

One example? Jared McCain's 10 rebounds against Bucknell. The 6-3 guard led the Blue Devils in rebounding that night. He also scored 17 points. The fact that happened in the game following his scoreless performance against Michigan State only adds to the importance of his performance.

Duke's offense will run better when the guards rebound well on the defensive end, too.

"That really was the start of our fast break, our guards getting in there and rebounding," Scheyer said.

Through the admittedly small sample size of the first four games, prior to Tuesday night's game with La Salle, Duke's offensive efficiency is 116.6 points per 100 possessions, according to KenPom.com. At 1.17 points per possession, Duke is No. 13 in the country.

Last season, Duke produced 1.13 points per possession, No. 40 nationally.

In this season's loss to Arizona, when the Blue Devils didn't rebound well, they only produced 0.96 points per possession. That improved to 1.09 points per possession against Michigan State. It zoomed to 1.32, as is to be expected, against Bucknell.

### FEEDING TRANSITION

Rebounding, from all over the court, gets it going. But strong ball-handling and passing convert those situations into points.

For the season, Duke is in the 97th percentile nationally in points per possession in transition situations, according to Synergy Sports.

"When your guards are making great decisions and they're playing unselfishly, really good things are gonna happen," Scheyer said.

Though Kyle Filipowski is a preseason All-American after leading Duke in scoring (15.1 points) and rebounding (8.9) last season, this year's Blue Devils are showing depth on offense to go with their team rebounding approach.

Filipowski scored 25 points in Duke's loss to Arizona. But, in the win over Michigan State, freshman guard Caleb Foster led the Blue Devils with 18 points as four players reached double figures.

Against Bucknell, sophomore forward Mark Mitchell tallied a career-best 20 points after he'd scored 13 against Michigan State.

"We have a lot of different players on this team, a lot of different scoring power," Mitchell said. "We can hit you in different ways on different nights. I think (Bucknell) was just my night and any other night could have been someone else's."

Facing Arizona and Michigan State, two teams ranked among the nation's top 25, back to back in early November gave the Blue Devils a quick reality check on where they stood as a team.

After completing the Blue Devil Challenge multi-team event with Friday's home game with Southern Indiana, Duke heads to No. 20 Arkansas on Nov. 29 before opening ACC play at Georgia Tech on Dec. 2.

The Blue Devils are showing signs that, with further development, their different style of play this season could be even better than what last year's team showed in Scheyer's first year.

## 'We're always together': A look at the unbreakable bond between Duke's 'Freshmen Four'

By Mackenzie Sheehy, The Chronicle (November 3, 2023)

East Campus was pulsing with energy as bright-eyed and bushy-tailed freshmen arrived at Duke Aug. 19 for move-in. Parents were ushering their kids toward a new collegiate adventure as orientation leaders schlepped bags to rooms. Various Blue Devil faculty and staff were grinning from ear to ear, trying to settle nerves and engage the new students in positive conversations.

There were four greeters who stood out – literally – among the rest: Duke men's basketball's "Freshmen Four." Composed of TJ Power, Sean Stewart, Caleb Foster and Jared McCain, the Blue Devil debutants were out welcoming their classmates as if it were the most normal thing in the world.

"We just love going outside and meeting new people," McCain said on "The Brotherhood Podcast." "Us four, we're really good at [asking] 'What's your name? What are you majoring in? How are you doing?' ... connecting with people."

This skill of connection and interaction served the group of four well a few months earlier as they met on Duke's campus for the first time in the summer. Hitting it off instantly, Power, Stewart, Foster and McCain cultivated a close friendship that is evident from miles away and has taken social media by storm. Even on a team that prides itself on culture and chemistry, the freshmen stand out in their brotherhood bond.

So how did this happen?

It started from the very beginning: the recruiting process.

It was Foster who played the initial role in bringing the Freshmen Four to Durham. Lovingly dubbed "C Fos" by his teammates, the Harrisburg, N.C., native committed to Duke mere months after sophomore phenom Kyle Filipowski joined head coach Jon Scheyer's roster. From there, he became the program's secret recruiting weapon, helping to draw in the remaining three members of his class of 2027 squad.

"You played a huge role in my commitment," McCain told Foster on the podcast.

It may be surprising, then, to learn that the Freshman Four did not know each other well in high school beyond crossing paths on tournament circuits. So when they arrived on campus in the summer, building a bond was essential both on and off the court. The freshmen did it with ease.

"I didn't expect to hit it off as quick as we did. I don't know why, I was just kind of like, 'This is Duke. I think it might be more cutthroat,'" Power said at the team's preseason media day. "But

they've been great. We have a lot of fun."

They were fast friends from the start, but their close relationship really blossomed in a place they were all familiar with: the gym. Establishing an early morning routine, the freshmen were in the gym together at 6 a.m. each day, with Power blasting Mariah Carey and other R&B music in the early morning hours as a wake-up call. Using their shared work ethic to push each other, their relationship was built on the solid foundation of determination and drive.

"[It's great to be around] kids that are willing to go the extra mile just as much as you," Power said on the podcast.

"It doesn't even feel right at this point [if we don't]," Foster added.

Their bond truly took off, though, outside of basketball and working out. Before moving into their suites at Wilson Residence Hall on East Campus, the foursome shared an apartment in the summer that allowed them to dive into relationship-building head-first.

"We'd just come back [to the apartment], sit in the little living room, talk with each other ... we would talk for hours sometimes," Stewart said.

The group, never ones to let their competitive spirits go to waste, were also big fans of board games throughout the offseason. "Uno" defined their summer experience; Stewart and Foster still cannot agree on who won the most games. "Spoons" was a popular one too, but the four of them can agree that McCain was the champion there.

It wasn't unusual to catch them at Dame's Chicken and Waffles every Sunday as well, getting out in the Durham community beyond the college bubble.

"Once we stepped on campus and we lived together in the summer, we just formed a great bond; we're always together," Stewart said at media day.

When everyone else arrived on campus, however, the buzz surrounding Power, Stewart, Foster and McCain really started to amplify. They began to realize the gravity of their role on campus when people came up to talk and take pictures – even if they were mostly interested in McCain.

"They usually ask us to take pictures of Jared," Power said on the podcast.

"My camera skills now, I got you," Foster joked.

The Freshmen Four are not afraid to interact with the community,

## **‘We’re always together’: A look at the unbreakable bond between Duke’s ‘Freshmen Four [cont.]**

By Mackenzie Sheehy, The Chronicle (November 3, 2023)

even as their names become increasingly well known. It’s not uncommon to see them out and about on campus as they recognize their roles as ambassadors of The Brotherhood.

locked in and ready to go, and their charismatic bond, translated into on-court chemistry, will quickly strike fear in the college basketball world.

“We’ll just walk around outside talking to people and get food,” Power said. “We’ll go sit with new people in the dining hall and stuff.”

With the start of the school year also came daily reminders that basketball season was looming. While there is a certain level of pressure, the freshmen are ready for the big stage. The thing they are looking forward to most? Duke versus North Carolina in Chapel Hill.

“I accidentally Ubered to a Target in Chapel Hill and I walked in there, and I got booed,” McCain said. “Now I’m locked in.”

“That just fuels us,” Stewart added.

Despite the increasing fame and expectations on their shoulders to perform on a championship-caliber team, these four aren’t letting the moment go to their heads. They are still the same group that gets up in the early hours of the morning to go work out or go the extra mile to beat the elder statesmen in practice. At each of their cores is a similar desire to prove their place at an illustrious basketball institution and not take anything for granted.

Scheyer certainly recognizes the unique nature of his freshman class and its remarkable mixture of talent, work ethic and confidence.

“Those freshmen, man, they get after it. They’re competitive, they have good humility about them too,” Scheyer said at ACC Tipoff. “They put in the work, and I’ve been a lucky guy to coach them.”

While the lights are about to get brighter and the stages bigger, these freshmen are ready for whatever is thrown at them because they have each other. Their bond has grown deeper than on-the-court chemistry or a relationship of necessity during the summer. Power, Stewart, Foster and McCain are truly brothers in every sense of the word.

“The freshmen are some of my favorite people I’ve ever met in my life,” McCain said at media day. “I love all of them.”

When the Blue Devils take the court for their first regular-season contest Monday against Dartmouth, there will be plenty of uncertainties. Who are the starters? What will the rotation be? Is this team championship-capable?

One thing, however, will be for certain. The freshmen will show up

## Bridging The Brotherhood: Young welcomes role as captain and spokesperson with podcast

By Dom Fenoglio, The Chronicle (November 3, 2023)

A big man who doesn't dunk, the 44th-ranked power forward in his class and a player who didn't have enough talent to see the court his freshman year, Ryan Young is by no means a traditional Duke captain.

Young, a sixth-year graduate student, is the oldest returner on this year's roster by a wide margin. The 24-year-old, however, has only been with the Blue Devils for one season. So while he is an old head by college basketball standards, his presence is new in The Brotherhood.

Still, it didn't take long for the towering center to grow quickly into his own at Duke, both as an off-the-court mentor for the seven freshmen on last year's roster and as a seasoned veteran in the games themselves. This season, Young became just the second transfer player to ever be named a captain.

Even more impressive is the platform Young has created to spread Duke men's basketball, as he hosts "The Brotherhood Podcast," which features current and former players, coaches and others around the program. In just one year, Young went from someone uninvolved with The Brotherhood to one of its biggest advocates.

### 'You didn't take a day off'

Unlike the majority of Blue Devils, who enter Durham as highly recruited players expecting to make an immediate impact, Young did not see the floor in his first year at Northwestern. He redshirted to work on his size and game, and struggled with the adjustments and humility that came from being at the bottom of the ladder.

To get through this time and progress as a person and player, he leaned on older players who pushed him beyond his limits and brought the best out of him.

When he did earn a place in the Wildcats' rotation, Young competed in the Big Ten – a conference stacked with elite big-man talent, including former First-Team All Americans Kofi Cockburn and Luka Garza.

"It was difficult to come to college and realize, 'I'm not even good enough right now to help this team right now as a freshman,'" Young said at Duke's preseason media day. "There were so many lessons learned through those first couple years and tough losses that I think molded me into the leader I am today."

When he arrived in Durham, Young was ready to flip the script and teach the same lessons to a new generation. In the cases of fellow centers Dereck Lively II and Kyle Filipowski – freshmen in 2022-23 – even former head coach Mike Krzyzewski noticed the impact the

older big had on the rookies. Lively struggled to find his role on the team early in the season after coming back from an injury, but ultimately developed into a lottery pick. Filipowski began his rookie year still needing to adjust to the physicality of the college game, but consistently improved en route to winning ACC Rookie of the Year.

"You helped them. You really helped them," Krzyzewski said to Young on episode 16 of the podcast. "They got better, not just because of what they did. That was one of the things you brought to the team last year. You were there every day, and you didn't take a day off."

Young's work ethic and veteran presence have further grown this season, and he has embraced his role as a captain wholeheartedly.

His fellow captains, senior Jeremy Roach and sophomore Tyrese Proctor, spoke with Young on episode 15 of the podcast about the team's lofty goals, their unique leadership styles and what they have seen from the team in the preseason.

Each player enters the season with a unique background: Roach is entering his fourth season with Duke, Proctor brings international experience from his time with Team Australia and Young has four years in Evanston, Ill., under his belt. This allows the three to lead symbiotically, with both guards describing themselves as leaders by example and Young admitting he has taken on a "rah-rah" role this year as a vocal presence in the locker room and on the court.

"I think 'captain' is something that's thrown around these days ... but it's actually meaningful. It's been something meaningful in our program for a long time. I remember myself, when I was named captain, that was a big deal to me," head coach Jon Scheyer said at media day. "Ryan's probably our most vocal person on the team. You can ask any of our players – his voice carries a lot of weight."

### 'Uncle Ryan'

When the Blue Devils traveled to Orlando, Fla., for the first two rounds of last season's NCAA tournament, they were bombarded with a flurry of questions from the media. One "reporter" stood above the rest per the request of the in-house media team: the 6-foot-10 Young.

Young started asking questions purely to entertain but soon got hooked on interviewing. The result? "The Brotherhood Podcast."

In addition to contributing to team morale and dynamics, Young is simultaneously reaching a new audience of potential Duke fans. Already the most-followed basketball program on Instagram and TikTok with 1.3 million and 826.4 thousand followers, respectively,

## **Bridging The Brotherhood: Young welcomes role as captain and spokesperson with podcast (cont.)**

By Dom Fenoglio, The Chronicle (November 3, 2023)

"The Brotherhood Podcast" has peaked at 15th in the basketball category in the US on Apple Podcasts and garners thousands of listeners per episode across various platforms.

"The Brotherhood Podcast" has featured a number of current and former players, including the self-proclaimed "Freshmen Four," who affectionately refer to the host as "Uncle Ryan."

Young's interviewing skill allows viewers to also see the players' personalities shine through, and he is able to bring out smiles from each of his guests. For instance, Mark Mitchell is known as the fast-food lover of the team and can name everything that comes with an All-Star breakfast from Waffle House.

In many ways, Young's role as the podcast's host allows him to act as a bridge between the Blue Devils of new and Blue Devils of old and as a voice of what this season shapes up to be. The podcast's center, and each of the discussions it facilitates, is in its name: The Brotherhood.

It's something every guest, no matter their graduation year or affiliation with the team, has lauded.

"You will have relationships with all these guys, so about my sophomore, junior year I felt like I played with some guys who played in the 90s even though I was born in '93," 2015 national champion and former Blue Devil captain Quinn Cook said to Young on episode 5. "I felt like I played with Ricky Price, and I played with Trajan Langdon, all these guys. It was just authentic."

"We're proud of [the Brotherhood]," Krzyzewski told Young on episode 16. "Other people might try to copy it, but it's tough to copy because I was the coach for 42 years, so we created a family."

This camaraderie is shown in episode 10, when Filipowski took on the role of interviewer, turning the tables and forcing Young to answer questions – among them, his role and the importance of the Brotherhood in ensuring this season is a triumphant one.

Young told Filipowski that it will be anything the team needs from him to be successful. In his sixth season of college basketball, Young does not put any individual accolades or recognition over the singular goal of winning.

"I've been around college basketball enough and I've seen how effective glue guys and hustle guys can be for teams," Young said to Filipowski. "There's a lot of teams with a ton of talent, but if you don't have a few guys willing to do the dirty work, be gritty guys and do whatever it takes, those teams can only get as far as they can without them."

### **'Paying it forward'**

Duke has been vocal about its goal this season: to go all the way to the end and hang a sixth championship banner from the rafters of Cameron Indoor Stadium. Knowing the stakes, the tone of the podcast changed when talking about the upcoming season, turning dead serious.

In particular, Scheyer, the guest on episode 12, emphasized that nothing is given, not even to a team that returns its four leading scorers.

"Experience is only helpful if you take the lessons you learn and change them," Scheyer told Young.

The second-year head coach focused on the versatility of the team and talked about the growth possible with the number of returners. Young will be key to facilitating this growth, especially considering how far the sixth-year has come.

Throughout his collegiate career, Young has transformed from a freshman who didn't see the court into a senior that averaged nine points per game, and then again into an important role player on a young team that needed guidance. Now, he shares those lessons and the lessons of others via his podcast.

"Something that has had a big impact on me and my career, especially when I was younger, I was fortunate enough to be around older guys in the locker room that were really impressive captains and helped mold me to the person and player I am today," Young said at the team's preseason media day. "So [being captain is] a sense of kind of paying it forward in my mind, but also just having the opportunity to have a positive impact on my teammates."

## **'More to do here': Duke men's basketball's returning class ready for opportunity, challenges of encore**

By Jonathan Levitan, The Chronicle (November 3, 2023)

The first months of Jon Scheyer's first year as head coach were as promising and turbulent as one might have expected after more than four decades of Mike Krzyzewski and all that name means in Durham. It all came to a head in a whirlwind start to February, during which the Blue Devils followed up a stirring revenge win against North Carolina with crushing road defeats to Miami and Virginia.

That was the point in the season when Duke's young team seemed to grow up. One month later, the Blue Devils were ACC tournament champions, concluding a remarkable turnaround for a team that looked as if it might never realize its considerable potential.

This time around, with a second-year head coach and four out of five starters back in uniform, they don't have to grow up all over again. A basis for success already exists in that locker room.

"Everything is new, you're filling it all out," Scheyer said of his first year on the job at the team's preseason media day. "And this year, the way we're going to play is different and that's new. But they know me, they know each other. They know what worked and what didn't work. So at least you're working with some sense of a core of understanding what it takes to be successful."

When the Blue Devils came out on the wrong side of an instant classic at the 2022 Final Four against North Carolina, that was the undeniable end: Krzyzewski rode off into the sunset (on a golf cart), assistant coach Nolan Smith departed in the offseason for Louisville, and – most notably – six of the seven Duke players from that game never hit the floor inside Cameron Indoor Stadium again.

One year later, Scheyer's first Duke team entered the Round of 32 on a 10-game winning streak only to be handily defeated by a more physical Tennessee side. Again, it felt like the end for this most recent iteration of the Blue Devils' core, especially in the fluid, topsy-turvy landscape of college basketball in 2023.

But here Duke is, with a combination of veteran talent and elite newcomers – the four freshmen make up the nation's No. 2 recruiting class – that seemed impossible back in March. It is a blend that has elevated an already dangerous team into the No. 2 squad in the preseason AP Poll and the team that others in the ACC are looking up at as a new season begins.

"Again, 11, 13 guys last year, they're learning what it's like to be a Duke basketball player, everybody on my staff is learning, me, as head coach," Scheyer said. "And this year, just the familiarity helps a lot. So we're off and running at a higher level ... whether that translates right away, we still have a long way to go."

### **'Here for a reason'**

The Duke in the NBA machine has, perhaps, never whirred stronger. It was a real possibility that the 2021-22 team would become just the second ever to field five first-round selections come draft night; still, the Blue Devils landed four first-round picks including the near-unanimous Rookie of the Year in Paolo Banchero. Two freshmen from last year's Duke team entered the draft as early entrants and left as first-round selections themselves, with Dereck Lively II landing in the lottery and Dariq Whitehead joining the professional ranks later that evening. When the NBA season began anew in October, 24 Duke players permeated 18 rosters across the association, and that leaves out the considerable influence of Brotherhood alumni in management, ownership and the commissioner's office.

It is not hard to imagine the pull that the NBA has on the stars that arrive on Duke's campus each year. Even so, a number of the professional prospects on last season's roster are back in tow for another chance to make a run into March and – if they have their way – that coveted first weekend of April.

Each of those four starters – Jeremy Roach, Tyrese Proctor, Kyle Filipowski and Mark Mitchell – has his own reason for being here on the eve of the new season. Funnily enough, though, each of those reasons boils down to a desire to fully realize the tantalizing promise they showed together.

Proctor was the first to announce his return in March. The 19-year-old Australian sophomore was not originally supposed to make his college debut until this season but is already a first-round prospect and team captain with nods to the ACC All-Freshman Team and preseason All-ACC Second Team under his belt.

"I just don't think I was finished yet," Proctor said at media day of his decision to return. "Obviously reclassifying, that was a big part of it as well, just having that year for improvement, I guess it was. I had chances to go and I got all my feedback and stuff like that, and it just felt like it was the right decision for me to come back."

Filipowski, the ACC Preseason Player of the Year, also may have been a first-round choice in June. When the seven-footer instead opted to delay his inevitable professional future, some pointed to his hip injury – Filipowski underwent an arthroscopic procedure on both hips in April – as a possible reason that he did not end up as a lottery pick alongside Lively.

But Filipowski has made it clear: He wanted to be here this season, just as Proctor did.

"I loved it here this past year. And I know that there's just so much

**‘More to do here’: Duke men’s basketball’s returning class readies for opportunity, challenges of encore [cont.]**

By Jonathan Levitan, The Chronicle (November 3, 2023)

more I can improve on,” Filipowski said. “And I wasn’t even thinking about my hips, either. I wanted to make the decision of staying or going without any factors involved, and that’s hips included.”

Perhaps nobody has been through more in this era of Duke basketball than Roach, who debuted in the COVID-19-affected 2020-21 season before breaking out en route to the Final Four the very next season. The two-time captain also had professional prospects this offseason but brushed them aside for the second year in a row. At the team’s preseason media day, the veteran reflected on the “one vision” mindset that has helped him and Duke build the foundations of a culture in which star returners are the norm.

“If you win, everything will take care of itself,” Roach said. “You get to the Final Four, a national championship, then of course everything will take care of itself then. But if guys come in worried about their numbers or worried about what they’re doing on the floor stats-wise, then it’s not gonna work out the way they want it to.”

Among the four, the sophomore Mitchell has been strangely overshadowed. He was something of an unheralded contributor for Duke in his freshman season, starting every game for the Blue Devils until a last-minute knee injury kept him out of the season-ending loss to the Volunteers. For the Kansas City, Kan., product, the opportunity to suit up alongside his former and present teammates means a great deal.

“I think we definitely have more to do here, and obviously having two of my peers back that were kind of in the same spot as me I definitely think helped,” Mitchell said. “I think that’s kind of undermined – people talk about going to the NBA, staying or leaving, just you want to have your guys around you. And I know having them each and every day, it makes it a lot easier for me, too.”

Like Mitchell, Jaylen Blakes and Jaden Schutt are returners off the bench who have been somewhat overlooked but remain an important part of the strong position Duke is in today. For Schutt, a sharp-shooting four-star freshman on last year’s team who played in only 14 games, the possibility of hitting the transfer portal was never in play.

“I don’t think it was really a decision,” Schutt said when asked of his decision to return to Duke. “It was more, I came here to win a national championship and be a part of winning. The transfer portal is out there, it is a thing, but I’ve never left anything in my life, never transferred. This is my team, this is my home, so just wanted to contribute to winning.”

Add up each of these like-minded (yet unique) decisions, and it really does begin to feel as if Duke has a roster that is more than the sum

of its parts. Maybe, as Scheyer thinks, their collective return has made them stronger in ways too difficult to fully grasp.

“They all were being recruited by other places,” Scheyer said. “NBA, a transfer, could go on and on. And they all came back for a reason, and I think that bonds you. That unifies you. I try to remind them of that from time to time: You’re here for a reason, and so follow it up now with action. Don’t be about words, be about action.”

## 'I meditate every single day': Inside Jared McCain's rigorous physical and mental discipline

By Ranjan Jindal, The Chronicle (November 3, 2023)

"Just Wanna Rock," by Lil Uzi Vert plays as the Cameron Craziest roar to their feet in anticipation at Countdown to Craziest.

Head coach Jon Scheyer knowingly grins and shakes his head in the back as the rest of the team watches in admiration. TikTok sensation and freshman guard Jared McCain does what he does best: Bring joy to a crowd with dancing.

McCain has won the hearts of college basketball fans with his cheerful smile and outgoing personality. His game isn't too shabby either. With a consistent jump shot and unselfish playmaking ability, the Sacramento, Calif., native was the 11th-ranked prospect in the class of 2023 – the highest recruit in this year's Duke class.

Five-star basketball recruit. Two million TikTok followers.

But there's another side to the story. McCain is extremely extroverted – unorthodox for a player of his caliber – and this has generated plenty of hate on social media. From those who ridicule his decision to paint his nails or accuse him of spending too much time on TikTok, there is no shortage of McCain critics.

"There's definitely some times during the season where I'm like 'Why? Why am I getting hated on?' All I'm doing is dancing and smiling and just trying to spread some positivity," McCain said at the team's preseason media day. "But it's just them projecting their insecurities, they want what you have ... I'm just being me, so I can't listen to that."

Because of their historical success, McCain was prepared for more resentment after his commitment to the Blue Devils.

"I kind of knew coming into it that especially at Duke, which is one of the most hated [programs], that you're gonna get hated on," he said.

So, how does McCain stay calm and focused on basketball amid hate and outside distractions? The answer might be unexpected, but in true McCain fashion, he doesn't care what others think.

### No stone unturned

"I meditate every single day, every day," McCain said. "Especially with the social media hate and just being on the court, it helps me be so calm."

It all started roughly three years ago, when McCain watched Matt D'Avella's YouTube video of his 30-day meditation, inspiring the Centennial High School product to start routine practice.

In conjunction with his daily yoga and meditation, Southern

California-based basketball trainer Shea Frazee has been instrumental in McCain's development as a player, both physically and mentally. Frazee has trained McCain since eighth grade, when he had plenty of time for daily training.

"If you're not in the right place mentally, if you don't have the right kind of focus, you're going to learn slower," Frazee told The Chronicle. "Because you're going to be having this internal battle in your head and a lot of times that turns into an internal battle within your body for who's in control."

This mental battlefield is a serious detriment to many physically gifted athletes, and meditation is not a gimmick. McCain's discipline for waking up at 5:30 every morning to do yoga is unwavering, a product of the mental strength that comes with meditation.

It's one thing to block out the noise when other people are screaming and yelling. But what about when it is just you, alone with your own thoughts and inner voice, with no escape but the sound of your breath? That's the power of meditation, focusing solely on inhaling and exhaling for an extended period of time. In addition to silencing the doubters in his mind, meditation plays a powerful role in relaxing McCain before he takes the court.

"I know what I'm capable of," McCain said at media day. "After having a bad game, I know how to be centered with myself and find my breath."

The mind is a muscle, and just like the physical toll of basketball, meditation is one of the strongest forms of training. One of the biggest keys to McCain's mental growth, according to Frazee, was Timothy Gallwey's "The Inner Game of Tennis," where Gallwey illustrates how self-doubt and mental weakness can affect sports performance and limit life success.

Frazee's father introduced him to "The Inner Game of Tennis," and Frazee tries to read it multiple times a year. During their training sessions, he discussed this with McCain, who has fully bought into introspection.

"I read ["The Inner Game of Tennis"] before every game," McCain said in a TikTok. "That probably built my confidence the most."

"[Gallwey] did a really good job of taking the understanding of Buddhism and Hinduism, and then importing them into how to practice tennis or sports or anything that is physical and skill-based," Frazee said.

Yoga and meditation, rooted in ancient Hindu tradition, have quickly grown to worldwide phenomena due to their numerous benefits. However, it hasn't fully taken the high school and collegiate athletic

## 'I meditate every single day': Inside Jared McCain's rigorous physical and mental discipline [cont.]

By Ranjan Jindal, The Chronicle (November 3, 2023)

world by storm. Nevertheless, McCain's open-mindedness to try something new is unique, and reflects his greater humility.

"He's not gonna leave any stone unturned," Frazee said. "He's gonna do all the aspects of preparation and he's about as good as I've seen. So it's always impressive and a lot of times inspiring to watch him go about his business in that way."

The Californian is an inspiration for many, and has a celebrity aura about himself that even transcends the fame of a Duke basketball player.

"[Students] usually ask us to take pictures of Jared," Power said jokingly on "The Brotherhood Podcast."

McCain has an enormous following, inspiring kids across the country. Graduate student Ryan Young mentioned that McCain stood out on the team's summer bonding trip to Chicago and everyone wanted to meet him.

"It feels really good, I can touch people's souls in different ways," McCain said about his ability to influence others.

It would be easy to become conceited, and let this fame get to his head. But McCain maintains his down-to-earth, genuine personality, no matter what. Whether it be preparing a routine to show off on TikTok, or playing basketball in front of a packed house, he has a constant joy about him.

"I think he really enjoys preparing and executing a plan to entertain people, whether it's understanding all the little nooks and crannies of [basketball] or if it's choreographing an entire routine," Frazee said.

'I knew I was gonna be in this position'  
McCain once asked Golden State Warriors guard Steph Curry how he handles slumps and Curry answered, "trust your work."

Many college newcomers face the "freshman wall," a combination of physical and mental fatigue with the rigorous demands of college athletics. But McCain's full-body preparation style is perfect for this, with his work ethic showing a love for not only the game but also the process.

"I've always loved getting up early, I watched those videos of CEOs who wake up early and get the work in," McCain said at media day. "I like the pressure of knowing I've got to perform right now. I trust my work."

His openness to trying meditation and his joy in whatever he does translates to the court, as he strives to become the best player he

can be by learning about every skill in the game.

"He really enjoys just being good at any part of basketball, it doesn't matter," Frazee said.

"Because of that, you're teaching him stuff you would teach a five-man or a post player. He'll just enjoy it, and he'll do it at the highest possible level he can do it at."

However, there is also a mental impact to preparation, knowing that you have the ability to play with the best in the country. McCain has made dream boards outlining his goals since middle school, validating that his basketball career is deliberately planned.

"I feel like I've manifested this," McCain said at media day. "I'm a huge believer in visualizations and just the law of attraction, so I did know I was gonna be here. I knew I was gonna be in this position."

The law of attraction is the idea that positive thoughts bring positive results into someone's life. McCain is the walking embodiment of positivity. He is "unapologetically himself" according to head coach Jon Scheyer and he perfectly walks the tightrope between confidence and humility.

When asked what he would tell his earlier self, McCain responded, "Be prepared for the hate, be prepared for people just being flat out mean. Always be yourself, no matter what situation you're in, always be yourself."

"It's a balanced confidence, whereas it's rooted into a lot of self awareness and understanding who he is as a player and who he is as a person," Frazee said.

One of his goals from his middle school vision board was to get an offer from Duke, and he has gotten that and more. So far, he's achieved everything he has manifested on these boards up to this point. But he's in the process of creating a board right now, with an unmet goal at the center:

An NCAA championship.

## 'He kinda brainwashed me': The story behind Sean Stewart's legendary Duke connection

By Ranjan Jindal, The Chronicle (November 3, 2023)

Sean Stewart's childhood room has all the staples of a sports-obsessed teen: jerseys and medals aplenty hanging on the walls, a sizable shoe collection and a Boston Celtics championship poster. But this particular room has a twist.

Above photos of a young Sean hangs a framed blueprint of Cameron Indoor Stadium. Steps away from a red neon sign mounted to the wall that reads "Sean13Stewart" and sandwiched between middle school basketball trophies rests a small Duke basketball autographed by Coach K. Peek into his closet, and the bottom rack is loaded with Duke-branded Nikes.

"My whole life I've been a Duke fan," the freshman forward said at the team's preseason media day. "My wildest dream is here and I'm living it right now."

That part is obvious. The reason why – not so much.

For as long as he can remember, Stewart and his family have lived on the same street in the Orlando suburb of Windermere, Fla., as Grant Hill.

Yes, that Grant Hill: the Blue Devils' heralded two-time national champion and arguably most successful professional product ever; the retired No. 33 jersey suspended in Cameron Indoor Stadium; the opening act of Duke's most famous historical moment – a full-court heave to set up Christian Laettner's "shot" in the 1992 Elite Eight that spearheaded a run to a second NCAA title in as many years.

To Stewart, though, he's just "Uncle Grant." He's the neighbor across the street who he'd known since he was a baby, whose kids he'd grown close with. He is the neighbor who was, in many ways, responsible for cultivating Stewart's lifelong dream to play basketball for the Blue Devils, which is now just days away.

"Whoever would have thought," Hill told The Chronicle.

### 'He kinda brainwashed me'

Hill first got acquainted with the Stewart family through Sean's father, Mike, who spent nine years as a journeyman in the NBA. Upon moving to Florida – and sharing a street – they began interacting more and more. Their wives soon became close friends, as did their children.

"Probably as close as you can be without really being blood relatives," Hill said.

The two families took vacations and spent holidays together. Hill shuttled Stewart and his brother Miles to the park and to basketball

games. The Hill household became a frequent host for playdates among the kids.

"I've essentially seen him and watched him grow up," Hill said.

It's no surprise, then, that Hill's deep-rooted Duke pride rubbed off on the young Stewart the more time they spent together. That came to a head on a fateful visit to campus in 2015 – the year the Blue Devils last won a national championship – to watch the first game of the season at Cameron Indoor. Stewart was awestruck, and Chekhov's gun was loaded.

Hill, who brought his family alongside Stewart's, didn't know how influential a trip that would later prove to be. In his eyes, the game wasn't even the kids' favorite part.

"We went to Dame's Chicken and Waffles," Hill said. "I remember that was a big hit. I thought that was a bigger hit than the actual game because they were all so young."

To this day, Stewart touts that visit as the genesis of his desire to take Duke's famed floor himself, not as a fan but as a player.

"Being in Cameron and watching Duke play in person may have sealed the deal," Hill said. "I think he might have been eight, nine years old, 10 years old at the time."

Hill underestimated the significance of that game at the time, but he isn't naive to the fact that his influence may have played a pronounced – perhaps the most pronounced – role in Stewart's eventual touchdown in the Triangle in team-licensed gear.

When it came to the recruiting process, though, Hill made a point to distance himself. He wanted to give Stewart the space to explore potential destinations, understanding the deeply personal nature of the journey and the necessity of self-selection.

Stewart agrees, and appreciated the hands-off approach to allow him to pick the right place. But his childhood fandom and the shining memory of that day lingered, as did Hill's presence in his life.

"He told me to be really open to my options," Stewart said at the team's preseason media day. "But when I was young, it was Duke, Duke, Duke."

Hill is a proud and prominent Blue Devil alumnus. He serves on the board of trustees, has appeared on "The Brotherhood Podcast" and even features his own clip saying "another one" in the video the program releases every time it bags a new recruit. His pass to Laettner and highlight-reel one-handed dunk from the 1991 title

## 'He kinda brainwashed me': The story behind Sean Stewart's legendary Duke connection [cont.]

By Ranjan Jindal, The Chronicle (November 3, 2023)

game play on the jumbotron before every home game. For Stewart, that meant Duke was never far away, despite Hill's best efforts to corral it.

"I'm sure through the years Sean and his family have heard me talk, share with pride, just my love for Duke," Hill said. "And so I'm sure when you hear as much as I'm sure Sean has heard, you're gonna love Duke or hate Duke."

Clearly, Stewart adhered to the former.

"I guess I indirectly did that when he was 10," Hill said.

### 'Always had that fire'

In the 18 years Hill has known Stewart, two things have remained irrevocably constant: his drive and his utter disdain for losing. Because Stewart was the youngest among all the kids when his family would hang out with Hill's to play games, that meant he lost a lot.

"I think he always had that fire. When he was young, he competed, he lost, he would get really mad," Hill said, laughing. "And I mean, really mad."

So growing up, Stewart was determined to not lose – to "work [his] butt off" and achieve his goals. Hill has always admired that about him.

"I remember telling [Stewart's] mom, I was like, 'if they don't bark as a puppy they won't bite as an adult,' or some line like that," Hill said.

Having spent as much time with Stewart as Hill has, he's seen him play plenty of basketball. He first got a clue that he had the potential to be something special in middle school – something no doubt helped by Stewart's father's 6-foot-10 stature and near-decade in the league.

From YMCA ball to middle school, to Windermere High School and then to Florida's storied Montverde Academy (home to Duke products like RJ Barrett and Dariq Whitehead) for his senior year, that potential was realized, and quickly. Entering his freshman year in Durham, Stewart was a consensus five-star recruit and fielded offers from Michigan, Georgetown, Ohio State and, of course, the Blue Devils.

The key to this? A one-track mind toward his goals and an unwavering dedication to do whatever was needed to get there, both on the court and off it.

"I think the thing that I really admire about his game, and hopefully I played this way when I played, but he always plays hard," Hill said.

"Playing hard is a talent. And you never have to get him to play harder."

Evidently, this was something the folks in Durham picked up on, and in December 2021, Stewart put pen to paper as the newest member of head coach Jon Scheyer's project.

"I think his dream school, when they showed interest, I don't think there was really any decision on his part or any thinking it through," Hill said. "Duke was the school that he always wanted to play at."

When Stewart laces up the Duke-branded Nikes from his bottom shelf and steps onto Coach K Court for the Blue Devils' season opener against Dartmouth, it's no longer about a signed ball, a blueprint on the wall or a yet-to-be fulfilled dream. He's worked for this, and now he's here.

"I don't even know how to explain how I'm gonna feel when we first step on that court and all the Crazies are watching us," Stewart said. "But I'm really excited. That's probably going to be the most hype I'll be for a game, ever."

The last time he felt that way was eight years ago for another curtain-raiser, with Grant Hill by his side and in his ear.

It's just as surreal now as it was then.

## Duke basketball hiring Emanuel Dildy as assistant coach

By Brendan Marks, The Athletic (July 27, 2023)

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After a nationwide search, Duke is hiring Oklahoma assistant coach Emanuel Dildy to its staff, per multiple industry and team sources. Dildy will fill the vacancy on Jon Scheyer's bench created earlier this summer, when former assistant Amile Jefferson left to take a job with the Boston Celtics.

Scheyer considered several other candidates, including at least one with significant Duke ties, before ultimately settling on Dildy, sources added. Dildy's hiring is expected to be announced publicly in the coming days, potentially even before the team's NIL trip to Chicago this weekend.

Last summer, in his first offseason as head coach, Scheyer made two hires from outside the Duke coaching tree: assistant Jai Lucas, whom he hired from Kentucky, and general manager Rachel Baker, who had never worked for a college program but had extensive basketball experience at Nike. Scheyer told The Athletic last preseason that he valued the diversity of thought those two brought to the table, and both made immediate positive impacts on the program; Lucas was even promoted to associate head coach this summer, after a single season keying the Blue Devils' defense. Lucas and Baker's success validated Scheyer's decision to go outside "The Brotherhood" – and also paved the way for another such hire.

So, why Dildy? At 42, he's regarded as a strong recruiter nationally with promising developmental chops on the court. At Northwestern – where he served under former Duke assistant Chris Collins – Dildy played a key role in assembling the highest-rated recruiting class in program history, which included a pair of top-100 commits in 2021. And at Loyola Chicago before that, he helped recruit the foundation of the Ramblers' 2018 Final Four team. That's how Dildy ended up back in Norman in 2021, due to his connection to Porter Moser, his former boss at Loyola Chicago.

From Duke (and Scheyer's) perspective, Dildy checks a number of boxes. First, his recruiting prowess should be a boon for a staff which already landed the No. 1 and No. 2 classes, respectively, in 2022 and 2023. Keeping the elite talent pipeline flowing to, and through, Durham is imperative. But Dildy also makes a ton of sense given where the rest of Scheyer's staff stands – namely, that Lucas is on the fast-track for a head coaching gig, and is expected to be a top candidate the next two hiring cycles. If Lucas were to leave next offseason, or even the year after, it would obviously create another vacancy, so Scheyer is looking for stability with this hire to mitigate that looming likelihood. Lastly, Dildy maintains diversity on Duke's staff, something that was important to Krzyzewski during his tenure and which Scheyer has continued.

Because Duke is a private university, Dildy's contract details will not be revealed publicly.

## Will Avery's basketball career comes full circle as he joins Duke basketball staff

By Steve Wiseman, Raleigh News & Observer (July 8, 2023)

Twenty-five years after he left Augusta, Georgia, to begin his Duke playing career, Will Avery returned to his hometown Friday and took another important step in his basketball life.

Avery joined Duke's coaching staff as an assistant coach, which allowed him to attend the Nike Peach Jam event just across the Savannah River in South Carolina at the Riverview Park Activities Center.

He's familiar with the surroundings, having played in the inaugural Peach Jam as a prep star before his one season at Duke and the NBA.

"It was actually really surreal driving over here," Avery said Friday, sitting courtside watching a game featuring Isaiah Evans, one of Duke's committed players for the 2024 class. "Now my first job. It's one of the first events I get to cover. So it's been great. I'm enjoying the ride, and I'm looking forward to get to work and help us continue to hang banners."

The job Avery is filling is one of two new positions on the Duke staff that are available this summer due to an NCAA rules change. College basketball teams are now allowed five assistant coaches, up from the previous three. Coaches in the new positions, like Avery, are allowed to work with players on the court in practice and individual work sessions, but they are not allowed to recruit on the road.

Off-campus recruiting is only allowed by the head coach and three other assistant coaches. In Duke's case, that's normally head coach Jon Scheyer and associate head coaches Chris Carrawell and Jai Lucas.

But the Blue Devils are down one recruiting assistant since Amile Jefferson left the Duke staff last month to become an assistant coach with the NBA's Boston Celtics. The search to fill his job is ongoing.

So Avery is allowed to recruit on the road at Peach Jam via an NCAA waiver because Duke has not yet hired Jefferson's replacement.

Back in 1998, he left his hometown of Augusta to join the Blue Devils. He helped them reach the NCAA Tournament championship game in 1999 before joining three other teammates as first-round NBA Draft picks the following summer.

After playing in 142 games for the NBA's Minnesota Timberwolves in addition to a career overseas, Avery retired as a player in 2012. He returned to Augusta to start the Will Avery Basketball Academy and said he got the itch to coach full-time while one of his daughters played middle school basketball.

"I started watching some practices," Avery said. "And I was like, 'Man, I gotta jump in here.' I started to really enjoy it, enjoy the relationships that I was building with the kids and everything."

Scheyer, who sat next to Avery watching Evans play at the Peach Jam on Saturday, was glad the NCAA created the new opportunities that provided a place on the coaching staff for Avery.

"The opportunity to have Will Avery here is incredible for us," Scheyer said. "He understands our program at its highest level. As an NBA Lottery pick in 1999, he knows the goals of our current players and achieved many himself."

In between getting the urge to coach and landing the Duke job, Avery had to finish up the college degree he started in 1998. He returned to Duke in 2019 and completed his African-American studies degree last spring.

Mike Krzyzewski, Avery's coach as a player at Duke, allowed him to work on the basketball staff in various roles over the last four years while he was going to school. Mainly, Avery joked, he had one job.

"Rebound," Avery said, referencing his role in player shootarounds. "I wasn't able to do much rebound in the past. But I got to observe and learn a whole lot from these guys."

Scheyer said Avery was impactful, even in that limited capacity, by his example.

"He has been a tremendous asset for our staff over the last several years after returning to Duke to complete his undergraduate degree," Scheyer said. "And what a testament to return 20 years later and achieve that. I'm thrilled for Will and his family and excited to have him as an assistant coach."