

Duke's Brian Zoubek pulls down one of his 17 rebounds during the Blue Devils' 77-56 win over Maryland on Saturday.

AP photo



NO. 8 DUKE 77, MARYLAND 56

Zoubek delivers on Coach K's big day

DURHAM — The subject was broached quickly and without interrogation Saturday afternoon, so as not to upset the cheer Duke coach Mike Krzyzewski brought with him to the press room.

The eighth-ranked Blue Devils had just pounded Maryland 77-56 at Cameron Indoor Stadium in a first-place ACC showdown shown nationally on CBS.

For two hours, Duke played with a near-perfect combination of passion and poise.



Dan Wiederer

On Coach K court.

On Coach K's 63rd birthday.

On the day Coach K sat on the Duke bench for the 1,000th time in front of a packed-house audience that included

dozens of former Coach K greats.

But, of course, with the rumor mill spinning like it had Friday, the celebration had to pause briefly for just one question.

Would Coach K possibly leave all this behind — the success, the energy, the adoration — if he had the chance, as gossip indicates he might, to work for Russian billionaire Mikhail Prokhorov as the coach of the New

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Jersey Nets next season?

"I've not been contacted by anybody," Krzyzewski answered.

Then, he smiled.

"The guy's Russian, right? Now, do you think he'd hire a Polish guy? Really?"

And if the phone call ever came?

"Saying 'nyet' would be easy for me," Krzyzewski said.

For now, that's that on the NBA chatter.

And besides, Krzyzewski has more to learn right now than a few Russian phrases.

After what happened Saturday at Cameron, he should have left the gym and bounced right into Krzyzewskiville to shout the afternoon's most repeated word.

"Zooooooooouuuuuubbbbs!"

Giant impact

That's right. On a festive afternoon, with ACC Player of the Year frontrunners Jon Scheyer and Greivis Vasquez going head to head, the best player on the floor turned out to be ... Brian Zoubek?

The 7-foot-1 inch senior has been the butt of many a joke over the past four years.

His vertical leap, we've all jabbed, rivals that of a three-legged rhino.

His senior-season beard, coupled with his always-imposing size, has made him look a bit like Treebeard from "Lord of the Rings."

And with an ACC-most 84 fouls this season, we've openly wondered if Zoubek has ever been called for blocking while brushing his teeth.

But on Saturday, Zoubek was no joke. Making his first start of the season, he was all over the floor, contesting shots, grabbing rebounds, pouring in points.

The final stat sheet had him for 16 points plus a career-high 17 rebounds, eight of them on the offensive end.

Scheyer wasn't even asked a question in the postgame when he looked at the media horde engulfing Zoubek and smiled.

"I mean, he played his butt off today," Scheyer said. "He's been working so hard and has had such a great attitude the whole year. It was great to see him all over the place. He blew the game open for us."

Now soak in this scene for a second: for about 5 minutes, J.J. Redick roamed the Duke locker room with a smile. The program's all-time leading scorer had to skip town quickly but wanted to congratulate the Devils first.

Redick shook Scheyer's hand and Nolan Smith's too. But he had no way of getting to Zoubek.

So for a moment, Redick stood alone in front of his old locker stall, peering at the sea of bodies surrounding Zoubek.

"That's incredible,"

Redick said.

Grand slam

If he thought that was incredible, then there's no telling what went through his head with 17:05 to play when Zoubek delivered the signature play of the afternoon. It came after a

GAME HIGHLIGHTS

■ Duke dominated this matchup by shooting 41.5 percent and locking down the Terrapins, who finished 25 points below their season average.

■ Greivis Vasquez scored 17 points and Cliff Tucker added 12 to lead the Terrapins (16-7, 6-3)

■ Nolan Smith had 14 points and Kyle Singler finished with 10 for the Blue Devils — who have won four straight, six of seven overall and 40 in a row at home against unranked teams.

missed Kyle Singler 3-pointer caromed harmlessly into the air.

Yet Zoubek maneuvered through the lane like a snow plow, sprung a good 14 inches off the ground and delivered a vicious tip dunk.

Duke led 48-26. The Cameron crazies were in hysterics.

Scheyer couldn't believe his eyes.

"I seriously had to take a double-look," he said. "I didn't know who that was."

Indeed, it was Zoubek, doing what few of his teammates or coaches had ever seen him do.

"They were such uplifting buckets," Krzyzewski said. "He was even playing above the rim. I'm going to try to figure out what he did last night and what he had for training meal (today)."

Zoubek revealed his magic breakfast was a heavy helping of silver dollar pancakes.

"Then he's having them all the time now," Krzyzewski said.

The Blue Devils know better than to expect this kind of explosion from Zoubek all the time. But they also know his contributions this season have been more valuable than most people realize. And Saturday, when it all clicked, Zoubek was the 7-foot-1, 260-pound exclamation point on Krzyzewski's Cameron birthday bash and his 781st win as Duke's coach.

"A guy hasn't had a better job than I've had for the last 30 years," Krzyzewski told the crowd just after the final buzzer.

Days like Saturday certainly help.

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Md	Min	M-A	M-A	FT	Reb	A	PF	PT
Milbourne	27	1-6	0-0	1-3	0	3	2	
Williams	24	3-9	0-1	3-7	0	3	6	
Hayes	31	3-7	2-2	0-1	3	0	8	
Mosley	24	2-6	0-0	2-4	2	2	4	
Vasquez	33	7-12	1-2	3-7	4	4	17	
Bowie	8	1-4	0-0	1-4	1	1	2	
Tucker	24	5-13	2-2	1-2	0	2	12	
Gregory	8	1-3	3-4	2-3	0	2	3	
Padgett	21	0-1	0-0	1-3	0	1	2	
Totals	200	23-61	8-11	16-37	10	18	56	

Percentages: FG .377, FT .727. 3-Point Goals: 2-13, .154 (Vasquez 2-3, Mosley 0-1, Bowie 0-1, Milbourne 0-2, Hayes 0-2, Tucker 0-4). Team Rebounds: 3. Blocked Shots: 6 (Gregory 4, Milbourne 2). Turnovers: 14 (Hayes 4, Vasquez 3, Tucker 2, Bowie 2, Mosley, Williams, Gregory). Steals: 4 (Milbourne, Williams, Mosley, Vasquez). Technical Fouls: None.

DUKE	Min	FG	M-A	FT	M-A	Reb	O-T	A	PF	PT
Singler	38	4-14	0-0	2-6	1	1	10			
Thomas	26	1-3	2-4	2-3	2	0	4			
Zoubek	22	7-10	2-2	8-17	1	3	16			
Smith	35	5-14	4-4	2-2	6	4	14			
Scheyer	36	6-12	7-8	1-3	1	1	22			
MaPlumlee	17	2-4	3-4	1-3	1	2	7			
Dawkins	10	0-3	0-0	0-1	0	0	0			
MiPlumlee	11	1-2	0-0	1-4	0	2	2			
Kelly	3	1-2	0-0	0-0	0	0	0			
Davidson	2	0-1	0-0	0-0	0	0	2			
Totals	200	27-65	18-22	20-44	12	13	77			

Percentages: FG .415, FT .818. 3-Point Goals: 5-15, .333 (Scheyer 3-4, Singler 2-6, Dawkins 0-1, Kelly 0-1, Smith 0-3). Team Rebounds: 5. Blocked Shots: 6 (Singler 3, Zoubek 2, MaPlumlee). Turnovers: 7 (MaPlumlee 2, Zoubek, Smith, Mi.Plumlee, Scheyer, Singler). Steals: 5 (Smith 2, Mi.Plumlee, Thomas, Singler). Technical Fouls: None.

Maryland	24	32-56
Duke	40	37-77

A-9,314.



Duke coach Mike Krzyzewski acknowledges a former player after being awarded a jersey for coaching 1,000 Duke games.

AP photo