

Remarks Honoring the NCAA Men's Basketball Champion Duke University Blue Devils September 8, 2015

The President. Welcome to the White House, everybody. Hope you all had a good Labor Day. Let's give it up for the National Champion Duke Blue Devils! We thought about inviting the Cameron Crazies here, but I didn't want any blue paint smudging my walls, so—[laughter]—we weren't sure if the risers could take it if they were jumping up and down. So you'll just have to shout and scream from your seats.

We've got some big Duke fans here today, including some Members of Congress, our Transportation Secretary, a native of North Carolina, Anthony Foxx. I'd like to recognize the chairman of Duke's Board of Trustees, David Rubenstein, who's here. Duke President Richard Brodhead is here. Athletic Director Kevin White is here. And an up-and-coming coach named Mike Krzyzewski. [Applause] Hey!

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. [Laughter] We think he has a lot of potential. [Laughter] Although, he does look the same. Have you noticed? There's like that Dorian Gray mirror thing going on somewhere.

True to Coach K's Army roots, we've also got Secretary of the Army, John McHugh is here. Where's John? Right here. And our new Chief of Staff of the Army, General Mark Milley, is here as well.

So it's good to see the Blue Devils again. This is the second time that I've hosted them here at the White House. It is. [Applause] And my old body man, Reggie Love, played for Coach K, helped me win a lot of pickup games. [Laughter] And then there's Derek Rhodes. Where's Derek? Derek was an intern here last summer before being head manager for the championship run. So a little White House magic rubbed off on this team. I'm just saying.

And I can relate to this program. Does well in the classroom. Won twice in the past 4 years. [Laughter] Know what it's like for people to oppose you no matter what you try to do.

[Laughter] I mean, when I flip on ESPN and I see a documentary about how people still "hate" Christian Laettner—[laughter]—a guy who played for Duke 23 years ago, I realize, well, maybe I don't have it so bad. Or I think this is going to be a long 23 years. [Laughter]

But here's the thing. If folks didn't like this year's Blue Devils, they were just being haters because—or they lived in Chapel Hill. That's a possibility as well. Because these guys were fun. They ran off 14 straight wins to start the season. But by tournament time, they were down to just eight scholarship players: four freshmen and one senior.

They had a soft-spoken All-American in the middle, Jahlil Okafor—from the Chicago area, I might just add—[laughter]—whose size and footwork bent defenses in a way that people hadn't seen in a very long time. There was the Final Four's Most Outstanding Player, Tyus Jones—or "Tyus Stones"—because of all the shots he made. [Laughter] There was freshman Justise Winslow flying all over the place—[laughter]—dominating some of the games in the tournament. Senior Quinn Cook provided senior leadership, setting a school all-time assist-to-turnover record. And then, there was Grayson Allen, who just went crazy—[laughter]—who clearly didn't know any better and just said, well, I'm going to score eight straight points at the end of a game.

And in that championship game against Wisconsin, the four freshmen scored every point in the second half. The Blue Devils shut down the most efficient offense in the country when they needed to. And that lockdown defense—which, let's face it, had not been evident in every game during the season—[laughter]—was the key to Duke's fifth title run.

And Coach K described this year's championship as "the best moment of his coaching career." And with five career championships, second to only the legendary John Wooden, that's saying something. Last season, Coach K became the first Division I men's college coach to win

1,000 games. And somehow he did it without ever saying a bad word to a referee. [Laughter]

Head Coach Michael W. Krzyzewski. That's true. That's true. Only what they deserved. [Laughter]

The President. Only what they deserved, he said. [Laughter] That's what I say about some of my opponents. [Laughter]

But everybody knows this program is not just about winning on the hardwood. Five players made the all-conference academic squad this year: Tyus, Justise, Grayson, Amile Jefferson, and Marshall Plumlee. That is worth applause. Marshall also spent much of this summer in leadership training at Fort Knox as he works to become a commissioned officer in the U.S. Army. So—[applause]. I was saying to Marshall, though, I feel bad for his parents trying to pay those grocery bills. When you've got, like, three folks 7 feet, you know they're eating a lot. [Laughter] That's a big grocery bill.

This team also visited Durham elementary schools for the "Read With the Blue Devils" campaign. Coach K authored an op-ed on the importance of early childhood education. Players volunteered as mentors at the Emily Krzyzewski Center, which is named for the Coach's mother and aims to break the cycle of poverty through out-of-school programs that help young people reach college.

So this is the kind of program that we hope for at any institution of higher learning. They represent their university well on and off the court. And that's why their fans are so passionate. That's why sometimes there are going to be some haters. [Laughter] But they deserve every accolade. They've got a great leader in Coach K, and it's an outstanding university, an outstanding program, and they deserve our hearty congratulations. Very proud of you guys.

Thank you. Good. Coach.

Coach Krzyzewski. Thank you. Mr. President, thanks for opening up your home. [Laughter] We've been to your house twice, and you've never been to our house. [Laughter]

The President. We'll have to correct that.

Coach Krzyzewski. We have to correct that in about a little over a year.

The President. A little over a year.

Coach Krzyzewski. And we hope to do that. By the way, the guys already ultimately respect you, but seeing you perform here, once your term is over, "Saturday Night Live" should have a permanent host, I think. [Laughter]

The President. Comedian in Chief, I could do a good job.

Coach Krzyzewski. It would be great. The cool thing about our group was that they were fun. And even the energy that—when I walk into a room, I always—like, is it a locker room that needs to be picked up? Or are you already picked up? And you guys are already up. [Laughter]

And—but that's what these guys did for me and my staff the entire year. And I just want to tell them publicly that we love them, and it was amazing. And thanks for sharing that year with me. And the guys coming back, if you could do that again, I wouldn't mind. [Laughter]

We have loved being here. Last night, David Rubenstein made it available for us to have a dinner at the National Archives, so it was an unbelievable night. And in front of the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and the Declaration of Independence, our guys were awarded their championship rings last night.

The President. That's great.

Coach Krzyzewski. So that was a cool night. They're pretty big, by the way.

The President. They are. [Laughter] Show it again.

Coach Krzyzewski. I'm from Chicago. A little bit of bling is not—[laughter]—it's not bad.

But the last 24 hours to be in front of—in that great building, in front of those documents and realizing the great men that started this country, but also then to come here and be in your house. And on behalf of our Duke community, we want to thank you for serving our country over these last two terms. You've been an amazing leader for our country. And it's not just you, but your family and the sacrifices. So thank you very much for your service. [Applause]

The President. Thank you.

Coach Krzyzewski. When we visit—and you won't have to do this when you visit our house—but usually, when you visit someone's house, you bring a gift. So we brought a few gifts. And I want to explain them and then

going to have Amile and Quinn, our cocaptains, give them. But we have a jersey.

The President. I need a jersey.

Coach Krzyzewski. We have a ball, all right.

The President. You've got a ball. I need a ball.

Coach Krzyzewski. And we have—I know you—

The President. My bracket again? [Laughter]

Coach Krzyzewski. No, no. We—[Laughter].

The President. He did this to me last time.

Coach Krzyzewski. No, no. But any time you take a test and you put your answers there, you should always want the approved solution. [Laughter] So that—

The President. This is the second time. [Laughter]

Coach Krzyzewski. But the other thing is not material, it's—I know you can't do it while you're President. But after you're through, we would like to scholarship you to our fantasy camp. [Laughter] We run a fantasy camp.

The President. Oh, excellent. Yes. [Laughter]

Coach Krzyzewski. Reggie said you can play and little—pound the ball a little bit, is what he said.

The President. Let's do it. [Laughter]

Coach Krzyzewski. But for 35—but for guys 35 and older.

The President. Yes. I'll dominate. [Laughter]

Coach Krzyzewski. He's not unlike the other 80 guys who come—[laughter]—and then, they find out the truth. [Laughter] But anyway, you have a scholarship.

The President. Thank you. I'm honored. Thank you.

Coach Krzyzewski. Yes. But again, thank you for inviting us for this very, very special day. And if Quinn and Amile—will you guys come down? If you guys would come in and present that. You can leave the bracket. That was a joke.

[At this point, guard Quinn Cook and forward Amile Jefferson presented the gifts to the President.]

The President. Thank you so much. Fantastic. Thank you. Let's strike the podium, and we'll get good pictures in. Come on, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:56 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former Personal Aide to the President Reginald L. Love; Tyus Jones and Grayson Allen, guards, Justise Winslow, forward, and Marshall Plumlee, center, Duke University men's basketball team; and Perky and Leslie Plumlee, parents, and Miles and Mason Plumlee, brothers, of Mr. Plumlee.

Remarks at Macomb Community College in Warren, Michigan September 9, 2015

The President. All right. Hello, Michigan! Oh, it's good to be back at Macomb. Go Monarchs!

Audience member. We love you!

The President. I love you back. I do. Yeah!

I want to begin by thanking your president, Jim Jacobs, for hosting us. We have got also two outstanding Members of Congress here who support every single initiative that we've got here in the State of Michigan. We've got Sandy Levin and Brenda Lawrence. We've got your mayor, James Fouts, here. [Applause] Well, somebody was really excited about you, James. [Laughter] And of course, we've got my favorite community college professor, Dr. Jill

Biden, here. Jill was not fibbing; on Air Force One, she was grading papers. [Laughter] She was. And I was—I had flashbacks to when I was teaching law and grading papers. It's not as bad as writing papers—[laughter]—but reading them is tough too, sometimes.

Jill works with Michelle to support our military families. She's leading the new College Promise Advisory Board. On top of that, she teaches full time at a community college in Virginia. And her husband is not so bad either. [Laughter] He's okay. Love Joe Biden.

The—so, across our country, young people—and some just young-at-heart people—[laughter].