

# American Athletic Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Thursday, March 13, 2025

Fort Worth, Texas, USA

Dickies Arena

## East Carolina Pirates

## Michael Schwartz

## RJ Felton

## Jordan Riley

### Postgame Press Conference



East Carolina - 70, UTSA - 65

THE MODERATOR: We'll go ahead and get started with an opening statement from Coach and then take questions for the student-athletes.

MICHAEL SCHWARTZ: Start off by saying just the utmost respect for Coach Austin Claunch's staff and their players. I just think they're a dynamic basketball team and no different than our other two games, just extremely fortunate that we were able to come out of here with a win in this second round conference tournament game.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. You guys put that last loss of the regular season completely out the back window. How did you go about wiping the slate clean and coming out with a solid performance on all ends tonight?**

MICHAEL SCHWARTZ: Well, to be quite honest with you, right after that game, we talked about, in the locker room at FAU, and we said, regardless of what happens here today, if we were fortunate enough to play better, lose a close game, win, whatever it may be, we were going to hit the reset button in that locker room. And I thought, led by these two guys, the next two days of preparation leading into this travel and heading here to Fort Worth, our guys were extremely locked in and focused on this game. Everybody kept asking about playing a team a third time, and we said, That is irrelevant. That's not what makes this game hard playing UTSA a third time. What makes this game hard is playing UTSA because they're a really good team. And so that's where our focus was, preparing as if this was the first time we played them.

**Q. RJ, fourth-year senior. You've been a part of this program coming up. How special is it to have that 10-win conference for the first time in a while and now a win right here in Fort Worth?**

RJ FELTON: I would say it's big for the program and us, but it's always about business right now. As far as right now, we're more in a business mindset, trying to take care of business.

**Q. Jordan, it was like a big three for you guys tonight between you two and Cam, and you guys fought off UTSA's big three with your scoring performance. How dangerous is this East Carolina team if all three of you guys are going off on the same night?**

JORDAN RILEY: It's pretty dangerous, especially when Cam is going off and RJ is going off. I won't even say it's the big three because we have also C.J. too and we've got Jayshane and Trevion. We got a lot of players that can go off any time, any moment.

**Q. You're 3-1 in overtime games. Did you start thinking about that tonight as it got close toward the end?**

MICHAEL SCHWARTZ: You know what? I guess you don't want to think about overtime until the clock hits zero and you got to do it. But in terms of what we were doing with C.J., I did have that in our mind. He had four fouls, so the thought that could this game get extended, so we were trying to do some offense-defense substitution. Obviously, we put him in at the end of the game for rebounding purposes when they were on the free-throw line.

But Trevion LaBeaux, all year long, when he's had to play at the 5, he's just such a smart player and he did a phenomenal job executing late game in terms of our foul. When we fouled up three, he executed that out of the timeout. But he always does that. But, you know, if it's 45 minutes, if it's 50 minutes, whatever it is, I know this team is ready to play.

**ASAP** . . . when all is said, we're done.®  
sports

**Q. Jordan, what has allowed you guys in these close games, particularly at UTSA and other games as well throughout the season, to have that confidence that you're going to make plays down the stretch like y'all did tonight?**

JORDAN RILEY: Can you repeat that question, please.

**Q. In the close games you guys have had, what kind of gives y'all the confidence to make those plays down the stretch, the winning plays in crunch time?**

JORDAN RILEY: We all put in a lot of work. Me, RJ and a lot of people, we put in a lot of work. Also, there's a toughness aspect too. So we just have a mental -- like, we have a strong mental where we can just do anything, and I just feel like we're just going to make plays. And it's not the first time we've been in this type of situation. We've been here plenty of times. We know what to do and that's pretty much what we just do. I feel like we're just strong with everything we do.

**Q. I was going to ask you about the fouling at the end. How much strategy went into fouling a guy who had struggled in that game at the line thus far?**

MICHAEL SCHWARTZ: Well, to be quite honest with you, we were going to foul on the catch. I've seen too many, at least in that situation. I don't know whether they were going to look to call a timeout when they got to half court or they were going to look to catch and just heave. I've seen a play where a team caught and heaved it and picked up three off the dribble because they tried to foul at half court.

So in that particular situation, with the way the game goes and in terms of the way UTSA shoots the three, again, Trevion executed exactly what we wanted to do, which was foul on the catch, and it just so happened that the ball ended up in Smith's hands. If that ball had ended up in a different player's hands, we would have fouled on the catch at that moment also because we didn't want to allow them to play up in the half court with a timeout or be able to get dribbles and momentum and maybe shoot and draw a shooting foul at that moment.

So again, every scenario's different, but we executed exactly what we wanted to do coming out of the timeout and that's why we called the timeout.

**Q. It's tournament play. You survived UTSA. Just speak on your thoughts heading into the UAB game tomorrow night.**

MICHAEL SCHWARTZ: UAB's one of the very best teams in this league. They're an NCAA tournament-caliber team.

We had a great game in Greenville a few weeks ago. They have the conference Player of the Year on their team. We know how talented they are. Coach Kennedy is as good of a coach as there is in this conference and the country. So we know what a great challenge it will be for us tomorrow night.

**Q. RJ, it looked like you maybe got a little banged up end of the first half. How are you feeling health-wise? And then coming back from that, having a really good second half as well, just speak on that a little bit, please.**

RJ FELTON: Man, it was just a little bump. Ain't nothing, really. Me just coming back, I just changed my mindset. I just got to get locked in and finish the game. It's more about winning and being more of a leader on team because if I go down, I'm going to have to -- if I go down, it's going to be a little hectic, but I had to get that mental toughness and fight back and play.

**Q. Did you have a word with your guys at halftime in regard to the little bit of a dustup there right at the end of the half? Did you talk to them about that?**

MICHAEL SCHWARTZ: Well, I didn't know what happened, to be quite honest with you. Obviously, I saw it as we were walking off the court. I didn't find out that there was going to be a technical assessed until we were in the locker room, and then I got the explanation when I came back out at the beginning of the second half.

But, yes, we just talked about keeping composure, and we know that these games, tournament play, regardless of it's a first time, second time, third time playing a team. I mean, we're competing for something at a very high level and UTSA's competing for something at a very high level. It's going to be an intense, physical game, and we just talked about keeping our composure and, you know, I guess we probably -- it seems like maybe we lost it a little bit at the end of the first half.

Again, I haven't even seen it yet, but based on what the officials told me. But, yeah, we addressed it quickly, but you know what? We addressed a lot more, is what we need to do to continue playing good basketball in the second half with being composed and being poised.

**Q. Jordan, you having a bigger experience into a deeper run into the American Conference previously, what's your best advice to your teammates in the locker room just being prepared mentally going into that UAB game tomorrow night?**

JORDAN RILEY: Pretty much how we did it last game, just

be ready, be strong, and just be ready to play for real. Since I had a lot of experience last year, it was just togetherness, being strong mentally and tough. Once you start winning, it's just fun and once you go and get one, you get another one, get another one, get another one, get another one. But that's the advice I would give.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

