

# NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Four

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Dayton, Ohio, USA

UD Arena

## Alabama State Hornets Coach Tony Madlock TJ Madlock CJ Hines

Media Conference



THE MODERATOR: CJ, talk about your excitement of playing in March Madness.

CJ HINES: Yeah, it's a dream come true just to be on this stage, to make the SWAC tournament, win the SWAC tournament, get to the big dance and be on this level, so it's a dream come true.

TJ MADLOCK: Yeah, same thing. As a Division I basketball player, every kid's dream is to go to March Madness, so to finally be here, to experience it, it feels real good.

**Q. In general, what are your initial thoughts of coming into March Madness First Four?**

TJ MADLOCK: We're trying to keep playing. We want to keep playing. Honestly, we know we come in here as a 16 seed, so don't nobody expect too much out of it.

But it's always a Cinderella story, so why not be us? So we're ready to play.

CJ HINES: Yeah, we're coming in as a 16 seed. We know it's a lot of teams that's going to try to walk by us and think, like, it's an easy game, but we're going to come in, take one game at a time, try to keep playing, keep going forward, because it's win or go home now, so just keep going.

**Q. Do you have a favorite memory of March Madness?**

CJ HINES: Favorite memory of March Madness? Hmm, I don't. I really don't.

TJ MADLOCK: Well, I've actually been as a fan because my dad. He used to coach at Ole Miss, so Ole Miss had went to March Madness one year, and right before Ole Miss played, Georgia -- I think it was Georgia State was playing, and they had hit a game winner to win it.

That was real crazy. Just shows the atmosphere of March Madness. That's the game when the coach had fell out of his chair -- Ron Hunter, that game. I was there for that game, so that was crazy.

**Q. You won all of your conference tournament games within five points. What do you think is the strength of this team that allows you to win those close games?**

TJ MADLOCK: Just staying the course during the whole game. We know especially in the SWAC that all those games we play, our whole season it was tight games. We know it's a game of runs, and for our team, we just like to stay level headed and fight until the end.

CJ HINES: Yeah, we had a lot of close games this season in the SWAC, in the tournament. We just tried to encourage our teammates to keep going. Basketball is a game full of runs, so they may make a run, we may make a run. As long as we get the last run, the last punch, then that's really what matters.

The last couple games we've been getting that, and that's why we've been winning.

**Q. Alabama hasn't played March Madness since 2011. What is the mentality coming into the First Four without having played in about a decade?**

CJ HINES: Yeah, the mentality, it really doesn't change. We're still going to look at it as another game. Just try to come out here, play our best, compete, grind, and come out with the W.

TJ MADLOCK: Yeah, like CJ said, mentality don't change. It's another game, another game in the books for us, and we're ready to play.

**Q. The SWAC has been such a big part of the First Four looking back the last couple years. When you**



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**guys have that stretch early in the season, because I know you spent a good amount of time here in Ohio, CJ, is that kind of on your mind, trying to get back here and sort of knowing that history with the SWAC and playing in Dayton?**

CJ HINES: Playing during the season, it really wasn't on my mind, but once we got closer to that tournament, the conference tournament, then getting that SWAC ring and getting back here, it started to get on my mind.

**Q. TJ, what you guys were able to do here earlier in the season in this state, where that club was in November to where we are now, what do you think has been the biggest improvement to this squad?**

TJ MADLOCK: I think we all just bought in as a team. Our big motto on our team is star in your role, and everybody knows their role for this team, knows what they have to do for us to win games.

Towards the middle of the season we kind of clicked, and we've been rolling ever since.

**Q. TJ, you mentioned "clicked." Was there one game in particular where you think that was the case?**

TJ MADLOCK: I would have to say when we played Southern at home. We had just come off a bad loss at home, and before that we didn't want to lose at home, and the way that team had beat us, we didn't like that taste in our mouth.

We had came together and just decided that we needed to go on a run, to finish up February, to finish up March, to be in the position we're at now.

**Q. How do you feel about being here now preparing to play a 16 versus if you were at another site preparing to play a No. 1 seed right now?**

TJ MADLOCK: Just go into it as any other game. We don't want to overlook it or underlook it. We just go into it as any other game. We scout the same way, prepare the same way, and go play our same game.

CJ HINES: Yeah, he said it perfectly. We're just going to go into it as another game. We're not really going to try to switch things up just because it's a 16-16 game or a 16-1 game. We're just going to go and just -- everything is going to be the same, the game plan, the scout. Nothing is really going to switch up.

**Q. What does it mean for you guys to be able to represent Alabama State on a stage like this?**

CJ HINES: Man, it's major just to represent Alabama State, the SWAC. We know it's a lot of fans watching, a lot of people all over the country watching, rooting for us. It's a major accomplishment to be here.

TJ MADLOCK: Yeah, it means the world. Alabama State, we got the best fans in the world I think, an HBCU for sure, so it means to world to represent them and to show what an HBCU can do.

**Q. You guys played in a lot of tight ballgames this year. Which defense were you most productive? Was it man or zone or a combination?**

TJ MADLOCK: I'm going to go a combination because we have a lot of defenses we like to switch it up. We like to put pressure on teams, and sometimes we like to just play regular man-to-man.

But we have a lot of different defenses that we throw at different times in the game. So it's a combination of all of them.

CJ HINES: Yeah, it's definitely a combination. We're just trying to keep them off guard on defense, just keep them on their toes, keeping pressure, just so we can have the advantage on that end.

**Q. You guys mentioned about your fan base. Do you have anything to say to your fans before going into March Madness in your first game?**

CJ HINES: Yeah, I just want to say thank you all for the support. We're going to need y'all Tuesday, Thursday, whenever we play. We're going to need y'all, so just want to say thank you, and we're here.

TJ MADLOCK: Yeah, we appreciate y'all for everything y'all done for us, and we're ready to hoop. If y'all ready, we're ready.

**Q. TJ, pertaining to your opponent, such a quick turnaround in what has been just a wild couple hours here in the last 24. What's sort of the prep and trying to get ready for Saint Francis?**

TJ MADLOCK: I mean, like you said, it's a quick turn, so there's not a lot we can do scout-wise. We can't go over every single play they have. We understand that, so we have to go off principles and do what we do. That's going to be defensively just making sure we guard our yard, rebound, we run, we play fast. That's our type of play.

Just doing what we do for the most part, and it'll all work



out in our favor.

**Q. Taking care of your business and doing what you do, CJ, I'll ask you, what's the best quality of this team, and when are you at your best?**

CJ HINES: I would say the best quality of us, probably guarding and getting out in transition. Once we guard, get the rebound, we've got guards, we've got wings, bigs. We can run the floor. We've got IQ to make the right play from that. I would say getting out in transition, that's what we're at our best.

**Q. You were at your best looking at the SWAC tournament. Talk about your confidence right now, and if anything really changed in your game as we've gotten towards the back end of the season and this winning streak you're on.**

CJ HINES: Yeah, my confidence right now, it is through the roof. Nothing really changed. I just told myself, like, just got to go out here and compete. The SWAC championship, the tournament was win or go home. I just wasn't trying to go home. I was just trying to give my all to keep playing, keep dancing.

**Q. TJ, when do you think you're at your best and what's the best quality of this basketball team.**

TJ MADLOCK: Our best quality, like I said earlier, is everybody knowing their role. So everybody doing whatever they got to do for us to win.

We got some people that know they got to go score. CJ, man, he knows he has to go score every night for us, and we know some dudes that know they got to guard every night. So everybody knowing their role, everybody doing what they got to do for us to win.

THE MODERATOR: We're really excited to bring on the head coach in Tony Madlock, first time since 2011 that Alabama State has been able to play in March Madness, the champions of the SWAC here in the First Four.

Coach, your opening statement and what this means for the Hornets.

TONY MADLOCK: Well, first of all, man, what a great time, March Madness. It just feels so good to be playing at this time of year. I've been in this business a long time, 29 years, and there are a lot of Marches that I'm not participating. So this is a lot of fun, and it feels good to get Alabama State back to the dance.

It's been a long time, 2011, so I know Hornet Nation is

feeling really good, the city of Montgomery is feeling good, and Alabama State University is feeling really good right now.

**Q. Coach, this town loves basketball, and there's going to be a lot of energy for these games. How important is it to have the crowd on your side?**

TONY MADLOCK: Oh, it's very important. We just got through playing a game for the SWAC Championship in Atlanta, which Atlanta is two hours away from Montgomery, so the fan base came down and supported.

I've actually coached in this arena multiple times. Actually when I was at Ole Miss and we played BYU in one of the play-in games. So I know exactly how it feels to be in this arena with the support of this city. Yeah, it's going to be a lot of fun.

**Q. Sort of a follow-up, do you feel like that'll be really important in getting your guys ready and prepared for what to expect come tomorrow night?**

TONY MADLOCK: Yeah, we've talked about it a little bit earlier today, that it's going to be a great environment.

Again, Dayton does a good job of hosting this tournament and making sure that everybody feels welcome. I know the fans will be loud and crazy in there tomorrow. We're excited about that.

**Q. They had played here in an exhibition to start the season. I don't know if you think that might help them a little bit. What are the pros and cons of being here versus being right into the 64 for a 16 seed?**

TONY MADLOCK: Well, I think the con is that you don't have a lot of time to prepare, but that might also be a pro, that you can just go play, because we've just got through playing three games in a row.

We're feeling really good about how we're playing right now. I bet they're feeling the same way.

Maybe we can get right to it.

But we're excited about the opportunity. Man, again, it's been a long time for our university, so we're excited about trying to keep this thing going.

**Q. What traditions or philosophies from Alabama State do you try to uphold still from past teams?**

TONY MADLOCK: Well, what we try to do is to make sure that, first of all, our student-athletes do the right things,

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about graduation, about making sure that our guys are about being about a community, the city of Montgomery.

And just making sure that all of our former alumni, just seeing our alumni in Atlanta this past weekend and the support we had, man, that's what we're trying to do. We want to make sure that Hornet Nation knows that we're trying to represent that university to a higher standard at all times.

**Q. This team is really playing well, and it comes at the perfect time. 10 of your last 11. Has there been one thing in particular that's been the result of this tremendous streak of success?**

TONY MADLOCK: It all just kind of fell in line. It started with we had a loss at home to Grambling State, and Grambling State is a really good team. They won the SWAC last year. We lost to them at home and lost to them pretty good. They just outplayed us.

Our league is a Saturday-Monday league, so we lost on Saturday, and then we had to play the best team in the league, someone that was undefeated at the time, on a Monday. We came out there Monday night and really played well, and we won that game.

So we gave Southern their first loss, so from that point on, I think our guys just started to believe that we are a good team, and kind of the rest is history.

**Q. What does it mean to you and to the program to be representing HBCUs on a stage like this?**

TONY MADLOCK: Oh, it means so much because people get a chance to see us. It's one of those things that not a lot of our games are on national TV, so we're not seen like that.

So anytime that we can be seen, somebody can talk about HBCU, the HBCU experience, it's great for our university. It's great for everybody that's involved.

**Q. Do you anticipate to adapt to the team's game speed, or do you want to have a game tempo to throw them off?**

TONY MADLOCK: Yeah, we're going to try to do what we do. We're a team that really tries to play fast. We're going to be aggressive on defense. We're going to try to continue to do the things that we've done to get us here.

Hopefully we can just come out and play relaxed and be ready to play.

**Q. We just got to talk with TJ and CJ. They had great years and both were named to the all-tournament team. But amongst some of the other guys on this team, what should fans be looking for tomorrow night and how Alabama State plays basketball?**

TONY MADLOCK: You're going to see a fun style. Amarr Knox, who he isn't one of the guys who talked today, but he was first-team all-league. He's had a tremendous year. He's from Memphis, Tennessee, and he's a basketball guy. He's a scoring machine.

You're going to see some guys that can really shoot the ball, can score the ball. We're athletic. We're a fun team to watch.

Hopefully we can make sure that we're playing right at the right time like we have been and have a good showing tomorrow night.

**Q. You mentioned Memphis, and you got to play in this tournament as a Memphis Tiger. What's it mean for you on the flip end of being a head coach -- I know you've experienced the tournament in other facets, assistant coaches, but the excitement of being the guy on the sideline in charge?**

TONY MADLOCK: I've thought about that a lot of times. It means so much. I've played in this tournament, again, in Memphis. I made it to the Elite 8 with Penny Hardaway, way back in the day. And then being an assistant coach I've been to the dance a couple times. Now to have my own program and to get Alabama State back to the dance, it means so much.

But again, that's what we do. That's the reason why I got in this business, is to try to keep advancing. Hopefully it keeps following in the right direction.

**Q. It being just your second season, are you a little bit surprised how quickly you've been able to get here?**

TONY MADLOCK: It's actually three. This is year three for me. Every coach thinks they're going to get to a program and turn it around quickly because it was a total rebuild. This is the first year -- so year three for me. This is the first year that it's all my players, the guys that I've recruited and signed.

So going into the year, you know that it's on me. It was no leftovers from the previous staff. It was all my players, all the guys that I've recruited. It's turned out pretty good so far.

**Q. In trying to get ready for this game tomorrow night,**



**how much do you know about Saint Francis? I know you just alluded to the fact of how quick the turnaround is, but have you been able to really sit down and watch the Red Flash?**

TONY MADLOCK: Yes, got a chance -- me and my staff got a chance to watch a couple games last night. Because I've been in this business so long and I know a lot of people, I've talked to some coaches that's in their league. I think we know as much as you can know in a 24-hour period.

But no, it's been good, but it's going to be tough. But it's going to be the same for them. We're all trying to find out as much information as we can, but we'll do a little bit more prep tonight and be ready to go tomorrow.

**Q. How good was the feeling of actually seeing your name up last night in the selection show, Alabama State being able to punch their ticket?**

TONY MADLOCK: Oh, man, it's nothing like it. Nothing like it. Again, I've been in this situation as a player, as an assistant coach, but when you're the man, you're the boss and you're the head coach, it hits different.

**Q. Is there an excitement factor, too, in being able to come to Dayton? I mentioned this with your players, the SWAC being such a great representative of the First Four. You always want to be in, but amongst being a 16 to being in the First Four as a 16?**

TONY MADLOCK: Well, you think about that, I think we're the first game tomorrow. Everybody is going to be watching. So all eyes are going to be on us, so we're excited about that.

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