

# NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Four

Tuesday, March 18, 2025

Dayton, Ohio, USA

UD Arena

## Alabama State Hornets Coach Tony Madlock Amarr Knox TJ Madlock

Media Conference



Alabama State 70, Saint Francis 68

THE MODERATOR: Talk about what this win means and kicking off March Madness in that fashion.

TONY MADLOCK: You just said it, March Madness. I think I've talked about this with all of the media, that all of our games end just like this, either we have to get a bucket or we have to get a stop. Fortunately enough we were able to get a bucket to finish this game off.

So proud of these guys. We did not play very well. We've got to give Saint Francis a lot of credit, but we did not play well. But we talk about finding a way, finding a way. And we got the W, and that's the only thing that matters. You're talking about survive and advance.

**Q. That last play, what was both of your views? Obviously Amarr, but what was the design there and then what actually happened?**

AMARR KNOX: Well, first, we wanted to throw the ball long, and we put our tallest athletic person to go get the ball. And fortunately everybody tipped the ball, and it landed to me, and I got the rebound and made the lay-up.

Couldn't have done it without my whole team. We instituted a play that we practice on all day in practice, our game plan, and it worked.

TJ MADLOCK: Like he said, we go over a lot of situational stuff in practice every day. At the end of the day, it's about who wants it, and I know he obviously showed he wanted it a little bit more tonight.

**Q. Simpson made a heck of a pass. Is he a**

**quarterback or something? That was right on the money.**

TJ MADLOCK: Like I said, we go over a lot of situational stuff in practice, so he's the one throwing it in practice every single day. He's used to that pass. He was ready for the moment, and we executed perfectly.

**Q. Amarr, was he a quarterback?**

AMARR KNOX: Yeah, he's definitely our quarterback. He makes that pass on the money all the time in practice. It was perfect today.

**Q. Saint Francis was up by nine at one point, shortly before halftime. What was your mentality when you guys were down? What did you have to do? Was there any conversation about climbing back? What was your mentality just to get back in this game, especially late?**

AMARR KNOX: Well, we've been in that moment, that situation a few times this year, and we knew we just had to come out and play ball. We stayed positive. We knew as soon as the next half started that we would come out, fly around, play aggressive and just do whatever it takes to win the game.

TJ MADLOCK: Yeah, we know it's a game of runs, and we knew early we wasn't playing good, and it might have been because of a little nerves. Once we got through with that, we knew all we had to do was go out there and play our game and we'd be good.

**Q. Guys, there's a lot of Memphis up there at that table. How proud are you guys of this moment? I heard Coach Madlock on the TV sort of shout out Memphis. Just talk about how proud you guys are of this moment.**

TJ MADLOCK: Yeah, like you said, a lot of Memphis up here at this table, so it's good to represent the city. It's the best city in the world. It feels good to represent.

AMARR KNOX: Yeah, I feel like Memphis is the best city in the world. We have to show out or represent our city the best way we can.



**Q. What was the experience like for you guys here? You're not here very long, but you accomplished what you wanted to accomplish.**

TJ MADLOCK: Unbelievable. It's March Madness; there's nothing like it. It's every Division I player's dream to play in March Madness. So to be here and play and get a win is unbelievable. It's amazing.

AMARR KNOX: Yeah, it's incredible to play in March Madness. It's my first time being here. I plan on coming next year, too. It's amazing. It's a crazy atmosphere.

**Q. You didn't make it to the line until about five minutes left in the game. What does it say about your squad to continue to stick with it and battle in the paint and keep grinding?**

AMARR KNOX: Well, that's normally not us. We normally get to the free-throw line. But things happen. We've just got to find a way to get the win, and that's what our entire team did, and I'm proud of them guys, and time to move forward.

TJ MADLOCK: We need to get to the line more. We need to be more aggressive. But a lot of our shots that we shot, a lot of our threes, they were wide-open looks and we'll take them every day, but we do need to be a little bit more aggressive, and we will do that the next game.

**Q. TJ, was that supposed to go to you, that pass? Were you one of the guys that was supposed to get it?**

TJ MADLOCK: It wasn't supposed to go to me, but I wanted to go get it, go make a play, and that's what I did. But it wasn't supposed to go to me, it was supposed to go to our big. But hey, it's March Madness, anything can happen.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the head coach of the Alabama State Hornets.

**Q. Micah was just saying that he was put in to be the passer in that play about January he thought. What made you think that he was the guy to do that?**

TONY MADLOCK: Trial and error because, again, we spend a lot of time, especially on game day. Game day, we always spend probably about 10 to 12 minutes on situational stuff. We had a couple guys throwing the pass and it wasn't very consistent, and then once we got -- Micah says, we call him Deuce, he's been throwing it, and it's been going pretty good. That's what happened. So he became the guy that throws that pass on that play.

**Q. Some people with three and a half seconds might do a shorter pass, dribble up, try to make something happen. Why is that your best play in that situation in your mind?**

TONY MADLOCK: Well, we have multiple plays that we would do with three seconds, we just chose that one today because sometimes -- we do also a situational deal where we shoot half-court shots. So we know with three seconds you've got two good dribbles and then get it up. But we decided to go with that one today.

**Q. Cranford, especially in the first half, was hitting a lot of deep shots. What did you guys have to do to try to contain him, and what was your game plan to try to keep him in check?**

TONY MADLOCK: Yeah, they're a good team. They're a good team. They made shots, and we just knew -- that was part of the game plan; that we cannot let them get open threes. We did a better job in the second half. They made a couple late, but we did a good job, and we just knew defensively second half we had to be more aggressive, and we were.

**Q. How many times in your career do you remember that play has worked? Do you remember other games where that baseball pass has worked?**

TONY MADLOCK: No, not that I've been involved in. But we practice it a lot.

**Q. The pressure defense, especially late, was big for you guys, forcing 15 turnovers. What's your thoughts on that and how big was that in this game?**

TONY MADLOCK: Yeah, we was trying to do that for 40 minutes and not just turn them over. But it didn't happen like that. Again, we had some nerves. Guys had nerves. This is a big stage, man. This is a big stage.

But again, so proud of these guys. They just represent Alabama State so well. They just do everything I ask them to do, and they try to do it to their best ability. Again, I'm just so proud.

**Q. Talking about the big stage, obviously so proud about your team, but how cool is it sharing this, father-son, with TJ along for the ride?**

TONY MADLOCK: Man, we're going to have stories forever, aren't we, for everything that happened with Alabama State, first time winning a tournament game, got to 20 wins this year. You know how hard that is for an



HBCU school. It's so hard because you have to play those money games early.

But for us to just fight and fight and fight and find a way to get to 20 wins, it just means so much, again, to our program, to the city of Montgomery, to Alabama State University. Again, we just want to make that city proud.

**Q. It has been a great year for the state of Alabama in basketball, any number of teams. Is there irony, or is it kind of cool that Auburn is next for you guys? Second of all, when you win a game like this, the demands of the tournament as you move on, how long can you savor this before it clicks in that you're about to play the No. 1 seed in the tournament?**

TONY MADLOCK: I don't know. I'll figure that out tonight. But I know we're going to enjoy this tonight. We're going to have this bus ride, I guess a couple hours down the road to play in Lexington at Rupp Arena. How can you beat that? How can you beat that for a school in the SWAC that has a lot of great tradition for us to go play at Rupp Arena? Nothing like it. We can't wait.

**Q. Did the atmosphere and everything live up to what you were expecting?**

TONY MADLOCK: Oh, it did. It was outstanding. Dayton does a great job, the city does a great job of hosting this tournament. Everybody is so friendly, so nice. No, it's unbelievable.

**Q. Coach Madlock, have you heard from Penny yet?**

TONY MADLOCK: I'm pretty sure I will have a text message from him when I get to my phone. But again, man, I told a couple people that we talked the other day on my ride to work, the other morning, and we just talked about the journey, when both of us was playing at Memphis and we made that Elite 8 run way back in the day now.

But just talking about both of us are taking our teams to the dance, and it's just a special moment. Again, we just try to represent the city of Memphis with stuff we do, and I'm just proud to get this opportunity.

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