

# NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Four

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Dayton, Ohio, USA

UD Arena

## Texas Longhorns Coach Sean Miller Jordan Pope Dailyn Swain Tramon Mark

Media Conference

**Q. Just wanted to ask you guys being here, second straight year in the First Four, last year Dailyn obviously with Xavier, how different does it feel to be here with that year of experience under your belt?**

DAILYN SWAIN: It's a great feeling. Coach Miller talked about familiarity, like playing here before. I played here in high school. This is probably my fifth or sixth time playing here. I'm from Ohio, so I know how it feels. So I'm trying to get these guys to understand that feeling, and it's a great opportunity.

JORDAN POPE: Yeah, it's just a great opportunity ahead of us. Playing here last year, obviously we were on the losing end of that. It wasn't nice. Having that underneath my belt and just understanding the stakes and what we're playing for and how big and meaningful it is, just keeping that in mind. But it's a great opportunity.

TRAMON MARK: Yeah, like Jordan said, it's a great opportunity for us. Just want to come out there and play as hard as we can, together as we can. Just do anything we can to get the win and move on and keep this dream alive for us going forward.

**Q. Dailyn, you talked about trying to get them to understand the feeling. What is the feel of playing here?**

DAILYN SWAIN: Obviously it's not the first day of the March Madness, of the tournament, when you're in the last four teams in, but it's still the same opportunity. You have to take that, stay hungry, stay together.



Obviously it's not the most traditional route to get to the tournament or what you'd think of, but like I said, it's the same opportunity for us, and we have to attack that and keep our dream alive.

**Q. How does this arena compare to some of the other places you've played across the country?**

DAILYN SWAIN: It's a great arena, great atmosphere. They have really good fans. Ohio is a basketball state to me so I know there will be a lot of fans here who enjoy college basketball. But we've played in plenty of different venues from Maui in a high school or D-II gym to places like Rupp Arena to Moody Center. It stacks up pretty well against everywhere we've been.

**Q. Jordan, is it strange in sort of the situation last year and then now being back, with Dailyn on your side, have you guys joked about that?**

JORDAN POPE: Yeah, we've kind of joked about that all year so it's kind of ironic and weird that we're back here, a little déjà-vu feeling. But I'm glad to have Dailyn and Coach Miller on my side this time, and I think it'll play out a lot better than it did last year for me.

DAILYN SWAIN: For sure. It's definitely a full circle moment a little bit. My first few days at Texas, I kind of joked with them about how we beat them, and now we're teammates. And I never let them forget. I remind them probably once a week. It's definitely a funny feeling, but like he said, I think it'll be a better result for the Longhorns this time.

**Q. Going back to Maui against this NC State team, one of your more productive games of your career, seven three-pointers in that game, what was working for you that game that you're hoping to be able to transition over to this tournament?**

JORDAN POPE: In that game, we knew the way they played defense, they were going to be really gapped up and kind of force players into the drive and kick. We knew that going into it. So just staying prepared, staying ready, and trusting my teammates and myself to make the right plays, the right passes. That's what happened.

I got a lot of good looks from three. Like you said, I made seven. I'm sure this time around they'll probably make some adjustments towards myself and other guys that played that game from three. So I've just got to be able to counter that and find other ways to impact the game. But that's what I seen that game.

**Q. Tramon, looking at the squad, when Texas is playing at its best, what are the Longhorns doing in finding success?**

TRAMON MARK: I think when we're at our best, we're getting stops and getting down running on the break, scoring easy buckets from two, getting wide open looks from three, just stuff like that. All five guys are engaged on the offensive end and defensive end. We're just playing really well. That's what I think.

**Q. Follow-up question there, currently kind of in a little bit of a funk coming home. What are some of the things that you guys are looking to change and trying to change that L into a W?**

TRAMON MARK: I think just playing harder. Just playing as hard as we can, as fast as we can, being under control, just stuff like that, giving all our effort. I think that's when we're at our best.

**Q. What has Coach Miller brought in his first year there?**

JORDAN POPE: I'd say his intensity, his emphasis on all the little things. Some nights we're not going to be playing our best offensively or making shots, so what are doing to impact the game. Every day in practice since he's gotten there, just emphasizing our effort level, what we're doing on defense, our deflections, which is kind of a measurement of how hard we're playing, getting kills, getting stops that will open up other things throughout the game.

So since day one emphasizing all the little things that matter, that help lead or build to a winning culture, winning team, winning program. And we've had our moments, so just acknowledging that and trusting that, but that's something that I've seen since day one.

TRAMON MARK: Coach Miller, very intense, very detailed. He makes us understand the little details we need to do in the game that are going to help us win. It's just our job to go out there and execute them, and that's what we're going to try to do tomorrow. We just have to execute, get the 50/50 balls and just do stuff like that to win the game.

**Q. For Jordan and Dailyn, I spoke with Chendall in the locker room, and he said he addressed the team yesterday. What was his message to you guys and what was the reaction when you guys learned that you did make the NCAA Tournament?**

DAILYN SWAIN: Really just trying to breathe new life into it. Obviously like he said, we're coming off a funk a little bit and trying to bounce back from that. And being in the tournament is a new opportunity. We can't dwell on the last few losses that we've taken. We're just trying to have a little bit of a new feeling and a better team morale, and I think that's the main message, honestly.

JORDAN POPE: Just to soak in the moment, take advantage. The last couple days have been not ideal given the circumstances, and we put ourselves in that position, so hearing our name called was a big sigh of relief. But like Dailyn said, going into this game, everything we did in the past, good or bad, doesn't matter. It's a fresh start, quote-unquote, and something to keep the season going.

It's a win or go home, and none of us want our season to end, so just hearing our name called was a relief and we're thankful to be in this position. A lot of teams aren't in this position. So just being thankful and just trying to seize the moment, and that's what we're looking to do tomorrow.

**Q. Tramon, having faced NC State before, does it give you guys any bit of insight or has that matchup been so long ago it's almost two different teams?**

TRAMON MARK: I would say it's two different teams. They're probably going to do something way different than what we did the first game. Probably not be in the gaps as much, stuff like that. But we'll see.

**Q. When Sean spoke to us yesterday, he said there was a little bit of a lag between you guys losing to Oklahoma and starting the SEC tournament as far as you guys being able to flip the page on that. Do you feel you guys have adequately flipped the page from losing to Ole Miss to now?**

JORDAN POPE: I think so, and in perspective, everything that happened in conference in the SEC tournament is behind us now. So just looking to turn the page, and this is new life. So there's no reason to dwell on the last two games like we did from Oklahoma going into Ole Miss.

I think this is a completely different opportunity, and we also had a couple days in between to really separate the two. Unlike the Oklahoma loss, right after we lost that game, it was right on a plane to Nashville to see Ole Miss,

and we were never able to separate the two. But that's on us. We have to be able to move from game to game, and I think we'll do a good job here tomorrow in terms of separating that.

**Q. Dailyn, for you, have you given any consideration to what your future may hold beyond the end of this year as far as the NBA?**

DAILYN SWAIN: No, sir. Really I'm just focused on finishing the season as good as we can as a team, playing as hard as I can for my seniors and all the guys who won't be able to play anymore, and trying to make a deep run for Coach Miller in his first year at Texas and letting the country know how good of a coach he is. That's the main thing, really.

**Q. Is it hard to stay consistent as much as you guys are traveling and changing scenarios, and what do you guys do on an everyday basis to maintain some of that consistency in your preparation?**

DAILYN SWAIN: I would say being consistent in our habits, whether that's warming up, same shooting drills, same defensive drills. Honestly, just trying to be familiar with everything we do, whether we're in a different state or at a different school.

But I wouldn't say it's hard. We knew what we signed up for being college basketball players. It's kind of something you dream of as a kid, being able to get on a plane and fly to places like Athens, Georgia to play at Georgia and then to fly home to play at the Moody Center. Travelling isn't an excuse for us, I think it's more of a privilege. So we have to be as consistent as we can.

TRAMON MARK: Yeah, I wouldn't say it's hard for us. Like Dailyn said, we signed up for this, so we're prepared for anything we have to do, whether that's warming up, shooting, just getting our bodies loose, ready to go for anything. We've got to do it with our practice, just stuff like that. We're always ready to go, no matter what time it is. Travelling and stuff, that takes a toll on you, but we signed up for it.

JORDAN POPE: Like both of them said, it's nothing new or that weighs too much on us. For me personally, I've been travelling and going state to state since I was a sophomore in high school, so it was something I was able to see before I got to college. And then in college, I'm an older guy, so I can't really use flights or travelling as something that's taxing for me.

We're all creatures of habit, so what we do in our daily routine on the court off the court, treatment, our diet, our

sleep patterns, everything, all that goes into it. So I think if you're consistent with that, over time, the flights and all that, that won't bother you at all. We're pretty lucky and privileged in the resources we have in today's game.

**Q. Outside of playing in the NCAA tournament, which all of you have been able to do, Jordan, what's your favorite March Madness moment as a fan?**

JORDAN POPE: That's a good question. So many. My mind is going blank. I guess just seeing some of the Cinderella stories, the underdogs do the impossible. For me personally, I've been an underdog most of my life, so seeing things like that happen, it's pretty surreal. That magical feeling that happens in March. Now that I'm in position to be in March Madness, that's something I kind of want to get a feeling hands-on for myself and for my teammates.

Yeah, just stories like that, just feeling that magic that can take place in March.

DAILYN SWAIN: I would say for me, seeing FDU beat Purdue as the No. 1 seed. I don't know if Cam Heide would like that answer. But it going down in Columbus, Ohio and then having a Columbus kid in Sean Moore, a kid I saw him play in high school when I was younger. It kind of inspired me.

Like he said, I've been an underdog as well for a long part of my life, so seeing that kind of lights that flame inside you that you can accomplish a lot of things in March.

TRAMON MARK: I can't really think of one right now, but just seeing teams that the media doesn't think would make a deep run in the tournament or fans don't think would make a deep run in the tournament go really deep, and you see how really connected they are as a team at the end of the year. It's just good to see teams like that.

**Q. With all the moving parts and preparation and goings and comings, how are you able to handle your academics?**

TRAMON MARK: I mean, I handle my academics well. I got all online classes, so I handle it pretty well, just doing what I've got to do.

DAILYN SWAIN: I would say the same thing. I have more online classes than in person. But we get a lot of help from our academic advisors and assistant coaches, constantly reminding us that we're student-athletes, as well. So whether that's doing homework on the plane or on the bus, we get done what we have to get done.

JORDAN POPE: Me three, I guess. We have a lot of help in our support system with our academic counselors, advisors. They're on us a lot. So whether that's working ahead when we're in town in Austin, making sure we get our work done, talking to our professors and things like that to make sure we're staying ahead of the curve when we travel. So I think we're in a good place and we have a lot of help to make sure we handle business.

**Q. Dailyn, you're a Columbus kid so it's kind of a homecoming for you. Just the thoughts and feelings of being back here in Ohio and if you have any family or friends that are going to come up and make the trip?**

DAILYN SWAIN: Yeah, for sure, a lot of my family that in Columbus will make the trip down here -- family, former coaches. I was just telling these guys when we got off the bus about my experiences here. I lost in the Final Four two years in a row here, and really the only good feeling I have is when we beat Texas here last year. So I'm trying to hold on to that as much as I can.

I think it'll be a great moment for my family to come see me now that I'm in Austin. But they can come see me here, as well.

**Q. Coach, your thoughts on being back in the NCAA Tournament and this time with Texas?**

SEAN MILLER: Yeah, first and foremost, I think I speak for everybody a part of our team and university, we're thrilled to be a part of this year's NCAA Tournament. When you're going through the grind of a long season, you're constantly reminded of the parity in our game. Just so many great teams, especially in the SEC. To be at the end and have the opportunity to represent the SEC and obviously the University of Texas in this tournament is something that we all feel really good about.

Sometimes you enter it here in Daytona, other times you enter it at a different site, but each year represents a brand new canvas. And we're excited and looking forward to playing NC State. We've obviously matched up against them one time already, so we're very familiar with their talent and the type of team they are.

**Q. Shawn, I spoke with Chendall a second ago in the locker room. He said he addressed the team. Curious if you knew that message was coming. Your thoughts on that? And also, just the importance of this team seizing the moment here?**

SEAN MILLER: Yeah, for sure. I think the ending of our season is somewhat of a unique experience for us

because we hit a stretch where we played our very, very best basketball in about a four-week window where I think we won five SEC games in a row, and we were playing at a very high level.

We ended the season with a couple tough losses. But if you're really following the SEC closely, losing in an overtime home game to Oklahoma, to Porter Moser's credit and Oklahoma, they were playing about as well as any team we had faced all year long when we played them. And I think that was represented in the SEC tournament.

You get into the SEC tournament, you play Ole Miss, at one point who maybe has lost 11 of 12, but they have a great coach in Chris Beard, and they came into the tournament playing really well. If they beat Arkansas, they lost in overtime, I'm not so sure they wouldn't have won the SEC tournament, five games in five days.

You have to see that for what it is. Sometimes it's not a reflection of who you are, it's who you're playing. The one thing that we bring to us at this time of year is all of those experiences are helpful when you're in a neutral site setting against a team like NC State. You call on those experiences.

We're excited. I think this is a brand-new season. We've left what has happened, good and bad, in the past. The fact that we're a part of the field, now it's up to us to try to stay in this tournament.

**Q. Just wanted to ask you, obviously as a former assistant at NC State and having ties to that program for a number of years, just your memories of coaching at NCAA State but also what that program means to you, too?**

SEAN MILLER: Yeah, I have a lot of amazing memories there. Two of my three sons were born in Raleigh. It was a very great time in life for my wife and I. We lived in Garner, North Carolina. Herb Sendek was the head coach. We were building a program in the shadow of Coach K in his prime and Dean Smith towards the end.

But when I think back to my experience at NC State, it was an incredible time in the ACC. Tim Duncan was a senior when I was there. Gary Williams was building his program to eventually win a national championship with Steve Blake and Juan Dixon and those guys. Rick Barnes ironically was at Clemson. Bobby Cremins was at Georgia Tech and it was a round-robin.

For a young assistant coach, it was the ultimate training ground to really understand what college basketball was about because you're seeing Hall of Fame coaches,

National Championship coaches build their program, coach the game, run their team, develop like those types of coaches can develop into something incredible.

When I was there for five years, it was like going to grad school as a college basketball coach. I learned so much, whether it be recruiting, coaching, and just if you were paying close attention, you were surrounded by greatness.

When I look back at that time of my life, it was certainly one of the great five-year stretches, especially in college basketball, that I've had.

**Q. Sean, could you talk about the team's perimeter defense, kind of the challenge they're going to have against NC State tomorrow?**

SEAN MILLER: Yeah, we're here in this tournament because of our offense. I don't think that's a secret that I'm giving away. We've been very efficient. We've scored a lot of points. If you would have told me in August that my team would score 80 or more points seven times and lose, I would have taken that bet. No way. Not only that, but that means we scored 80 or more points quite a few times, which we have. We've averaged over 80 points. That's how we've gotten here. We've worked hard to improve defensively. I think our defensive rebounding is the best thing we do on that side.

But we have our hands full against NC State, their three-point shooting. I think their center is underrated, he can score, and they have a number of different guys. And Copeland, who we've already played against, he had 28 in our game in Maui when we played them.

Just watching the season that he had, he had, in a sense, a historic year. His assist rate of over seven a game, his scoring, his size. We really look at him as the engine that makes them go. He's a terrific player, and Will Wade is obviously an excellent coach. Yeah, that's part of being in this tournament.

**Q. I believe this is the second time that you've now stepped into a program as a first-year coach in the NIL era and been able to take them to the NCAA Tournament. I was curious if there's any new challenges you've found in this era compared to the first one as a first year being able to get to this stage?**

SEAN MILLER: Yeah, it's a very good question and complicated to some degree. I would just tell you that what once was is no longer, whether that means a postseason meeting with a player that would return, how you go about recruiting, even to some degree player development, how you build your roster.

I think all of us are trying to, number one, identify what's best for our individual programs, what works for us to be the best that we can be at the University of Texas. It might be different for somebody else at a different program or different area of the country.

I think it's just a moving target, and there's a lot that goes into it, a lot of thought. And even in the last year, I think things are constantly evolving and growing, and we're all trying to evolve and adapt and grow with it, and quite frankly learn from others.

There are programs, the ones that are thriving, what are the decisions they're making that we have to start looking at differently maybe than we once did.

I would just kind of wrap up my answer by saying, it's really just ever evolving and adapting right now.

**Q. I had two questions. One was what do you remember about the atmosphere here last year for your game? The other one is I believe Thad Matta retired today. I wondered if you had any reaction to that, thoughts on that?**

SEAN MILLER: Yeah, I'll answer that first. Thad, all of us have several friends in coaching. I don't have anybody in coaching that I care more about or that I have a closer bond with than Thad Matta. Him and I shared an office at Miami of Ohio in Oxford for a couple of years.

You talk about young assistant coaches that were just kind of on the fly, drinking out of a fire hose, and willing to do whatever it took to win on and off the court. We worked really hard.

Then we worked together for a while, as well. He's had a remarkable career and did it right from day one. I think we all admire Thad because he did it his way. There's not two of him. His way of coaching the game, and I think his demeanor away from the game really set him apart.

But great friend, and I know he's moving on to happy times.

What was your other question?

**Q. Atmosphere here.**

SEAN MILLER: Yeah, the atmosphere last year was certainly pro the team that I was coaching. We felt that, and sometimes that's the case with just the region that you go to. For example, I know UConn is in Philly. If I was getting ready to play UConn in Philly, I know what that means. There's going to be a lot of UConn Husky fans.

We're here in UD Arena, and regardless, it's about the game. We have to execute, and we have to be excited to play.

I don't have any doubts that we'll be able to, to some degree, do both, certainly on the excitement end.

**Q. Was there something that you learned from last year and playing in the First Four that you look to use to your advantage tomorrow night?**

SEAN MILLER: Well, I think the one thing about the First Four is it hits you really quickly. You're watching the selection show on a Sunday like everybody, and you're thrilled to be in it. If you're in the First Four, there was some doubt, you weren't a shoe-in for sure. So it's that thrill, that great feeling of, we did it.

But then the reality of it is you're on a plane the next morning, and here we are. You don't have the rhythm of those two days and the true preparation. I think the pageantry of like that extra day and a half before you ever play doesn't exist as much here.

We talked to our team about that. Remember, the team that I'm coaching was here, as well, so they have a lot of experience with it. I think they know what Daytona, Ohio, looks like, feels like, what UD Arena feels like, and certainly are here to represent the SEC and University of Texas and be at our best.

**Q. Is there a strange feeling of being back here? Is it almost like Groundhog Day?**

SEAN MILLER: No. I'll answer that simply because I don't think you can ever connect one year to the next. So different. Very different for me, for a lot of obvious reasons.

But I think new team, new leadership, new journey, different schedule. And I think that's what captivates the world and why so many people love college basketball, because each year is its own brand-new story.

I don't want anybody as part of our team or program to think back to that year ago simply because there's nothing the same. It's completely different. It's a new journey, and we're here on a brand new day.

**Q. You have played here at UD several times in this building. I was just wanting to know, does that afford you any advantages because you've played here so many times?**

SEAN MILLER: I mean, for me, I'm very comfortable. As

soon as I walk in the building, I know there's a ramp. I've gone up and down it who knows how many times.

Look, I said this every time that I've ever been here: I don't know if there's a building, an arena in America that's any better than UD Arena on game day. It's amazing. I just think, like, the sound is -- it's just prevalent. It's not like some of the new buildings where it's so spacious and so new that you can't hear the loudness as much.

Here, you do. The seating, the renovations, and then most importantly the love for college basketball that exists in Dayton. My brother obviously was the head coach here for a number of years, and he loved being here, had a lot of success. Then obviously being in the area and just being in this arena.

A year ago we scrimmaged Dayton and were here in the First Four, and just every time you walk in here, you're reminded of what a great basketball venue this place is.

**Q. What can you say watching Dailyn Swain's career develop over the years?**

SEAN MILLER: Yeah, Dailyn is a great story, especially being here in Ohio. As you guys know, came from Columbus, Ohio, the footprint of the Big Ten. Dailyn would be the first one to tell you that it wasn't like a lot of those programs were knocking on his door. He came to us at 6'7", 176 pounds. Dailyn is very young. He turned 18 right at the end of June and early July, so he'd have been a true 18-year-old freshman in college.

But he's just gotten better. Same coach, same strength coach, structure, I think he's really bought in. He listens. He learns. We've had amazing support from his mom and family. They allow us to coach Dailyn, hold him accountable, and Dailyn has worked hard to develop his shot, develop his body.

I think his ability to pass and handle the ball, something that he had a good starting point on, he's really taken that to a very high level.

If you followed us this year, there aren't too many players that play college basketball that had a better overall season than Dailyn did. Let's start with the fact that he led us in five categories, averaged almost 20 points a game in the SEC. Newcomer of the year in the SEC, second team all-SEC performer, one of the top 10 players in our conference. All of that was hard-earned because I don't know how many people really knew who Dailyn would have been in November.

He's a throwback story in that he's just gotten better every



six months he's been in college, and I think his best days are certainly ahead of him.

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