

# NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Round - James Madison vs Wisconsin

Friday, March 22, 2024

Brooklyn, New York, USA

Barclays Center

**James Madison Dukes**  
**Coach Mark Byington**  
**T.J. Bickerstaff**  
**Terrence Edwards Jr.**  
**Michael Green III**  
Media Conference

JMU 72, Wisconsin 61

MARK BYINGTON: I'll start with this. I'll tell you exactly what I just told the team. I'm proud of them but not surprised. You know, these guys compete. They come to win. They play to win. And we kind of heard things about our schedule not being tough and who we are, and we knew we belong. We know we're good. We know we can compete.

And they showed that today. You know, from start to finish, I thought we were playing the right way. The guys never flinched. They knew the whole time that we were going to pull this thing out, and that's the type of group we've got. They are used to winning and I love coaching them. And we know it's a challenge coming up, and we love challenges. We're excited about it.

**Q. I don't know if it was just because I was sitting right in front of them, but for as loud as JMU fans were, your guys's parents were almost probably the loudest section in the whole place. Especially for Mike, since this is homecoming for you, what did it mean to have not just so many supporters but friends and family to come to the game and be as loud and passionate as they were in?**

MICHAEL GREEN III: It felt great. I have family and friends who have not seen me play since high school. They was able to come out and watch me play, and it just felt amazing to hear them and just see them here at the game. It didn't feel real.



TERRENCE EDWARDS, JR. Yeah, I kind of say the same thing. My family traveled all the way from Atlanta and they booked all the way to Monday so it was only right that we get this win today so we can just fill out their trip.

T.J. BICKERSTAFF: I would say it's all love, man. My parents are always so supportive and my friends, and I'm just glad they get to witness this because they have not been able to do that.

**Q. A lot of people kind of made a big deal of them having a 7-foot center, and you guys had not played against somebody that tall in a while. But Coach pointed out the other day that you guys are big at a lot of places even though you're only 6-9. Did you take that challenge to go against them? I think you outscored them at paint?**

T.J. BICKERSTAFF: I took it as a challenge. People were talking all week about how it depends on how we guard the bigs and what the bigs on the other team do. I took it personal and I played with a lot of energy, and I always try to prove myself on the court because I've always been underlooked.

**Q. Related to Shane's question, Wisconsin started the day 11th ^ in offensive efficiency. You guys forced them into a season-high 19 turnovers. What was the game plan defensively and how did you guys execute it?**

TERRENCE EDWARDS, JR. Like I say, we had an edge, you know. People -- you know, you hear a lot of things when you're not trying to hear, that they had a guy that was kind of -- they was kind of comparing to me and saying he was better and stuff. So it just gave me another edge to come out here and just defend him. And the coaches put me on everybody who started going off. I just had that edge and that's what I got to do going forward. I got to be better on the defensive end, and I showed that tonight, and that's what I'm going to do on Sunday, also.

**Q. Just for all the players, seemed like you guys in the first five, ten minutes came out super aggressively**



**defensively. What's the key to maintaining that across the whole game once you set that tone?**

T.J. BICKERSTAFF: I've been talking about it all year, it's our mindset. We have older guys on the team who have been through some things and experienced that stuff. Being able to have that mindset and set that example for our young guys and things like that, that's what helps us move forward.

TERRENCE EDWARDS, JR.: I think being a starter, you have to come out there and set the tone early, like T.J. said, for the guys that come off the bench. And that's why the guys on the bench come in and play the way they we play, because we come out and set the tone like that and it just give them even more energy. And we put that together for 40 minutes, we're a hard team to beat.

MICHAEL GREEN III: I think the big thing for us is experience. As an experienced team, we know what it takes to win these type of games. We've all been in bunch of them, it's no surprise to us, and we know what it takes to win these type of games.

**Q. You said there was somebody they were comparing you to. Who was that and once they started to get the early turnovers, how much did it become an emotional game?**

TERRENCE EDWARDS, JR. Can you say that one more time?

**Q. How much do you feel like it became an emotional game after some of the early turnovers?**

TERRENCE EDWARDS, JR. I don't really say it's emotional. I guess that's just how I play. I like to scream and get that stuff out of me, I don't like to hold that in. That just keeps me going, and it's contagious to the team. And the coaches tell me all the time, like when I'm playing like that on the defensive end, it's contagious. And yeah, that's what we going to do Sunday. I just can't wait to get back out there.

**Q. You guys, you don't get many shots at power conference programs, and you've beaten virtually everybody you played this year. And I know it was a long time ago, but you opened the season against a Big Ten team. Did that give you guys confidence coming into this game?**

MICHAEL GREEN III: I feel like we've had confidence, just in the work we put in. Like we know we are a good team and we know that we can beat any team in any league, so we prepare for anything.

TERRENCE EDWARDS, JR. To pick up on what Mike said, we did the same thing we did the first night coming out when the season opened. We came out and set the tone like we did Michigan State. I guess the same thing happened. Noah at Michigan State came out and hit the first three and it was gone after that. Tonight, Noah came out and hit the first three and it was the exact same thing. It reminded me of Michigan State for sure.

T.J. BICKERSTAFF: Yeah, I would just say we are not scared of competition. We proved that over and over again. We are not scared of like different experiences because we have been through it all.

**Q. What was the key down the stretch? You never let them get to the point where they were one shot away from equalling the score.**

TERRENCE EDWARDS, JR. Like I say, our coaches kept staying on us saying don't let off the gas. I think we were doing that a lot in conference play. We kind of got bored a little bit. So coming into this tournament, we knew we were going to play teams where you can't do that type of stuff. And so, yeah, that's what y'all seen tonight, just us putting on a full 40 minutes together and yeah, see y'all Sunday.

**Q. You pointed out a couple times in the past week that this was going to be the first time you were underdogs since the first week of the season, but did these guys ever feel like underdogs going into this one? They never trailed or wavered.**

MARK BYINGTON: I tried to use that, I tried to use the underdog strategy as a coach on Monday in our first meeting and first practice, and they were not paying attention to me. So it came to a point where I just had to take them who they are. They are an aggressive, competitive bunch.

I know we were looked at as underdogs, but we never felt that way. We felt that we had a chance to compete. We knew it was going to be a tough game, and that's something that these guys like. I mean, they are not scared of challenges. They embrace them.

**Q. Is it an advantage of having an experienced team when Terrence picks up his second foul there with about seven minutes to go in the first half, that you can still put him back in and essentially play him the last four minutes and have him help you extend that lead?**

MARK BYINGTON: Yeah, we were juggling lineups in the first half. Noah Freidel picked up his second foul and T.J.

got an early one, you know, really quick in the game, and I didn't want him to get his second. But with Noah and Terrence Edwards playing with two fouls, I thought we had to keep fresh bodies in there, and if they picked up the third, they picked up the third.

They are not typical foul-out guys, and I know some people believe in not playing guys with two fouls. I'm not one of them. I judged the game and I trust those guys.

**Q. After you talked about the importance of getting seven locks, you hit seven with a minute left in the first. Is that rare to do it that early, and what did that mean to do that well in the first half?**

MARK BYINGTON: Our defense in the first half was phenomenal. I mean, the game plan that the guys followed and executed, their aggressiveness, and to turn them over like that is very rare. Watched a bunch of film on them. We thought that was our advantage. We thought we could be quicker and more aggressive on the ball.

We emphasized that and maybe thought that will take away some of their size advantages or some of the other things. We thought that was our advantage, and in the first half, the guys did a great job of it.

**Q. Any nerves at any point today?**

MARK BYINGTON: For me or for the team?

**Q. Both.**

MARK BYINGTON: I am nervous all the time. So, yes, I was nervous before shootaround, before the game, and all the time.

But I think it's natural. But I think our guys, if they were a little bit nervous, they turned it into them being ready and being excited to play. There was nothing that we did out there that the guys were hesitant on. And that's what we kept emphasizing, look, if somebody is going to get us, it's not because we are going in and be scared or hesitant. If they are going to get us, they are going to get us, but we're going to be aggressive and play the way we're supposed to play.

**Q. Correct me if I'm wrong, but this is your first March Madness game and you're officially 1-0 in the Big Dance. How does that feel?**

MARK BYINGTON: If you saw me right after the game, I wanted to run to the locker room and start getting ready for Duke.

We've had great wins this year. You know, it's hard to enjoy it because there's something -- I'm always next. How does it feel? I'm really not feeling a lot of emotion right now. My thing is, I've got to get back tonight. Got a late night. Get these guys ready for Duke.

**Q. You kind of alluded to the lack of turnovers recently for Wisconsin, but they have had some games throughout the year where they turned it over a lot. What did you examine about the way that those teams defended them?**

MARK BYINGTON: The only team in the Big Ten that we kind of saw emulate what we were doing a little bit was Rutgers. We didn't really see it much. And then maybe Tennessee a little bit. We didn't see it much lately.

And I didn't know if we can do it or not. I mean, I looked at a stat in the last five games, I think Chucky Hepburn had 18 assists and 14 turnovers and he plays 38 minutes a game or something like that. That's incredible. I didn't know if we could turn them over.

I thought our aggressiveness would help us with our post defense. I thought our aggressiveness might turn them over, but it would help us with guys trying to drive and closing gaps down.

So it was a mentality, but it was also just a way we had to play and I thought it was the right way to play for us to try to have a chance to win against them.

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