

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

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Barclays Center

James Madison Dukes Coach Mark Byington Jaylen Carey Terrence Edwards Jr. Noah Freidel

Media Conference

Q. You did a nice job on Wisconsin's seven-footer last night. Filipowski is -- maybe you guys tell me. Is he a similar player? Do you think similar tactics, similar type defense works on him like Wisconsin's big man?

JAYLEN CAREY: Same game plan. Deny and stuff like that. He's a lot more skilled than the Wisconsin big, but it's for sure going to be a challenge tomorrow night, but excited for it.

Q. What is it like to be where you are? Program record, wins, playing Duke for a chance to go to the Sweet 16 for a program that had not won a NCAA Tournament since 1983. Can you describe what this moment is like?

TERRENCE EDWARDS, JR.: That's what we do it for, for the University and for the future and recruits and stuff like that to get people to come to James Madison. It's a big university, great campus, great fans. So yeah, that's what we do it for just to show people that you can actually go to a mid major and you can beat these type of opponents.

JAYLEN CAREY: Yeah, basically you put the work in and you can compete with anybody. It's just coming together and just working and working and taking out big schools one at a time.

Q. Obviously your brother went to Duke. Coach was talking earlier about his memories of you, going on recruiting trips and stuff. What's it like to bring your family playing against the Blue Devils?



JAYLEN CAREY: It's crazy, it comes full circle. As a kid you dream about playing for Duke or playing against them and it's crazy to be doing it in March Madness at the Barclays Center.

Q. All three of you guys can chime in, but for Terrence in particular, you were talking about future recruiting for this program, and you've been on that train for a while now talking about the future, and you guys stayed at JMU for four years. I guess, why did that kind of become your thing that not only did you stick around, but you're looking to the future of the program, long after you're good to be there?

TERRENCE EDWARDS, JR.: I can kind of say that I actually care about James Madison University and the people up there. They stuck with me from the time I committed to this university, so I felt like I owed that back to the university to get wins and make history. Coach Byington is a great coach. I don't see why nobody wanted to come play for him. And this style we play is built for dogs. If you're a dog, you should come to JMU.

Q. What did that Michigan State win do for you guys? How much did that change everything to start the year with a win like that?

NOAH FREIDEL: It sparked our confidence and got us rolling. Once we got the first two road wins, we knew we had a chance to do something special and that really kept us locked in and taking one game at a time.

TERRENCE EDWARDS, JR.: Yeah, same. I think it helped us like Noah said with our confidence and stuff. But we always believed in each other and our coaching staff. They always told us that we can do those type of things, and we came together as a group and the players. And we went into Michigan State knowing that we wanted to win the game and that was our main focus.

Ever since we won the first week of the season, it changed our season around and knew we had a chance to do what we did last night and make it to the NCAA Tournament and actually win.



JAYLEN CAREY: Yeah, before Michigan State, I felt like we knew we had a special group of guys and we were a special group. Going into that first week, it gave us the extra confidence we needed to go out there and do what do and bring us all the way to this point in March Madness.

Q. Taking out brand names, coach speak, X's and O's, how do you feel you match up with Duke, individual to individual?

NOAH FREIDEL: We only got one look at scout so far. We'll do a lot more of that tonight, but I think we match up fine. I think we are just as physical as them. I think we can play to our strength there and just be kind of what we were on defense last night.

TERRENCE EDWARDS, JR.: Yeah. Like in the other press conference, I feel like we can match up with any team in the country, no matter how big or strong guys are. We don't look that big out there, but we actually are strong. We put in work in the weight room. When it's time for big, strong opponents we don't back down. We bring it to them and see how they respond.

JAYLEN CAREY: I think we match up good. We matched up good with every other team so far, so just another game, another matchup. We're just ready to go out there and do what we do.

Q. Terrence, I'll let you do some recruiting because I think people look at the matchup and go, Duke is the big school, and JMU is the little school. Maybe they don't know all the good stuff you guys have. If somebody asked you what's it like to play in your program, what would you tell them?

TERRENCE EDWARDS, JR.: I'd tell them it's beautiful. Anybody who has been to JMU knows our facilities are very elite. As soon as you walk in the building, you just want to commit. Like, yeah, we have everything that every high major school has as far as everything.

Like football team, it's great. Like everybody's great around. Like we have some of the best fans in the country, and we have the best -- and I feel like we have the best coaches in the country. So you put all that together, and it just make you want to stay through college for your whole life.

Q. You both committed pretty quickly after going to football games. Can you expand on that, even beyond just seeing the basketball facilities things that really sparked your interest in JMU?

NOAH FREIDEL: Yeah, I came during the spring game, and just being outside and the weather and all the people that were out there, it was just a super good vibe, and seemed like everyone was like one big unit. The fans, even at the spring game, like for a spring game, were good.

Like Terrence said, the facilities are unbelievable. Our gym, our training room, our weight room, all that, it was pretty much a no-brainer.

JAYLEN CAREY: I came in the fall for the first big home game and I just fell in love with the place and with the guys and the coaching staff. Everybody just felt like family and home, and I knew it was perfect. And the facility, it was beautiful. It was probably the best facility I toured from a college, so I knew on the spot I wanted to go there.

Q. A lot of the guys from Duke were talking about how hungry and motivated they were to make the Sweet 16. That's a program that they are not just used to the Sweet 16. Like, that's the expectation. How does it feel for you guys playing for JMU that has never been to the Sweet 16 ever?

TERRENCE EDWARDS, JR.: I can kind of say, you know, stuff like this, in a lifetime, probably don't happen twice. So we're just living in the moment right now. And like you said, like Duke used to getting to the Sweet 16 and stuff like that and JMU is not. So I feel like we have the better edge if you're looking at it like that. So, yeah, we just can't wait to get out there.

NOAH FREIDEL: I'd say we have high expectations just being around the team, just being around the locker room and talking this year. We are not here by luck or anything like that. This was our goal and we worked hard for it. We are just ready to go.

JAYLEN CAREY: This is something as a kid that you always dreamed of, playing in March Madness, and now we are playing Duke, which is crazy. So it's just like, this is a moment we all are ready for and we are ready to live it.

Q. For any of you guys, do you feel like the underdog? You didn't play like it the other night against Wisconsin. People weren't sure what you guys could do because of the conference you come from. Do you feel like the underdog team?

NOAH FREIDEL: I'm going to let Terrence take this one again.

TERRENCE EDWARDS, JR.: I feel like we've always been the underdog this season. I feel like everybody forgot



about us after week one. So we came together as a team. We always felt like the underdog. Even when we play a team where they got us winning and stuff like that, we just always feel like the underdog. That's why we come out there and play with that edge like that.

Q. For each of the student athletes, what it means to represent JMU and have the national spotlight. You spoke on a lot of things that attracted you to the school and made you want to go there, but just what it means to be able to wear that across your chest and know you have an opportunity to make history.

TERRENCE EDWARDS, JR.: It feels good. You know, when you playing for your university, this is what you dream of, actually putting a university like this on the map. Especially for men's basketball at JMU because they have never been this far and, like I said, since 1983. It's 2024. It's been a decade since they did something like this.

It's been a great run with these group of guys to get where we at today and like Noah said, ain't none of this luck. It's all work.

NOAH FREIDEL: I'd say I'm excited and thankful for the way JMU welcomed me as a person and as a player. And to be able to represent and just pay the favor back is special, and we're not taking it for granted.

JAYLEN CAREY: It's just a blessing and an opportunity to come out and do it for the community that loves us the same way we love them and go out there and continue to do what we do for the Dukes.

MARK BYINGTON: You know, last night was a great night for us, and we wanted the guys to be able to cherish it. But with a fast turnaround, we forced everybody to turn around quickly, my staff and players, and we had to get back to the hotel even though it was late last night and give our full attention to a really good Duke team.

It's a quick prep and by this point in the season, you've seen a lot of things, and Duke has some things we haven't seen this year. It's a challenge and we love it. We embrace it and we are excited about being able to play tomorrow.

Q. I think I read that you didn't want to play at Michigan State but felt like you had to for your team. Why don't you want to play that game, and in hindsight, how much of that set you guys up for this kind of year?

MARK BYINGTON: At our university, we've got to play guarantee games. So we've got to play a certain amount

of games to make money for our basketball program and our budget, and my choice in that was to find somebody regional. Find a team regionally to be able to buy us to come play, and we couldn't find that.

So we had to get on a plane and go fly. And the reason I didn't want to do that is because we fly so much. Travel's hard, it's not easy getting there. And you're looking at it -- you know, it's easy to look at now and say, all right, you're going to win, but you're looking at going in. They don't lose in November. Izzo is one of the best coaches in the country, and the challenges in that first night. And we also knew we had Kent State right after, had not lost in their home arena in two years.

So we are looking at probably one of the toughest first weeks of any team in the country. So I would rather find a worse Power Five team, but we end up playing them and it worked out for us.

Q. When you were hired, if I remember correctly, the new facility had maybe just opened and you couldn't even see it because it was during COVID. How much did your decision to come to JMU, how much was linked to their sort of athletic program vision, what they had built prior to you getting there?

MARK BYINGTON: Yeah, the vision of Jeff Bourne and President Alger was extremely important on why I wanted the job and took the job.

I didn't want to come to a place that wasn't committed, and I had a good situation where I was before and I didn't need to leave. And once I came there, I thought it could be a place where we can get to a higher level.

The arena was almost being completed, and I saw the success that all of the athletic programs have. I thought, it has not been done in basketball, but the blueprint is there for teams at JMU, and we've got to figure out how to carve our path. Other teams have done it. It's a culture with the administration, with the school that I thought we could be a part of and be successful in.

Q. Two of your three losses obviously came to App State and they have great rim protectors, and Duke has not blocked a ton of shots this year, but they did last night against Vermont. Is that something that you're looking at with Flip, attacking a different way?

MARK BYINGTON: Yeah, he's huge, it's not even the ones he blocks sometimes. It's the one he affects. You have to do certain things with shot blockers. You hope he's not around the rim the entire game. You have to shot fake and you have to pass sometimes and make wise

decisions.

But every game is a different thing. Their style of defense is different than what you mentioned with what they are going to do and how they are going to play. He's everywhere. But he affects the game on offense and defense. And defense, Filipowski definitely gets his hands on a lot of them.

Q. How great was it to have all the support, not only from your James Madison fans but the crowd in general. How great was that?

MARK BYINGTON: Yeah, the crowd was electric last night, and I'm glad we gave them something to cheer about and get behind. We saw our section with purple in it and ^ they were fanatic and crazy and loved it. But we felt like the rest of the arena supported how hard our team was playing as well.

So we are hoping we can find that again tomorrow. Maybe some more JMU fans are driving up or finding a way there. But if anybody is not a JMU fan, be one tomorrow night for us. We'll take you on.

Q. You started your career as a graduate assistant at UVA and after leaving, you came back and went to Virginia Tech. Those are two programs that know Duke probably more than they wished they did. Talk about what are your sort of -- just from the perspective of coaching against the Blue Devils really early on during Coach K's time, what is your general thoughts on them as a program in general?

MARK BYINGTON: Historic basketball program and that goes without saying. With Coach K, the national championships, the pros, Cameron Indoor, it's one of the elite programs in college basketball.

My viewpoint and all that is we've got to play 40 minutes tomorrow, maybe a little bit more. That doesn't carry over into this game, the pros and the legacy and everything else. You have to be able to be good tomorrow night when the ball is tipped up, and that's what we're focused on. We're not worried about their history or the previous great players or the team and everything else.

We're worried about their current team, and what's the best chance we have to try to be able to beat them and that's where all our focus is.

Q. Can you just describe this year, start with the Michigan State win, and to be where you are now with program record wins and you get to share a court with Duke, chance to go to the Sweet 16, is it beyond your

wildest expectations?

MARK BYINGTON: If I ever took time to think about it, yes, it would be. And I'm so far in the season, it's always what's next, what do I have to do next.

And there will come a point when we're finished and we count the wins up, we cherish the memories and we do all that stuff. But we're eager for more right now. I'm that way. The players are that way. We've done a lot of great things. We know it. We are focused on right here, right now, and trying to be the best we can at this situation. Try to make more memories, try to make it even more special.

Q. Kind of piggybacking off this, you can't control your draw and who you play, but what does it mean as the program trying to accomplish what you guys want and believe that you absolutely deserve to be here, that you do have to go through Duke?

MARK BYINGTON: Yeah, I mean, every team that gets to this point has done some really good things. It's not a lottery system. You don't just show up in the round of 32. You've got to win your nonconference games, your conference games, and we had to win our tournament to get here. So everybody has earned their way here.

Whoever advances between us and Duke tomorrow night is going to earn that, too. We are not taking it any more than that. It's an opportunity. We're going to go out, compete. That's what we've done in every single game, and we are going to go out and try to go 1-0. That's what we try to do in every single game. We are not going to make it any different than what it is.

Our guys believe in a certain way of playing. I believe in a certain way of coaching; that we are going to try to figure out the best way to give us a chance to win and go out and do it.

Q. Did it add in any way to the satisfaction to win on the same day that Brad Brownell did and to have Bobby Cremins there last night?

MARK BYINGTON: Yeah, Brad Brownell, I got a text from him late last night, and I could tell he was up watching film. He's such a great basketball mind, and we bounce ideas off of each other. I got one of his former assistants in Matt Bucklin on staff. So he puts us in a group message and we are cheering for them. My former point guard is down there in Clemson, as well, Billy Donlon is on staff. So we've got some ties to Clemson.

I didn't know Bobby was going to be here, and sure enough I saw a picture last night, and I was almost mad at him that

he didn't come down to say "hi," but that's who he is. It's never about him. He wants to blend in. He wants to cheer. He wants to support. I'm glad he's here. I always feel like he has magic in him, and his personality in tournaments and feel, and if he's in the building cheering for us, I like that.

Q. For tomorrow night, what small facets of the game do you really want to come out on top in? Like if you looked at the box score besides the score and you saw that you won these areas, you would be happy win or lose, are there areas like that?

MARK BYINGTON: Yeah, we want the pace of the game to kind of go our way. One thing when I'm studying Duke, and the teams they had in the past are really fast-paced. And this is more of a lower-possession team.

But they are almost playing NBA-style of basketball, picking on matchups, and putting the ball in certain guys' hands and doing a great job of letting their best players make plays. So we've got to look at the tempo. We can't force the tempo and be crazy, but I hope the tempo is a faster-paced game.

And then when you're playing a team like that, you have to battle and withstand adversity. And the runs, you can't have many runs. If they have them, you have to stop them and come right back. But you're going to have adversity. You can't let it overwhelm you. You have to figure out a way to bounce back from it.

Q. Just what it means for you to represent JMU, a lot of people bracket-wise thought that this could be an upset, but I know that from a coach's point of view, you're not looking at an upset, you're looking at the strength of your team. Just all season long what it means to wear JMU on your heart?

MARK BYINGTON: Yeah, we never think about it as an upset. College basketball, it's unpredictable. A lot of things can happen and anything can happen in a game. You've got to be good that day that night.

There's people that picked us in the bracket, thank you, I hope we keep making you right.

It's one of those things where I think it's one of the coolest sport events -- actually, I think it's the coolest sporting event out there. The enthusiasm those first couple days of the tournament, and people getting around, watching games, and families, friends and everything else. I'm glad we are part of it and we're on the national stage, and I hope we keep making a run.