

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: Second Round - St. Louis vs Michigan

Saturday, March 21, 2026

Buffalo, New York, USA

KeyBank Center

Saint Louis Billikens

Robbie Avila

Dion Brown

Josh Schertz

Media Conference

Michigan - 95, Saint Louis - 72

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by St. Louis.

JOSH SCHERTZ: Credit to Michigan. I thought they were great. With them, you have to concede something. We don't have the size to not, and what we were willing to live with was some late contest 3s from different guys. To their credit, I think they missed their last two or three, but they were shooting almost 60 percent from 3 for the game.

Hard to beat them if they're at their A, and we just weren't able to make them play bad enough.

So proud of my team. Result is not what we want obviously, but they fought tooth and nail for the entire 40 minutes. A little bit undermanned, but not in terms of heart, fight, competitiveness. We gave everything we had. Like I told them, I think we hit a 3 in the middle of the second half to cut it to 61-57, and I thought we'd have a great chance to win the thing, I really did.

Credit Michigan, they made plays. We had to have a better night shooting the ball. 10 for 32, we had some guys struggle from 3. We got some good looks we didn't make, and then we obviously struggled from the free-throw line, and the margin against them is so small you've got to be almost perfect on both ends and for them to miss a few and us to make a few.

I think that's why they're the best team in the country, but again, I'm incredibly proud of our team in every facet.

Q. Robbie, how did your first two years at Indiana



State help you to prepare at this level?

ROBBIE AVILA: Just getting after it every day. We didn't change the work whether I was at Indiana State or here. It was a daily process. Both teams had really tough games and some really good teams. Just preparing every single day in the gym and practices with the team and just going out and playing high competition throughout the seasons. That kind of prepares you for games like this.

Q. Robbie, a lot of people seem fascinated with you, basketball fans know who you are, but you've almost become a pop culture icon over the past couple weeks. Has this felt like a life changing experience for you?

ROBBIE AVILA: Yeah, a little bit. I kind of take it with a grain of salt. Some days it's good. Some days it's not good. When you're really, really good, that attention is awesome. When you're not, it's a negative.

I kind of not try to let it play too big into my head. I'm just blessed to be able to play the sport that I love at a high level. Hopefully, I'll be able to continue to play basketball for a long time.

Q. Robbie, as difficult as this might be to wrap up your career in this way, just what do you take out of what your team's been able to accomplish this year?

ROBBIE AVILA: It just shows, like I said all season long, the resiliency, the dog inside our team. We're a dog whatever it takes kind of team all season long. I think that's how you have special seasons like that. We did so much. We accomplished so much throughout the season, just came up short in this last game.

Just credit to my teammates, every single one of those guys, for really giving their all, really buying into this team, and working to be the best we could. I think we gave it all we got all year long.

Q. For you, Mr. Dion Brown, where do you go from here, brother? You were doing a really good job with the rock and getting it distributed and everything. They call your man Robbie a point guard for the big man. You were doing a good job. Where do you go from here just as a player and as a team?



... when all is said, we're done.®



DION BROWN: Individually, I've got to see what my next step is. Obviously given my size, I'd be more of a distributor at the next level, wherever that may be. So I'll go into the summer working on my game, do whatever teams need me to do, whether that be overseas, whether that be here. I've just got to figure out my next steps.

As far as this team is going to go, sky's the limit for this group of guys. I think we're losing myself, Rob, and Paul, just the seniors, and keeping a majority of the group. There's so many young, talented guys, who haven't even began to scratch the surface of where they could end up. This is going to be a good group for years to come.

Q. Robbie, who was the first coach or person to put the ball in your hands and let you lead the offense? When did you embrace it, or has this always been your game?

ROBBIE AVILA: Growing up, I've had so many great, great coaches. The first coach ever was my dad. He kind of took me at the start, and we worked on everything.

I was a foot taller than almost everybody at a young age, but we've seen so many cases of guys being taller early. He's not too tall himself. Both my parents are like 5'11". So the height came kind of out of nowhere. So we wanted to be prepared for anything. We worked on dribbling, passing, shooting, play making, all that kind of stuff, because we wanted to be prepared, just in case I didn't grow to be the 6'10" I was.

Credit to him early on for teaching me the fundamentals. Like I said, I've been blessed with a lot of great coaches. Like I said, my high school coach, I kind of ran the hub for the offense there too. Played a lot outside, passing, distributing, shooting all that. All those coaches leading up until my college career allowed me to be more versatile within my game.

Q. Robbie, who do you pattern your game after? What drives you to help take you and make it to the next level?

ROBBIE AVILA: I think the obvious one is Jokic, being a big that can really run the offense and facilitate and kind of do it all. I've watched a lot of film with our guy AP and other guys too, like Sabonis, a little bit of Al Horford, Alperen Sengun, a kind of mix of those NBA guys that run the hub of the offense for their teams and are more versatile players. Just seeing the things that they do and how they can impact winning on more than just being athletic.

They're not the most athletic guys in the world, but just seeing how they play and how they can impact the game with how they do their things. That's kind of how I've got to see because I'm not going to be the most athletic dude out there. So I've got to find ways for being an impactful person.

Q. You guys had a great season, and it's meant a lot to the city of St. Louis. Both of you made kids' days. You've just been great about representing the school and the community. Can you talk about how it's been to represent St. Louis and how your year's been in this city.

DION BROWN: It's been a blessing for me. This is my third school in four years. I got to play in Baltimore, Boston, and now here. I could say St. Louis has been my favorite city to play in so far. Just the atmosphere, the community, and how they wrap their arms around you from day one. It's something like I've never seen before.

To be able to come here and have an impact on the team is just a blessing.

Q. Difficult as it might be to have your season come to an end that way, just what do you make of what you were able to accomplish this year?

JOSH SCHERTZ: I think for everybody but one, it ends abruptly and difficultly. There's 365 teams all trying to be the last team standing, trying to be one of the last 32 playing. This group, this university has played basketball for 110 years. This team has won more games than any team in the history of St. Louis basketball. Won a championship, regular season championship, won an NCAA Tournament game.

We didn't get the outcome we wanted today, but I thought those guys, they went out on their swords. They left it all out there. There's nothing for them to hang their head about. They fought, competed. There was nothing. They gave it everything they had.

I look at it as it's been a blessing for me to be able to work with these guys every day. They've etched their names in the history books at St. Louis University and set an incredible blueprint and template for the teams to follow.

Q. What is it about this opportunity that says kind of unfinished business here maybe?

JOSH SCHERTZ: I think always people make a place. It's the people. We've got an incredible situation at St. Louis from commitment level, from alignment, from the top down, facilities, infrastructure. You've got an incredible sports city



where we have a niche alongside the Cardinals and the Blues, and there's no NBA team and no other major Division I in St. Louis.

It's always about people. It's about commitment. It's about alignment. It's about where you're happy. I think those things always factor in.

You get to work with great people, and like I said, I think everything that I originally went to St. Louis for two years ago is in place, and I think there's an incredible commitment alignment from the top down that gives you a chance to have sustainable success and put yourself in this position consistently, which ultimately if you do that, you keep knocking on the door, eventually you'll knock it down.

Q. I had the pleasure of covering you guys when you came to Olean and last week in Pittsburgh. Can you expand upon Robbie and Dion's improvement and how they've helped this team over the past couple of years?

JOSH SCHERTZ: Robbie is somebody that I've said he just -- when he came with us from Indiana State, I think he legitimized our program immediately. Obviously he was one of the top recruits in the country, and to choose St. Louis, that was an incredible coup for us.

He has -- like I said, no coincidence that winning has followed him wherever he's gone. He won in high school, a place that hadn't won. He won at Indiana State, a place that hadn't won. He came to St. Louis, a place that hadn't been winning and won. And we're only 23 months from being 14th in the A10, to being one of the last 32 teams standing. If you look at it, it's been a quick trajectory, and he's had the most to do with it of anybody.

I'm incredibly proud of him and his growth over the four years. I think he won 100-some games, a little over 100 games in four years. He's been incredible -- great teammate, great competitor, great human being.

Dion, got to only coach him one year, wish I could coach him longer. He's a warrior. You just watch him play. He's undersized. He's fighting. He's scratching. He's clawing. He plays with -- he gives 100 percent of his effort and talent to the team, everything he has. He empties the tank every game. As a coach, you really can't ask for anything more than that.

No one plays perfect, but he was perfect in giving everything he had to his team and helping us. We certainly don't accomplish what we accomplished without those two guys. Dion is incredible. They both lead in different ways,

but they're certainly our two leaders.

Q. Coach, can you kind of take us into the last 24 hours in the locker room, just preparing for one of the teams that's a National Championship favorite. Is anyone on the team or coaching staff keeping the team pumped up? I'm sure that going up against one of the best teams in the nation always has got to light another fire under your guys, I would think?

JOSH SCHERTZ: Yeah, you get to this stage, certainly guys are excited to play. We knew the challenge. We believed we could beat them. It wasn't the best of seven. You've just got to beat them one time.

They're so talented and well coached. You know you're not going to be able to beat them, at least the way we did it. If they were going to shoot the ball, the shooting variance had to be in our favor, and the shooting variance was not in our favor. We had some pretty clean looks. We went 10 for 32. I think they were 11 for 23. We went 8 of 16 from the line, and missed two one-and-ones, really 8 of 18. We had chances. We had to shoot the ball better.

They're so gifted, and we knew -- I think we had a game plan to try to take what we could away. You can't grow in 24 hours. We knew there was going to be some limitations, but it was trying to make them beat us with late contest 3s. To their credit, they beat us with late contest 3s. Once they did, they got the ball in the post, and we had some breakdowns.

We wore down a bit in that final -- that little stretch right there, where they kind of opened it up. The first, I thought it was 61-57 maybe with 13, 14 to go. We wore down a little bit. Just the size and physicality over the course of the game, and I think us not making shots. We had a couple good looks that didn't go in. They had a couple looks that did. That always infuses you with some energy.

Q. You called them the best team in the country. Dusty is a very good coach, and they have very, very good players. Could you explain a little bit about how they use that size and what makes it maybe a little bit somewhat unique or different or more difficult to deal with. Obviously they're big, but they also do a lot of stuff.

JOSH SCHERTZ: Yeah, it's an intelligently constructed roster. You see -- obviously Michigan has -- a lot of those teams do -- great NIL, but you see a lot of teams that are poorly constructed that pay a lot of money for their teams. Dusty's teams, the pieces really fit well together.

You've got Mara, who's 7'3", 7'4", and he can score in the



post. He's a terrific passer, underratedly good passer. They can use him as the hub of the offense, like we use Robbie. He's different, he doesn't handle the ball like Robbie, but he's so tall he can throw over the top. If you have a breakdown, he hits back cuts.

Morez, what he does defensively and offensively, the post presence he provides, the rebounding, the physical toughness. Yax is obviously an NBA lottery pick, could have been that last year. He's 6'9" and can handle the ball, shoots 3s. Cadeau, his pick-and-roll play is as good as anybody in the country. He's one of the best, I think, point guard passers in college basketball.

And then they've got depth. McKenney off the bench, the five-star kid, who's terrific player. Tschetter is a terrific player, they come off -- Roddy Gayle -- they just have enough guys. They have depth. Their pieces fit together well. They put them in positions. When they're shooting the ball like that, they're really impossible to guard. For us at least, we're not big enough to play them one-on-one in the post, so now a team would have to be.

Even then, when they shoot the ball like that, they shoot 50 percent from 3, they'll be a tough out, not just for St. Louis, but for anybody. You've got to make them play bad, and we weren't able to make them play bad enough, but great players, great coaching. It's a tough task for anybody.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

