

# NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Round - Colorado State vs Texas

Wednesday, March 20, 2024

Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

Spectrum Center

## Texas Longhorns

## Rodney Terry

## Max Abmas

## Brock Cunningham

## Dylan Disu

### Media Conference



DYLAN DISU: Just like Brock said, everybody wants to win. A lot of guys on this team -- not a lot. But there's some new guys on this team that haven't been to the tournament before, so they're excited for the opportunity to play. And the guys that have been here before know what it's about.

Everyone wants to make a run, so everyone's excited to play.

**Q. This is more so just a fun question for you all to answer. I saw the other day that Texas alumni Bijan Robinson picked you all to win. How do you feel about that? What are your thoughts heading into March Madness?**

DYLAN DISU: We appreciate the love from Bijan and all of our alumni. Our thoughts heading in are just to go out there and compete, play hard on defense. And if we take care of the little things on defense, we'll put ourselves in a position to win games.

MAX ABMAS: He said it. Definitely appreciate the support from Longhorn nation. We're excited to compete. We've been working for it since the summer for this moment right here. We're going to embrace it and enjoy it and do everything we can do to put us in the best position to win.

BROCK CUNNINGHAM: Max took the words out of my mouth. I can't say anything about that.

**Q. Max, how seamless or how difficult was it to kind of walk into a situation where you had a lot of veteran guys like Dylan, like Brock. As an older guy yourself trying to take over a leadership role, trying to find your niche, trying to find your space?**

MAX ABMAS: I think just from the jump talking with R.T. through the recruiting process and the vision he saw for me and the role he wanted me to play and understanding that -- I think it's easy because you have older guys that have had success and they understand what it takes. So I think that's an advantage for us.

THE MODERATOR: We're ready to start with Texas. We'll start with questions for the student-athletes.

**Q. This is for Max. You and Isaiah, I guess, are pretty close, is that correct? Or you guys played high school ball against each other. Can you kind of update me on like that relationship and how close are you guys? How much did you play in high school? What's it going to be like playing against each other?**

MAX ABMAS: We're both from Dallas area, grew up playing against each other in AAU. Then our senior years in high school, we were in the same district. So we played against each other a couple times then too.

Then in college, getting a chance to work out together over with Tyler Ruf a little bit. So we've got a pretty good relationship. Excited to compete against him. He's had a great career. He's one of the elite point guards in the country. So I'm looking forward to competing with him.

**Q. Dylan and Brock, just wonder if you guys could talk about the sense of urgency coming off of Kansas City and the first round exit there. Where's the sense of urgency with this team right now heading into tomorrow's game?**

BROCK CUNNINGHAM: It's the NCAA Tournament. Everyone's urgent. Everyone wants to win games. We did put our best foot forward in Kansas City, but we spent the last week getting better and progressing to play our best basketball in March.



At the end of the day, we're all working together to be leaders if we see something that needs to be corrected or help out with little things.

**Q. Brock and Dylan, what's it going to be like to play a team that you just found out you're playing last night? Were you able to watch that team, scout a little bit?**

BROCK CUNNINGHAM: We've been scouting since the tournament picks came out on Selection Sunday. Really our efforts were put towards getting better as a team. We didn't know who we were going to play until last night.

It's similar to the Big 12 Tournament. Of course, you've played those guys before, but one-day prep, Saturday, Big Monday. We've been preparing for it all season. That's part of March basketball, so we have to adapt.

DYLAN DISU: Brock said it all right there. Just like Saturday-Mondays in the Big 12, we were lucky enough to play three of those this season so we have a little bit of experience with quick turnarounds and one-day preps.

If we continue to stick to our game plan and play hard, we feel like we're in position to have some success.

**Q. Does it feel any different entering the tournament as a big brand, more hunter than hunted? How different is that situation?**

MAX ABMAS: I wouldn't say it's too much different. It's the same mindset, same goal going into it. I think that being here a couple times already, kind of just understanding and knowing what to expect. I mean, there is a target on our back, though. I'm going to enjoy it all and embrace the whole thing.

THE MODERATOR: We'll begin with Coach Terry.

RODNEY TERRY: Good afternoon. Thank you guys for being here. We're excited about this opportunity. March Madness doesn't get any better than this time of year.

I think our guys are hungry. Obviously we've got a great opponent in Colorado State, who we have a lot of respect for. We'll be ready for the competition tomorrow.

**Q. R.T., just a two-part question for you. One, I just wonder if you could talk about really the sense of urgency in this room, especially coming off of last week in Kansas City. The second part of that question is you've always preached that 24-hour mentality. Win or lose, keep it for 24 hours. How does that benefit your team in a situation like this where it's single elimination?**

RODNEY TERRY: All year long, we've had to have a short memory. If we have a hangover in the Big 12, you lose the next game. You're only as good as what the win or loss on that given night. Big 12 tournament is done.

We're in the NCAA Tournament now. It's 0-0, and everybody's got an opportunity. You're on a neutral court. You're going to play a great opponent. We've had time to get back and work on some things that we try to do best and honing in on some details to be prepared for a quality opponent here in Colorado State right now at the moment.

I think again our guys are excited about the opportunity, and we've had a short memory all year.

**Q. Rodney, there's been a lot of talk recently about whether or not the NCAA Tournament should expand. Rick Pitino and Tom Izzo have both weighed in saying that not only should they look at it, but maybe they should add some ex-coaches, ex-players to the committee to help. Do you think that's a good idea or a bad idea to add ex-coaches and players?**

RODNEY TERRY: Well, I think it's always great to have some insight from guys that are actually in the mix right now doing it professionally. It always, I think, helps when you have a committee to have someone that's currently involved and actually doing it right now. I think that always helps in terms of discussion in the room.

As far as expanding, I don't know. I think the model's been pretty good. It really has. So always open for change. Life is about changing and adapting and adjusting as well. So you never rule out the opportunity to expand and everything.

But we try to control what we can control. I know as coaches, we just try to coach our teams and have our guys in the best position to be prepared for what they're encountering. But I do think it will be wise and good to have a coach in the room.

**Q. I wonder if you could speak to the point guard matchup in this game against Colorado state and how critical that will be to the outcome.**

RODNEY TERRY: I don't think it gets any better than what we have here. Two Texas guys, Isaiah Stevens, a kid out of Allen High School, won a state championship. He's had an incredible career at Colorado State, all-time leading scorer I believe, maybe an all-time assist guy there.

And Max Abmas, again, what he's been able to do, 3,000-point scorer, makes everybody else better around



him. Both of those guys have won at a very, very high level. They're both two guys who have played collegiately with a chip on their shoulder to show people that they can play on the main stage and get things done at a very high level. They've both won at a very high level.

I'm glad they're getting a chance to be on this stage. These two guys, with the careers that they've had, people around the country need to know these two guys and that they had an impact on the college game.

You're not going to see two better point guards in college basketball than what you'll see tomorrow night with Isaiah on Colorado State and Max Abmas for us.

**Q. How much of your job at a time like this is just managing players' emotions, considering obviously it's a highly emotional time in the NCAA Tournament?**

RODNEY TERRY: We talk about it all the time, and I know even in the midst of the Big 12 Conference race, I think so much is made of the physical part of the game and physical aspect of being prepared to play, but I also think there's an undervalued mental aspect of the game. We talk all the time about your head space, where's your head space? Are you mentally prepared to handle the details that we have to deal with?

In situations where things are going good and things are going bad. But I think guys are at their best when they're in a great space and they fully understand what their roles are and they're stars in their roles.

**Q. In this day and age of roster construction and the portal, you're able to go out and get a guy like Max, who's an older guy who's been through a lot. Is it fair to say that that has panned out really well, an older guy, adding him to other older guys like Dylan and Brock, and things have just worked out?**

RODNEY TERRY: It's been a great formula for us. From the time we were able to get back to Texas, we wanted to stay older. We wanted to have a very, very competitive team from day one. We've gone in the portal and done extremely well.

We've gotten Marcus Carr, that was two years with us, Timmy Allen, two years with us, we got one year with Sir Jabari Rice, just go right down the list. Christian Bishop was great for us. Obviously Disu has been great for us as well.

You want to stay older. I think in recruiting we're going to still recruit the best talent, high school players that can come in and play for us. If a guy says he's not going to

recruit the portal, he's probably lying. They want to stay older. We're playing an older team in Colorado State. They've done a great job navigating through the portal transfer model as well.

They went through the Division II model, and Player of the Year, man, really, really good players. We talk about Scott, physical, really, really good player. You talk about Cartier, those guys are good player. I think, when you do that too as well, those guys come in with a chip on their shoulder, and they finally get a chance to play on this main stage, and they shine.

You're going to stay in that portal, though. It's worked great for us. We'll continue to be in the portal.

**Q. R.T., was last night different from a normal dinner and sit down and look at film situation because you had your opponent playing live at the time and you guys gathering to watch it?**

RODNEY TERRY: For sure. I think for us a unique situation in terms of not knowing who your opponent is going to be, and you've got to prepare for both teams. Not knowing you're not actually going to be able to play until the night of competition is completed.

I know myself personally we had to scout both teams. Brock, to get here, watching four games on Colorado State to familiarize yourself with those guys. I think also, when you approach practice, not knowing the actual opponent, you still worked on things you needed to continue to work on to be really good at to execute both offensively and defensively, but you're also working on things for both of those opponents.

Two similar kind of opponents, both really good defensive teams. Really good transition defensive teams. Colorado State, offensively, very, very good, well coached. Both of them do a great job of really trying to keep you out of the paint and defend the paint really well. Great passing team, really good shooting team.

So we knew we were going to have to work on those things to continue to work on the things we need to get better with to be prepared for our opponent.

**Q. Just an observation, Brock was up here with his right thumb bandaged. He had been wearing a brace while playing. Is he done with the brace? Is he down to tape? Is that an indication that he's moving closer to full health?**

RODNEY TERRY: Brock's a tough kid. If it was going to happen to anybody on our roster, you'd probably pick him

to be the guy to do it. No, he had a really bad hand injury in the Baylor game, and from that point on, he's been toughing through it. Whether it be in practice, in games. It's one of those situations that's at any time it could go a different direction for us. He's been able to push through and work through the pain tolerant part of it.

But he'll have it wrapped up, and he'll go out and play the way he's always played and try to play through that pain.

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