

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

Thursday, March 21, 2024

Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

Spectrum Center

**Colorado State Rams**

**Niko Medved**

**Joel Scott**

**Isaiah Stevens**

Media Conference

Texas - 56, Colorado State - 44

NIKO MEDVED: Obviously I think there's two things. Obviously when you speak about this game here tonight, I think you look at it, and these guys, you've got to credit Texas, but I'm sure we're -- I know we are -- we're disappointed. We don't feel like we brought our best tonight. Obviously the 19 turnovers was uncharacteristic for us.

I thought we fought like crazy defensively. I thought we were really, really good. We cut our turnovers down. This team today was probably struggling to get to 50 against us. So we battled like crazy. We clearly weren't able to stick enough shots and too many timely turnovers.

Again, it's been an emotional year. It's been an emotional week for these guys. I've been doing this a long time, and I've been fortunate to be around some great young men and teams, but none better than this.

I can't even say enough about these guys and this guy right here, what he's meant. Again, I know it stings to go out this way, but, man, this team accomplished a ton this year when you look back on it. Everything they've done, and they did get to the tournament, and we did win when we get here.

As time goes by, they'll be able to understand that even more, but today is not that day.

**Q. Joel, Isaiah, I wonder if you guys just put into words to describe how you would describe that first half and what happened.**



JOEL SCOTT: They came out. They played tougher than us in the first half. There's not really much more to it. I think that kind of sums up that first half. But we fought back, and that's all that matters.

ISAIAH STEVENS: It was hard to get into a good rhythm. We came out early in the first four minutes, but when everybody kind of started to settle in, we kind of got pushed out from our typical spots on the offensive end, and we just can't allow that to happen.

Like Joel said, we fought back like crazy. We were much tougher in the second half, much more sound. But maybe just not enough there to get the win.

**Q. For both of you, what hit the biggest frustration level for you guys in the first half, the turnovers or just the shooting woes?**

ISAIAH STEVENS: Probably turnovers. You're going to make and miss shots, but you can't afford to give a team like this extra possessions. They already find ways to get steals and deflections and offensive rebounds, but we have to find a way to take care of the ball.

JOEL SCOTT: Turnovers is something you can control a little more, just being strong with the ball and working for your catches and all that stuff. I think that's the part that really kind of eats at you a little bit more.

**Q. Isaiah, can you just walk us through what's going through your head at the end of that game and just your emotions right now or what you're feeling right now?**

ISAIAH STEVENS: Really can't even wrap my head around it. I just know everybody in that locker room means so much to me. They've done so much in my life both on and off the floor. Those are relationships that will last a lifetime.

This is by far the tightest group that I've ever been a part of. As of right now, it really stings, more so because of the play, but also just knowing that I won't get to suit up with a



lot of these guys again. It's tough to deal with, but that's the way life goes.

**Q. For both of you guys, obviously this season has had a lot of great moments, but just to end it on the biggest stage in college basketball, what has it meant to you to be able to do that in a CSU uniform?**

JOEL SCOTT: For me, it means a lot. Like Zay was kind of saying, when I got here in June, it was a family right away. It was one of the tightest groups. Like within a week, two weeks, we were all already really close. Chemistry was great. And it's just grown even more since then.

Being able to be out here and put on that CSU jersey means a lot. This is a dream as a kid, being able to play in one of the greatest tournaments in the world. What else can you ask for?

It definitely hurts right now, but thankful, blessed, and just going to roll with it for now.

ISAIAH STEVENS: It meant the world, being able to put on a CSU uniform again and go out here on this stage and compete with my brothers. We came out short, but being able to do something that doesn't happen too often in CSU history never gets old.

The fact that we've been able to go two times in the last three years, I think really speaks volumes to Coach right here and the culture he's built and the players that work their tails off each and every day to go out there and continue to raise the standard.

**Q. Isaiah, apologies if this feels too soon, but what does your time at Colorado State mean to you?**

ISAIAH STEVENS: Yeah, definitely too soon. Can't even really express that or put it in words. I've been here for five years. I literally came in as a teenager, and now I'm a little bit more of an adult. Just so many experiences, so many relationships. It's hard to kind of grasp right now. But it means everything to me.

I love these guys, and I love Coach right here.

**Q. Niko, with what happened in the first half, what did you talk to your team about in the second half? And kind of how proud are you of the way they fought back and tried to make this a game?**

NIKO MEDVED: I thought they would fight back. That's what they've done all year. It's kind of crazy, I look at the stat sheet and the fact that they shot, what, 40 percent for

the game and they scored 17 points off turnovers is pretty amazing when you think about it.

I challenged them pretty hard at halftime. We just did not -- you've got to give Texas credit. That's what they do. They pressure. But we really got careless, I thought. We got challenged, and we didn't fight back. We kind of surrendered a little bit to that.

But I knew they would fight back. We did, and we had some chances. Kind of the story was the same. We came out at halftime, and I think we turned it over three times in the first four minutes again, and we kept getting stops, and we just couldn't -- we cut it to six, seven, and we had some great looks. We just couldn't quite get over the hump.

Digging yourself that hole is a hard one to climb out of against anybody, but especially in the NCAA Tournament against a team like that.

**Q. In that first half when you guys were in those slumps, you kind of said surrender. Do you feel like some of that was settling for shots that kind of helped exacerbate, I guess, the scoring woes?**

NIKO MEDVED: Yeah, turnovers, poor shots. Listen, they're a physical team. If you know they're getting physical on a cut, you've got to cut harder. You've got to screen harder. We got the ball taken from us. You've got to catch and see.

When they ramped it up, we didn't handle that very well, clearly. So, again, you've got to give them credit, but I think that's the thing. We just didn't bring our best and something that we've been good at.

Clearly, listen, I thought we did have some great looks in the second half. It just wasn't our night. We played more than good enough defense to win the game, but we turned the ball over too much, and we couldn't get the ball to go in the basket enough.

**Q. Kind of like Mike said, maybe too early to fully look at the big picture of this, but how do you kind of view this season and what you guys did?**

NIKO MEDVED: That's what I told them. I wasn't going to hash out what happened in the game here after. They all know. I mean, these guys said it. I've been around some great groups. This group is just a phenomenal group of young men in every way. They're so fun to be around. They're such great human beings. They work so hard. They're so unselfish.

And you know what, when you look back on it, this is a



historic season. We got to our highest -- tell me if I'm wrong, we got to our highest ranking in school history. We spent as much time as we ever have in the top 25 poll. We sold out the arena again multiple times. We got to the NCAA Tournament, and we won when we got here. If you look at the history of Colorado State basketball, that doesn't happen a whole lot.

They don't want to hear that right now. They wanted to win. They wanted to play better here today, but this was an unbelievable season.

One thing about those guys, like I told them, they're going to be able to come back to campus at some point as a team and see each other, bring their families, and they're going to be able to look up in the rafters, and they're going to see that banner because they earned that. That's a big deal because there aren't a ton of them hanging up there, and they should be very, very proud of that. And they should be very proud about the way that they did it.

**Q. Niko, you kind of mentioned it, kind of a historic season. You kind of look back at some of the other players you've been able to coach, David Roddy, Nico Carvacho, they've all been intertwined with the team. But then there's this group of players, Isaiah Stevens and his greatness, just where -- you kind of build all those pillars for a culture. How big is that going forward and looking forward?**

NIKO MEDVED: It's everything. When you're trying to build a program, I always tell people I want guys to come in our program and feel like their experience in our program changed their life. They look at it as one of the best things that they've ever been a part of and that they're proud to play in our program, they're proud to have been at Colorado State. We've been able to start to really create that culture, and that builds on itself.

Those guys come back. They talk about their experience here. They want to be a part of it. Eventually they give back, and that means a lot. It's so fun when guys come back in the summer, they come, and they hang out, and they want to spend time with us and their families and the guys.

Any successful program throughout the years, that's what they do. Those things take time. The teams that have been at a high level for a long period of time, it's built pillar by pillar, and you sustain it with a great culture. A ton credit to these players because they bought into that.

**Q. As a coach, you feel blessed to have somebody of Isaiah Stevens' caliber in your program. What does it mean to you to have had the player, the person, who's**

**done so much to build the culture of team together and have him around you for so long?**

NIKO MEDVED: Just like he said, I just -- it's hard to process that today. I mean, I think we all know what it is. I've been fortunate to be doing this for a long time. He's a unicorn. I've said it over and over again. I think he feels the same way. I just love him so much, and I care about him so much, and I know he cares back the same way.

We're just kind of in this raw emotions right now. It hasn't settled in that it's over. But it will. And when you do that, I'm not going to be sad, you know what I mean? It's like, holy cow, I got a chance to coach a guy like that? You don't get to do that every day.

And he'll look back and go, man, how many guys got to have the kind of career and left the kind of legacy at a place that he gets to. There aren't many. And that's pretty special stuff.

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