

# NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: Second Round - Texas vs Tennessee

Friday, March 22, 2024

Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

Spectrum Center

## Texas Longhorns

## Rodney Terry

## Brock Cunningham

## Dylan Disu

## Max Abmas

Media Conference

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

**Q. Brock, has it sunk in about being the winningest player in Texas basketball history? And what does that mean?**

BROCK CUNNINGHAM: Not quite. We're so focused on the next game at hand and trying to get better even through this 48-hour stretch before we play Tennessee tomorrow.

So it will be a couple days, maybe even a couple weeks before that sets in.

**Q. Dylan, what do you remember from the last matchup with Tennessee last season, and what do you take away from that that you hope to take into tomorrow?**

DYLAN DISU: I have a lot of experience playing against Tennessee. I used to go to Vanderbilt. They're a super physical team. We compare them, physicality-wise, to Houston in the Big 12.

We know that we're just going to have to come out and match that physicality and play hard on defense to give ourselves a chance to win the game.

**Q. Max, what stands out about Zakai Zeigler's game?**

MAX ABMAS: Kind of the way he controls the game, the



way we plays with pace. Kind of looking to get downhill and create for his teammates.

It will be a collective job on the defensive end for us.

**Q. Brock, I guess starting next season, Tennessee and Texas would be a conference game, but it almost maybe feels like it is. This is the third year in a row. Is it weird to play a nonconference team that you know this much about a little bit?**

BROCK CUNNINGHAM: It is a unique circumstance with the history of Rick Barnes being at Texas and Coach Terry working under Rick Barnes, and myself watching the Texas program when Rick Barnes was there. We're very familiar with Tennessee, and it's going to be another fun game to carry the last three years into tonight and then moving into the SEC next year.

**Q. For Dylan and Max, if you don't mind, obviously you won the game yesterday. That's what you came here to do. I know you wanted to play a little better offensively. Was that something Colorado State was doing, or were you just missing shots or out of rhythm? What caused some of that?**

MAX ABMAS: I feel like, I guess me specifically, got some really good looks that we've made throughout the season. So it was just we kept shooting the next shot with confidence.

We put in a lot of work, but when shots aren't falling, the emphasis is on the defensive end even more to get stops down there and not let the other team score.

DYLAN DISU: I think Max hit it on the head there. Shots that usually fall weren't falling yesterday. We got good looks. Shoot the next one with confidence.

But in March you have to be able to win in multiple ways. You can't always rely on your offense. Your defense has to travel night in and night out. We feel like it did last night, and that's why we had a chance to win the game.

**Q. For any of you guys, when you see Dalton Knecht**



**on film, what makes him so difficult to stop? I guess for Brock and Dylan, you've seen him once before live. How much has he grown as a player from year to year?**

BROCK CUNNINGHAM: He's made a huge, huge step as a player, moving over to Tennessee, becoming the SEC Player of the Year. He's an extremely potent player. He can shoot the ball far away from the basket. He's extremely athletic, a well-rounded player. He's just dynamic, and we're going to have to put a lot of focus on working to stop him.

DYLAN DISU: I think Brock hit it on the head there with that answer.

**Q. Max, when it comes to a game where if shots aren't falling early, does it bring up an issue to make sure to block it out of mind and go, or is it just, like they say, the old relief pitcher gives up a home run and you just keep firing away? Is that something that you process through or just put it out of your mind and keep going and come back ready to shoot the next one?**

MAX ABMAS: I think I definitely come back ready to shoot the next one. I put in a lot of time in the gym. So really just trusting my work, never losing confidence in myself.

I've had plenty of games where I've missed a lot of shots, but I always going to keep shooting the next one with the exact same confidence I shot the first one with.

THE MODERATOR: We're ready to start with Coach Terry.

**Q. Rodney, I think Rick said last night he want trying to speak for you, but he thinks, if either one of you all were asked do you want to play the other one in this tournament, the answer would be no. Do you agree with that?**

RODNEY TERRY: I would completely agree with that. Coach is family to me. He's one of my biggest mentors. He's been incredible throughout my career. We love each other.

But we also, at the end of the day, I'm super competitive, he's super competitive. When the game starts, it will be about our players and the guys on the floor.

That's kind of the relationship we have. We talk often and congratulate. Last time I had interaction with him was congratulating him on winning the regular season conference. It's always really hard to do. He has a great ball club this year.

**Q. Rodney, when Rick was in here last night, your name came up, of course. He said that coaching Texas was your dream job. Is that accurate? As a young assistant, was that your dream job, to coach Texas?**

RODNEY TERRY: Absolutely. I worked at UNC-Wilmington for a great coach and a mentor as well, Jerry Wainwright. When an opportunity presented itself at Texas, it was a no-brainer. I pretty much sprinted there.

I was offered a job by Kelvin Sampson at Oklahoma, and I ended up turning the job down prior to taking the Texas job.

Yeah, it was a lifelong dream and an incredible opportunity to work with Coach Barnes over the years that we were together. We had incredible success. We did everything except win a National Championship.

**Q. Rodney, you touched on it a little bit last night what Dylan has meant to your team this year. What has he meant to the program in general? What has he done this year to grow his game and put up the numbers he's putting up.**

RODNEY TERRY: Disu the latter part of last season really came on for us from a scoring standpoint. He had been a star in his role prior to that in terms of being a guy that's a cerebral player, cerebral defender, rim protector, but really stepped it up from a scoring standpoint the last part of that season. And going into this spring and summer, we challenged him to be a guy to also continue to take it to another level. Instead of making one three a game. We may want three or four threes a game.

Gave us great inside presence last year as well. I think he was injured the first part of the season, coming back from surgery and things of that nature there. But he was really engaged with our team from the very beginning of the year. He was basically an assistant coach, and when it was time for him to play, I thought that was a real smooth transition because he had been so vocal and so involved with the team that he just stepped right in. It was a really good transition for us coming off of the injury and not playing the first part of the season.

He just took off. He really worked hard on his shooting, and as a result of that, I thought he had a great year shooting the basketball for us this year.

**Q. Just from watching it on tape, what makes Jahmai Mashack such a good defender?**

RODNEY TERRY: He's athletic. He's a guy that can go

on basically anybody on the floor. He can go on a big, switch off and go on the point guard. Plays with a great motor. He's a tough matchup. Offensively crashes the glass really hard. You have to match his energy when he comes in the game.

**Q. What makes Dalton Knecht so tough to deal with?**

RODNEY TERRY: Well, he has NBA size, and he's an NBA player, for one.

We've seen him grow. We played him when he was at Northern Colorado as a youngster. He's really bulked up his body right now a little bit in terms of that. He plays a lot stronger and more aggressive.

He can always score the basketball. He's a three-level scorer. He can score in transition. He can score getting downhill. He's a terrific player with size. I think that's the one thing. He can raise up and shoot over smaller guards.

He's a tough guard. You've got to do a great job of really trying to really just contain him. You're not going to stop a great player like him from scoring. He's going to score, but it has to be on our terms and hopefully not let him have one of those crazy nights where he goes off for 30 points.

**Q. Rodney, I know obviously next season this would be a conference game. You all have played the past two seasons. How rare is it to play a nonconference opponent where there's this much familiarity, where it almost already feels like a conference game?**

RODNEY TERRY: It's basically our third year we're playing right now. You look into the fact we were in the SEC Challenge with the Big 12 challenge, and we played back-to-back years, home and away.

Again, we're very familiar with how Tennessee plays in terms of they're going to be very physical. It's a very physical team. They're a team that's going to rely on a lot of paint touches. They shoot a lot of threes and make threes, but they're heavy in the paint, playing inside-out. Really good defense. They're going to sit down. They're going to guard you really hard. They're going to play heavy gap and going to try to limit you to one shot and out.

Again, I think it helps. It helps with them likewise in terms of we're very familiar with knowing what each other wants to do and the strengths and the weaknesses of both.

**Q. Rodney, I'm just curious, with Jonas Aidoo, how have you seen him improve, and what kind of stands out about the jump he's made from sophomore to junior year?**

RODNEY TERRY: He's made a huge jump. The thing that jumps out about him is his size. He's a big kid who runs the floor, carves out space offensively with his hard duck-ins. He's really tough on the glass. His shot-blocking ability changes games as well.

I thought last year was hard for him to get on the floor. They had some other guys that were pretty physical players that took up the majority of the time.

But going against those guys every day, you can see how he's improved. Olivier played really well against us last year, and Aidoo didn't get a chance to get on the floor a whole lot.

But watching him from where he was last year to where he's at right now, he's really grown from an offensive standpoint and a defensive standpoint. He makes an impact on the game on both ends of the floor.

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