

# NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Round - TCU vs Ohio State

Wednesday, March 18, 2026

Greenville, South Carolina, USA

Bon Secours Wellness Arena

**Ohio State Buckeyes**

**Jake Diebler**

**Bruce Thornton**

**Devin Royal**

Media Conference

THE MODERATOR: We'll get started with Ohio State student-athletes Bruce Thornton and Devin Royal.

**Q. This is for both of you guys. First time playing in the NCAA Tournament. How does it feel?**

BRUCE THORNTON: Definitely a dream come true. We've been waiting for this moment for a long time. I'm just excited that it's here.

DEVIN ROYAL: Really the same thing. Feels good. The work we put in paid off. We've been putting the work in day in and day out. It just feels good when it pays off.

**Q. This question is for both of you. The NCAA is incredible moments. Any special moment that you can remember as a kid watching growing up?**

BRUCE THORNTON: I remember the Anthony Davis team because it was undefeated and things of that nature. One player I always remember watching is Carsen Edwards, his Purdue run and the shot-making he was doing for a smaller guard, it just caught my eye at a young age.

DEVIN ROYAL: I just love watching basketball. Any game I'm going to love watching it anyway. I don't have a special moment, but I watched a lot of basketball throughout my years for sure.

**Q. The journey this year, what's the difference about the team late in the year as compared to the beginning?**



BRUCE THORNTON: This year as a team, we bonded when we needed, when times got hard and crucial when we needed big-time wins, we came through as a team. Nobody did it by themselves. We came together. Our coaches did a great job. Buckeye Nation was behind us.

It was a great collective effort, and we've still got work to do.

DEVIN ROYAL: I feel like our connection has gotten better throughout the year. Towards the end, it definitely skyrocketed. I feel like we stayed more connected. We've been through hard times, hard games. So I feel like we trust each other more.

**Q. Does this TCU team remind you of anyone that you saw during the Big Ten play? Talk a little bit about what you've seen from them so far on film.**

BRUCE THORNTON: They have a great team, very physical team. They have a lot of similarities to a lot of teams defensively, like a Nebraska. But TCU just forces a little bit more turnovers.

I feel like we have a great game plan, and we have a team at Ohio State that I feel like we can get the job done.

DEVIN ROYAL: I feel the same thing. They do a lot of offensive rebounding. So we've got to lock in on offensive rebounding, boxing out as a team.

Like he said, we've got a good game plan for them, and I think it will be great.

THE MODERATOR: We're lucky enough to be joined by Ohio State head coach Jake Diebler.

Coach, if you could give an opening statement.

JAKE DIEBLER: Really excited to be here, excited with the way our team has been playing, and excited to kick off the round of 64 early tomorrow against a really good opponent.

Have a ton of respect in what we've been able to see on film for what TCU has done this season. I think you have two teams that have played their best basketball down the



stretch of the season, which should make for a really exciting matchup tomorrow.

I love where our team is at, the chemistry we've had, the adversity we've been able to overcome, to be playing the way we've been playing down the stretch has been a great thing. Really excited about tomorrow.

**Q. Coach, I remember when you were hired, you talked about the standards you wanted to set. What does this mean for you and the program to be in the NCAA Tournament?**

JAKE DIEBLER: This was a checkpoint for us to get this program back to this point. I think we've now got to build upon this. This season's not over yet. We haven't arrived. We're not finished by any means with this season. Our focus, since we saw our name get called on Sunday has been getting prepared to play our best basketball tomorrow.

Certainly, again, a ton of respect for what TCU has done, and it's called for some really, really intentional preparation because of their ability to rebound and play with pace and their interior scoring and certainly good guard play.

We're excited to be here, but this was a checkpoint for us, but this isn't the end goal. We're going to continue to build from this.

**Q. Does this team, TCU, remind you of anyone you saw in Big Ten play at all that helps them prep for this?**

JAKE DIEBLER: Their physicality is similar to what we see in the Big Ten, and you can see it on film. They have elements of teams with some of their ball pressure and defensive schemes that we've seen a few times this season.

Then offensively, with some of the actions that they run, with the ball in the hands of their big guys on kind of the perimeter or just inside the perimeter there to play-make. And certainly we're familiar with Harding. He's a really good player, a tremendous playmaker.

Yeah, I think there's elements that we've looked at through some of our opponents we've played this season, things that maybe we struggled against or had success with against those particular schemes. Yeah, I think the physicality of the game is something we're familiar with and anticipate it being a physical game tomorrow.

**Q. Going into a game like this, Jake, you've emphasized how good TCU's defense is, the amount of turnovers they create has been huge for their**

**defensive metrics. In a game like this, how do you emphasize ball security without taking away from the aggression that I know you've seen from your guys on the offensive end?**

JAKE DIEBLER: We've got to be obviously really tough with the ball when it's in our hands. For us it's mostly about valuing possessions. That's certainly taking care of the ball and limiting our turnovers, but also the shot quality that we fight to get. So those two things combined are how we evaluate how our offense is doing. It's about valuing possessions.

Certainly TCU has the ability to turn teams over. It's part of them getting out and playing so well early in the shot clock. We've got to be strong. We've got to play with great poise against the crowds that they're going to show the ball, and then we've got to have outlets and guys have got to move.

That's something we've faced here down the stretch of the season, and I think we've gotten better at handling. It's going to be important obviously tomorrow.

**Q. I want to talk about Bruce Thornton. What does it say about him staying with the program for four years, just recently announced he was honorable mention All-American?**

JAKE DIEBLER: Bruce is everything that's right about college basketball, a young man who came to a school, stayed during the coaching change, trusted a first-time head coach, and got a degree, became a part of a network that will take care of him for the rest of his life, and then continued to get better each and every single year.

I think development is a word that gets lost right now in our sport because you're seeing the window for development be so small in many, many instances. He's gotten better each and every year. It's a testament to his hard work.

I think Bruce is everything that's right about college basketball. He is a huge reason why we're here, there's no question about it. When you're a first-time head coach, you're looking around to say, okay, who can help me establish the culture and the standard of this program, and he was the guy I turned to first.

So our relationship will last long, long, long after his time at Ohio State, but he's been a special player and an even better young man.

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