

# NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: Second Round - TCU vs Duke

Friday, March 20, 2026

Greenville, South Carolina, USA

Bon Secours Wellness Arena

## TCU Horned Frogs

## Jamie Dixon

## Jayden Pierre

## David Punch

## Liutauras Lelevicius

## Tanner Toolson

## Micah Robinson

Media Conference



**Q. This is for LT and Tanner and for Jayden because, Micah and David, you've been here from the beginning. I'm anxious, David has talked about the camaraderie of this team and how it has come together and you guys have all -- there's great unity and respect for each other. Let's start with you, LT. Tell me how it's different than maybe other places you've been, and why is it different here, do you think?**

LIUTAURAS LELEVICIUS: First thing that comes to mind is that we have a lot of fun. I would say Coach would probably say sometimes too much fun. I think that's what brought us together, especially late in the season. We enjoy playing with each other. We enjoy practicing and competing.

I think that's the main point. We just enjoy being here and with each other.

TANNER TOOLSON: I think it goes deeper than just basketball too and having fun on the court. Our personalities all mix pretty well. We don't have any guys that are outcasts or different than everybody else. Everyone comes from different backgrounds, but we all come together.

We've had the same goal since day one, since we got here in June or May or whenever that was, and we've been working for the last nine or ten months. That unity has brought us closer together and helped us play well on the court.

JAYDEN PIERRE: Our mentality is something we focused in as a staff, coming together in June. Having us eat together, spend time with each other, we had a team retreat to help us get closer together. Over time we came together, and as we've been winning, it makes it easier to come together. We want to celebrate each other and have fun together.

**Q. You saw what happened with Duke yesterday. They got a pretty good scare from a 16 seed, Siena. Does that add to your confidence that, hey, maybe you can go in and knock out the 1 seed?**

MICAH ROBINSON: No. Kind of like what Jayden said, we kind of view each opponent equally. Obviously in

THE MODERATOR: We're going to go ahead and open it up for questions.

**Q. Question for Jayden. I know every game at this point in the tournament is a big deal, but playing Duke, does that add any extra weight to this game for you guys?**

JAYDEN PIERRE: No. Obviously they're the 1 seed, but we look at every opponent in this tournament as a team we want to win, a team we want to beat. I think every game we value the same. We go into it playing our game with the same mentality. Whoever we play is going to be the same for us no matter what.

**Q. Punch, you and Xavier got a big challenge coming up on Saturday, but I think you guys also match up well with Boozier. What are your initial thoughts on him just from watching film?**

DAVID PUNCH: I think he's a lot like us, just how he creates his shots. I'm excited to see me and X go up against him. It's a great opportunity for me and him to showcase how good we are on a stage like that.

Again, I'm really excited to see how this plays out tomorrow.



March, if you don't come out ready to play, anybody can win.

I feel like we're just going to stick with our same mentality of just doing what we do, and we feel like the rest will kind of take care of itself.

**Q. Jayden, this one's for you because you were in the Tournament. How does the Big 12 prepare you for the NCAA Tournament compared to the Big East?**

JAYDEN PIERRE: You see everything in the Big 12. A lot of projected lottery picks and a lot of great teams, a lot of top 10 teams, top 25 teams. I feel like we were very battle tested. The Big 12 is the best league in the country. I feel like it's really prepared us for this moment.

The Big East has some good teams, but it's very top dominant. The top four teams are usually pretty good, but you have some teams that are not as good in the bottom half of the league. But the Big 12, 1 through 16 is all good.

**Q. Micah and David, you guys have been here from the beginning. TCU has never won two games in an NCAA Tournament. Have you thought about that? Did you know that? Does that matter at all?**

DAVID PUNCH: No, it doesn't really matter too much. It's a new year. This is a new squad. It's going to be a different outcome, I feel. We don't intend to carry a lot of things from last year, prior years. I try not to.

So I look at every game as a new opportunity to prove somebody wrong or make a new statement or even have a new goal. Winning two games, this is a goal for us.

MICAH ROBINSON: Kind of not the opposite of that, but kind of we know that we have a chance to kind of do something special. We know that we're kind of one game away from making TCU history.

I'm not going to say that that's like something that's driving us, but I just feel like that's something else that we could add to the list of good things that we've been able to accomplish this year.

**Q. Jayden, Cameron Boozer gets a lot of attention for this Duke team. I'm wondering what you've seen on tape from their guards, specifically Cayden Boozer since he's taken over, and Isaiah Evans as well.**

JAYDEN PIERRE: Last game he had a very good game. He's playing aggressive. He stepped into his corner role, a bigger role since he's been playing. They have good guards. They're a good team.

I think our guys we have very good guards ourselves. We can speed them up, get up in them, pressure them, play our defense. I think this will be a good matchup for us for sure.

**Q. Tanner, I'm curious what was going through your mind, the team's mind yesterday, the shots aren't falling, you guys go down five. What was the key to you guys holding the line yesterday?**

TANNER TOOLSON: I think in the first half we had a really big run that spurred our confidence a little bit and also on defense. The way we play defense is very different from anybody in the country. There's only a select few teams that play like us. With our defensive pressure, with the way that we can handle different offenses, the way we handle different looks that Ohio State gave us, that defensive pressure is always going to be there. That's a constant. That's what we always say, defense travels.

When we're not scoring well, we're not very efficient, we're not making shots, I think we always rely on our defense. Oftentimes that bleeds into transition buckets, easy points, and that gives us our confidence to start shooting and play better from there.

**Q. When you saw what Siena did yesterday and how they attacked Duke, are there any tells you can pick up on how they attacked? I see you're smiling. Is there anything you can share that you guys feel like you can attack with them?**

JAYDEN PIERRE: I don't want to give things away how we prepare. I would say they shot the ball well. They played hard. They rebounded the ball. They guarded well. All the things you need to do to win games. They did those things for the majority of the game, and there's things we know that we can do and we're going to do tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, if you'd give an opening statement.

JAMIE DIXON: Just had a good practice. We worked on some things we want to get better at. I think what we do is what we do. But I think it fits into the game plan for what we have to face against Duke.

Excited about the opportunity. Excited with how we're playing. We know it's a challenge, but we stepped up to the challenge the other day. So looking forward to it.

**Q. I know you've probably seen the game video with Duke playing with Ngongba and without Ngongba the last few games. A little bit of a guessing game as to**

**what you might see tomorrow, and how can it change things?**

JAMIE DIXON: We focus on ourselves more than anything, but they've got good players no matter how -- they've got a lot of good players. If he plays, I don't know how much he'll play.

We're not changing our -- if he plays, he plays, I guess. That's not going to affect us too much, I think. He's a good player, but they have too many other good players to focus on one.

We'll stay focused on us and then them as a team.

**Q. You've knocked down a lot of firsts in your career at TCU. There's another opportunity with this game. Do you think about that at all, or does that come after the game?**

JAMIE DIXON: Not really. I don't even know what first you're talking about. Is that winning two games in the Tournament? It's time. I guess certainly with a Number 1 seed it's a challenge. This is where you want to be. This is what you work to to be at this point. Now you've got to do the job. You've got to play well and play together. I think we're ready to play together. Then we've just got to play well.

Guys are excited about it. I think I joked about it before, to your point, I guess, when I got here to TCU, we're going to be talking about, you guys are going to say getting to the Tournament is not enough. You've got to get to the Final Four. I think they laughed at me then when I said that, and certainly that's what's happened.

This is where we're at. I did it. I said we would be in this position. Now we've got to go win some more games.

**Q. Coach, I think you're the only team in the country that will have played all four of the Number 1 seeds.**

JAMIE DIXON: Are you sure? I've been saying that, but I didn't know it was right. You confirmed it?

**Q. According to your media guide.**

JAMIE DIXON: All right.

**Q. How much does that help you having played against the other top teams? And the second part of the question, is there anything that you learned from watching Siena attack Duke that you could employ tomorrow?**

JAMIE DIXON: Everybody has their runs against Duke, and then you've got to finish and win the game. Obviously they have that formula down.

As far as the playing, I thought that -- well, I knew going into the tournament, we had played the three Number 1s, and we knew we were probably going to be in Duke's region because, unless we became a 7, which we thought could happen if we beat Kansas. So we kind of knew. That's why I knew that little stat.

I probably take credit. Steve wrote it down, but I think I gave it to him beforehand. I did his job.

Yeah, we beat Florida. That was a good win for us. The Michigan game, we should have won. We were up the whole game and didn't get it done down the stretch. Then Arizona got off to a good start against us, and we fought back. Bradley hit shots that were remarkable down the stretch.

I remember those games well, but you're kind of in this league that we're in, in the Big 12, and you could go down the list. You talk about three Number 1s, but then we could talk about No. 2s, and No. 3s, and No. 4s that we've played too. You're kind of built for it when you get into this tournament.

With the leagues I'm in now and the leagues I've been in, the ACC, and the Big East, and Estridge is tired of me saying it and Steve, but I've pretty much spent my entire career in the best conference in the country. If you really do look at it, it's probably been pretty accurate. That's my story. I don't recommend it for coaches, but that's what we've chosen.

Yeah, kids are confident. I just said it to CBS when we were talking in there. Our kids, generally our guys are looking at mid-major and decided to come play in the Big 12. So they're confident kids. They want challenges. They're excited about it. We weren't recruiting the Number 1 players in the country. We were recruiting guys that wanted to play in the Big 12. They made that choice to play in the best conference in the country.

**Q. Jamie, you know the history of this program probably better than anybody else. Does this feel like this might be the biggest game in program history? I know you guys played Arizona a couple years ago.**

JAMIE DIXON: To me it's today, so it must be the biggest game in our history, in my mind. But my mind doesn't matter too much. In my mind, yeah. It's today's game. Going back to what we said earlier, we want to take it to the next step. It's the Number 1 team in the country, and

it's Duke.

I think I've coached against them I don't know how many times. A couple times at Pitt, in the Garden and then Cameron. It's more about being in the Tournament and winning the second game.

**Q. I think it's four times against Duke. When you were at Pitt, you played Duke with obviously Coach K on the bench there. Have you noticed any changes at all, or is it pretty much a similar blueprint with Jon running the program now?**

JAMIE DIXON: They always have good players, that constant is there, best players in the country. I think they're the same.

I think they've evolved too with the game, how it's changed too. The game's changed a little bit, so they've adapted to it. They always had the big bodies inside too, but now they've got the athletic runners and guys that can guard on the perimeter and play on the perimeter offensively. So I think they've adapted.

I have a funny story. You must be the Duke guy I saw yesterday after the game -- after we won, and I think it must have been a couple hours after because it was after Duke won. Desmond (Bane) called me, FaceTimed me on the phone, and they were getting ready for a game in Orlando last night. I think it was Orlando. He was getting ready on the table. Him and Paolo (Banchemo) were arguing about the game. They were talking noise as they're preparing for their game.

I guess they play Saturday. Otherwise, they said they'd be here.

**Q. Jamie, two-part question. I'm just curious, what are your thoughts on Cam Boozer? Obviously you've got some good big men yourself. How do you think Punch and X can match up against him?**

JAMIE DIXON: Amazing. Obviously we played against the best freshmen in the country. I remember seeing him as a sophomore I guess it was and didn't know how good he was. I guess there are other freshmen in the Draft in the first of five picks. It's remarkable how good of a freshman class it is. We played against them. You go down the list, AJ, Flemings, Peterson, you go down the list, we played against all these guys.

We have guys that, younger guys who move like him and are confident, but we've played against the best, and we'll be playing against one of the best again. The guys are excited about the opportunity. It really does come down to

team defense. That's always been the way how we play and I think everyone at Duke plays.

It's not one guy. One guy may stand out, but it's really team defense, and what we're trying to do is keep them away from doing one thing, and that's usually relying on what we are doing as a team or a scheme defensively.

**Q. How important is it going to be to avoid foul trouble tomorrow for you guys?**

JAMIE DIXON: I think everybody. They don't want to be in foul trouble. They're not playing a lot of guys. We had eight down on the scouting report. We had Jayden playing seven, V's our eighth. I think that's the case.

We lead the league in free-throw attempts, free-throw rates. So they're more likely to be in foul trouble than us. We get teams in foul trouble. That's how we play. We're aggressive. We don't foul at a high rate. We have multiple guys that can attack the rim. Our expectation is to have them in foul trouble.

**Q. Do you consider tomorrow a neutral site or a pure road game?**

JAMIE DIXON: I mean, we were in a road game last night, I guess. We've been in the Tournament before. That's usually been the case. We're the smallest Power Five in the country. We're actually smaller than Duke. I guess Wake Forest and us are the two smallest.

If that's what you're talking about, crowd. But we're looking at opportunity. Oh, I have some family here. So that will be good. My sister's flying -- my sister's here, and my daughter's flying in from Portugal to get here. And I got some friends coming from Pittsburgh too. That makes it feel like home.

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