

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Round - Texas A&M vs Saint Mary's

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Texas A&M Aggies Coach Bucky McMillan

Media Conference



THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Texas A&M Head Coach Bucky McMillan. We'll start with an opening statement from Coach and then get to questions.

BUCKY McMILLAN: Howdy Aggs. I see a lot of you out there. Appreciate you making the trip. Let's get them tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. There's a cliché in sports about teams taking on the personality of their coach. Do you feel like your team has taken on some of your personality, and if so, how?

BUCKY McMILLAN: I hope not (smiling). I don't know. I'm competitive, obviously, so hopefully our team is very competitive. I'm confident in our team. Hopefully they're confident in themselves.

I was a high school coach six years ago, so I have an underdog spirit to me. You know, we're a 10 seed in this tournament. Hopefully we take on that underdog spirit and we fight that way.

Q. Coach, as you scout St. Mary's, is there any team that you played this year that kind of they remind you of at all?

BUCKY McMILLAN: Not any Power 4s that we've played. They're different in that regard. I'm not saying they're -- they have size that we've seen. We've played some teams that played a slower pace, but just collectively they're a little bit different than what we're used to seeing.

They're more of a stylistically of a team that we played when I coached at Samford and we played in the Southern Conference. They were kind of that kind of a team. Very a cerebral team, well coached, damn sure not going to beat

themselves. Very solid team.

So we haven't seen as much of that in the SEC, but you know, that's what makes this time of year so great is that you get to see different styles and different teams from all over and different conferences, but I know that the SEC -- I mean, it's a tough conference. We know. I think this analytically year it's been the toughest lately. So even though they have unique styles, we've seen a lot, and I think our guys will be ready for the challenge.

Q. What does it mean to have so many of your guys getting to play in their first NCAA Tournament?

BUCKY McMILLAN: It means a lot. It's a great experience. You're playing for a national championship, whether you're there on the last day or the first day. It's obviously very well-run event, but I mean, basketball is a tournament sport, and this is the greatest tournament in the world. It's something that they can always take away.

I've told them, I don't want them to have any regrets. I mean, it's a circus. I don't want them to come just to be part of the circus. I want the circus to last longer than two hours, so we got to have the laser focus you got to have and not just be happy to be here before you get to the first ten minutes of the game and realize this isn't very fun because you're not focused and we're down by 15.

So hopefully we remember that and we try to make this tournament last as long as possible.

Q. It's pretty well-documented you guys had one guy on roster when you took over as head coach. I want to ask you about that one guy and just what Chris has meant to this team and just what you have seen from him this year, even though he's maybe had some limited action.

BUCKY McMILLAN: Yeah, Chris has a lot of heart. He's all about A&M. He could have chose to do other things, but he stayed not knowing who would be on the team. He did that.

I didn't know him great. He did that because he loves A&M. At the end of the day, the players in this tournament that are going to play for something bigger than

themselves are usually going to have -- give themselves the chance to have the most success.

I love Chris, and he represents what A&M is about. Hard, blue-collar, tough, has a self-awareness, knows his role and plays it to the fullest.

Q. I'm kind of curious to see what some of the biggest challenges are for preparing for a game like this.

BUCKY McMILLAN: I mean, obviously in this tournament every team that you're going to run into is a good team. You know that.

I'm going to say something that's really crazy. Are you ready for this? We got to get ready for their good players. Everyone wants to talk about this whole, hey, we got to get ready for this unique play or that play or this. Coaches can coach talk it all they want, but at the end of the day, I won't be playing tomorrow. And they're going to run some good plays, and hopefully we can negate their actions, but we have to get ready for their good players that they have, and our guys have to rise to the occasion.

Q. Any time one team plays a certain style and another team plays another, one team plays a fast pace, St. Mary's plays a slow pace, there's the question of which team -- is it easier for which team to impose its will? Is it easier for the fast-paced team to impose its will on the slower-paced team or vice versa?

BUCKY McMILLAN: Well, I think that throughout the course of basketball, you've seen teams that played really fast win national championships, right, whether it was Arkansas or Kentucky, and then you've seen teams like Virginia win national championships.

There's no one way to do it or everyone would do it that way, right? I think that at this time of year, when you look at the Final Four, all those teams are going to have one thing in common. Is it that they play zone, is it that they play man? Is it that they press? Is it that they play half court? They have one thing in common: They have really good players.

So I think that when you look at this game tomorrow, at the end of the day, everybody is going to do their best to execute in every way possible, but you're going to walk away from that game and say probably where that fast stuff really got them or the slow stuff really got them, you'll probably walk away from this game and say either way could have worked; whose players really got it going? And you can do that playing fast or slow.

I think sometimes as coaches -- and I'm saying this

because we've won games where we played fast, and we're like, we just got to them because we played fast. Right? Well, really you looked up and we made 14 threes and one of our guys had 23 points, right?

So I think that there's not really -- you've seen it work both ways. I just think who is going to step up to the occasion in this time of year.

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