

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Round - Kennesaw State vs Gonzaga

Wednesday, March 18, 2026

Portland, Oregon, USA

Moda Center

Gonzaga Bulldogs
Coach Mark Few
Emmanuel Innocenti

Jalen Warley

Adam Miller

Media Conference

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Gonzaga student-athletes. At this time we'll open the floor to questions.

Q. Adam, you've played 150 college games. So many of you guys up there have been very experienced. What is the value of that this time of year? How do you think that has affected the growth of this team?

ADAM MILLER: Yeah, I mean, that's a lot of games over a lot of time. We got a lot of guys on our team I feel like with a lot of games under their belt.

In March I think maturity and guys who go out there who's been through the rodeo a little bit can really help you get wins, give you a good chance down here in March.

Just want to use all my wisdom, everything I learned from my whole career, kind of tie it into this last stretch here in March for my teammates.

Q. Did any of you fill out a bracket?

JALEN WARLEY: No, I didn't fill out a bracket.

EMMANUEL INNOCENTI: I didn't either.

ADAM MILLER: I did. I already lost.

Q. Anything else you'd like to share with us about that bracket, your Final Four, any upset picks?



ADAM MILLER: I already lost. I ain't -- I'm out of it.

Q. A big topic of conversation this season has been about if we should expand the NCAA tournament. What do you guys think?

JALEN WARLEY: I think that's a cool idea, especially a lot of the games in March are a lot of fun to watch. Like you said, we see upsets and Cinderella stories. Any type of more basketball, especially in the month of March, I'm all for it.

EMMANUEL INNOCENTI: I believe with what Jalen said. We're on the same page.

ADAM MILLER: Yeah, I think so. I think it would be cool.

Q. This Kennesaw State team has a really fast tempo, top 20 in the country. When you were watching film, is that something you noticed? How do you feel about countering that for you this game?

JALEN WARLEY: Yeah, especially with their pace, like you said, in transition. I think it's just going to be a team effort. Not going to have one guy guarding the ball. There's five guys guarding the ball. Making sure, like we've done all season, have each other's back. Team defense is what is probably going to help slow them down in their attack in transition.

EMMANUEL INNOCENTI: Yeah, it's going to be a team defense. We also play fast, so we're kind of used to play defense like that. We'll be ready for tomorrow.

Q. You are one of the oldest teams maybe in the tournament. Do you feel that? Do you feel old and experienced? Does that help? Does everyone on the team have two or three degrees?

ADAM MILLER: No, I feel like we all feel like we're young in life. I think that. But especially in college, we definitely are an older group. I think it shows in different ways, like being grateful, which is valuing each other's time, how we work together, how we work individually, how we take scouts, how we take everything our coaches say. We really value our time together.



I think that's kind of the maturity part that really helps us grow as a team, really stick together through hard times, everything that goes on.

I think that's the most important thing about that. I think we all feel young and youthful for the most part.

EMMANUEL INNOCENTI: Yeah.

JALEN WARLEY: No, I feel young. I feel like all the age and the experience that we have kind of all from different places. We kind of have seen it all and we kind of bring our shared experiences and just try to put our best foot forward to make a run this March.

Q. Being a high seed gives you the advantage of having to make a shorter trip, a bus ride down to Portland. How does that help your preparation as you look to try to go far into the NCAA tournament?

JALEN WARLEY: I think that helps, like you said, for travel, but also for our fans traveling. They've been with us all year. They're a big reason for our success.

Being able to play in front of them, have a really big fan traveling to our games, I feel like that's the biggest part for us.

Q. Adam, looking at the younger guys on this team, Mario and Davis in particular, how do you help prepare the young players who have never been in the NCAA tournament, who are extra excited about getting this opportunity to stick with it and keep playing their game?

ADAM MILLER: I mean, those two are special individuals. Those two, they really don't be needing a lot of help, to be honest. They're above their age. They play basketball really, really well. Sometimes being younger you're showing up late, doing little stuff. They don't do any of that.

To me, they're not even freshmen anymore. I honestly feel like now they're at the point where they're sophomores. Going into this tournament, they're going to be a big piece of this team.

Shoot, I think that it's not just about me helping them; we're all helping each other here. They're more than well-prepared. Coach is getting us all together. We're still growing and getting better every day, so still trying to get better.

I feel like they're as prepared as can be.

Q. About Mario, he plays with a lot of flair, personality.

He also seems to have a lot of personality off the floor. Sometimes when you watch you guys, you can see Coach Few saying to him, Please make the easy pass. What is the craziest pass you have seen him throw in a game or maybe in practice? Did he get in trouble for it?

JALEN WARLEY: I'd probably say behind-the-back passes. I don't know if he's necessarily done in it a game. There's definitely a couple times where we'd be playing in practice, I wouldn't be expecting the ball, next thing you know he's throwing it behind his back.

I don't know if Coach Few necessarily got on him, especially when it works. I think we all kind of smile about it. He brings a lot of flair and personality to his game. We kind of all rally behind it.

Q. (No microphone.)

ADAM MILLER: Yeah, he has this bounce pass, a certain bounce pass he throws. He doesn't do it anymore. He might. He might pull it out one time. I definitely seen it like early in the year. You'll know it if he sees it. He throws a bounce pass, but it's sharp. It's the same as a chest pass. He doesn't really do it. I wish I could explain it better. It's probably out there somewhere. Somebody got to find it and clip it.

Q. (No microphone.)

ADAM MILLER: Probably.

Q. All three of you have started games this year. All three of you have come off the bench. More starting lineup changes than Mark Few ever does. Injuries played a part in that. With all the changes, adjustments throughout the season, adversity as well, what has been the message from the coaching staff to keep you playing well?

JALEN WARLEY: I think what's been cool about what you're talking about is we've kind of kept each other, not in check, but more so we kind of understand it because we have so many talented guys. We went at it all summer. Each day there would be a new 'MVP' of the day.

When these lineup changes happen, I don't think we take it personal. I think you really just try to help whoever is in our position be most prepared for when it's their turn. I mean, at the end of the day we all know that we're all going to have a moment. The most important part is us walking away with a W.

It's been something like I feel we've held each other



accountable more so than the coaches have, keep us in the right mindset for.

EMMANUEL INNOCENTI: I agree with that. Also we have a deep team. Everybody can hoop. At the end of the day we have the same goal, which is to win. It don't matter if you start or not. We got to reach the goal at the end. That's the most important thing.

THE MODERATOR: All right. Thank you very much. Best of luck tomorrow.

We are joined by Gonzaga head coach Mark Few. Coach, we'll go ahead and start with your opening statement.

MARK FEW: Obviously great to be back at the NCAA tournament. The streak that we have, I think it's at, oh, 28 straight now, something like that, is something that we take very, very seriously. I know this group feels a sense of relief, but also a sense of accomplishment to keep that thing going on their watch.

Again, with all the adversity that we've been through this year, I think the staff and the players have all just had the opportunity to just step back and be very, very grateful that we're playing in March Madness. We're excited to keep this thing going.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. You guys are playing back at the Moda Center, you played here in December against Oregon, you played in Portland in February. How much does it impact you and the team to be in a place you're familiar with, played recently with?

MARK FEW: I mean, I don't think it hurts at all. But I'm not sure how much it really, really helps.

Obviously the best thing for us is some of these teams have had to travel long distances. This is an easy trip for us. Obviously it's easy for our fans. We have a lot of fans down here in the Portland area. So I think that's probably the biggest positive out of everything.

Q. How is Jalen Warley moving around right now?

MARK FEW: He's much better, getting better by the day. I think I wouldn't say he's 100%, but he's rounding probably into the upper 80s. He's moving much, much better than he did even a week ago.

Q. You have one of the oldest teams in college basketball. I asked the three guys who came in if they feel old, if their knees hurt. They assured me they

don't. They feel young and youthful. Do you feel that? Do you feel like their age, maturity, has that played a role this year in your success or are they a bunch of immature 25-year-olds?

MARK FEW: They're definitely not immature. It's interesting. It can be a positive in many, many ways, but it can also be a negative, especially maybe in this transfer era where sometimes there's a lot of things you have to undo, I mean, not in a bad way. There's just different systems that they've played in. There's different language and terms that you use in basketball that one program might use this for what that coverage is, something else might call it something else.

There's a little bit of a learning curve involved with that. I think that's probably had the biggest impact on Tyon and Adam.

Yeah, by and large they've seen a lot. I think they also have a great appreciation for this moment, what we're about ready to partake in.

If you look a guy like Tyon, he's had great success in this tournament, dating back to his Grand Canyon days.

Q. Speaking of Tyon, this Kennesaw State team seems to have a lot of strengths that Tyon could counteract. Great rebounding team, shoot well from the perimeter, get out and run, they have super high tempo. How impactful do you feel Tyon could be in this matchup?

MARK FEW: I mean, I'm hoping he'll be very impactful. I mean, that's the hope every game.

Yeah, I mean, this would theoretically lend itself to a game that could kind of lean towards Tyon's style of play. But you never know. Every game takes on a life of itself.

We'll have to see. I would say that he's done a nice job. Throughout his career it always seems like he starts trending up as the calendar turns to March. Hopefully that will be the case this year, too.

Q. We've been having a conversation all season about if the NCAA tournament should expand. What are your thoughts?

MARK FEW: I mean, I think this year is just a great example of why we should not expand. It's perfect where it's at right now. If it isn't broke, don't fix it.

I mean, there's other things that are broke obviously within college basketball. But the one thing that isn't, the shining light of everything in college athletics, is the NCAA



tournament. I don't know why they would ever mess with that, especially with everything else that's so tragically messed up.

Q. I've been asking players, some Wisconsin guys said earlier they would be for game expansion. They would like to move to a three-game series starting in the Sweet 16. They said you'd get a better scout. I thought Greg Gard would give a pithy comment, but he was like, it's not a bad idea. What do you think about that?

MARK FEW: If there was a way we could go back into '17, '19, '21, and '22, I would love to have a three-game series because I think we'd be staring at three or four NCAA championships if that was the case with the groups we had.

I think that would take away from the magic of this entire tournament. That's why everybody focuses in on it. I mean, it's very much like the Olympics. I mean, as heartbreaking as it can be, as we saw in some of the Winter Olympics. I mean, the whole just drama of, hey, you got 40 minutes to play. Irregardless of what happens, the winner moves on is what is so captivating and makes this thing so special.

I would probably vote against that, or I would vote against that.

Q. Coach Pettway comes from the Nate Oats coaching tree. What have you seen from this team on film? Did you get a chance to talk to Coach Oats?

MARK FEW: No, Coach Oats has his hands full right now. I left him alone. I thought about it early Sunday night when it popped up. Then, no, not talked to Nate.

Yeah, I mean, obviously we've had some great games with Alabama over the recent history. I mean, they're similar in some ways to Alabama, but they're different, too. But it does help that our guys have experienced playing against Alabama even earlier this year.

Q. I know you've been here in '22, years in the past have been to Oregon and Portland. Would definitely love to ask you about being an Oregonian and being from here, if there's anything extra special to play a tournament game in your home state.

MARK FEW: It's great. It's great for me to get back relatively close to home. My dad's not able to travel. It's nice that we're close enough and the family can get down to see him maybe on the break in between games and such.

Yeah, no, love Portland. Love coming to Portland. Obviously love staying in the Northwest. Like I mentioned earlier, we have a huge fan base down here. It's easy for our fans to get here from Spokane, Seattle, wherever they're all coming from. It's a huge bonus for us.

Q. (No microphone.)

MARK FEW: I think that's a true statement on your part, yeah (smiling).

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you very much and we will see you tomorrow.

MARK FEW: Thank you.

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