

# NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Round - Hawaii vs Arkansas

Thursday, March 19, 2026

Portland, Oregon, USA

Moda Center

## Arkansas Razorbacks Coach John Calipari

### Trevon Brazile

### Malique Ewin

#### Media Conference

Arkansas 97, Hawaii 78

THE MODERATOR: Coach, we'll start with an opening statement.

JOHN CALIPARI: What I was most happy with, we end up with 26 assists. We passed the ball to each other, we created shots for each other. Makes us pretty good.

The start of the game we talked about it. We've been talking about it for the last month. First five minutes. Now, the first five minutes could be 15-15, but you were ready to play, and the other team played well, too.

Today they missed some shots, then they started making shots. You got to give them credit. They did not quit. Hawaii just kept playing. All of a sudden I'm looking up, it's 15. Then we make a play or two.

These two, Malique Ewin is showing he's basically telling on himself of, This is how good I am. The way he chased down balls with unbelievable energy. Then you saw TB. The great news is, you saw him when he wasn't making shots. How did he look? He didn't make shots. You're looking at him like, Holy cow.

That's what I just keep trying to tell them. If you make them, great. If you don't, do all the other things you do.

That was a good start for us. Always worried about the first game. Hard game for everybody playing.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open the floor to questions.



**Q. Coach, as you said, Hawaii doesn't really give up many assists. They have a unique style of defense of guarding their yard. What strategy did you have for that?**

JOHN CALIPARI: Well, we probably shot more threes than we wanted to. But they were open. If you play really fast and space the court, they got to either give up a layup or someone's going to be free.

We do some stuff that runs people at the rim, as I'm driving. It's a little bit different.

But let me tell you. I watched the tape. I watched how they played. So well-coached. They give up nine assists a game. That's ridiculous, folks. Nine a game. That worried me 'cause our thing is, if we get 20, we win.

For us to do what we did was pretty special.

**Q. Cal, you've obviously coached a lot of NBA guys with a ton of talent. When your players go on a little highlight reel where they're throwing down lob dunks, are you impressed or are you just kind of shrugging like, I've seen this before?**

JOHN CALIPARI: No, this team is one of the -- I've had some really fast teams. This team is right there, fast. We're long and we're athletic. It's what we are.

But we're also skilled because we don't turn it over that much because we are skilled. This is a good group. What I said after to Malique, what I'm always trying to do is get guys to break through. The battle they have is with themselves, it's no one else. When they win that battle, you can see it in how they play.

Malique busted through here the last week or two. He's setting himself and our team up for the rest of his basketball career on the things he's doing: making free throws, grabbing balls, great hands. Today he had six assists. He had six assists. He did have three turnovers, but... He had six assists. I mean, he's doing a little bit of everything.

TB has just come on. He's special. 6'10", folks, can guard guards. Head on the rim. Did you see that dunk? I sat



down. I don't even know. I think Malique threw him a bad pass, and he got it from behind his head. How did you get that down? I just sat down 'cause everybody on the bench is looking at me. I'm like, Don't look at me. I can't believe how he ever got that ball.

But he never ceases to amaze me some of the stuff he does. Some of the blocks. We've won games based on him getting a block in the last 10 seconds of the game, and it wasn't on his man. It was on someone else driving, he goes over and blocks it, rebound, we won the game.

They both have done great.

**Q. Malique, you had six assists today. Sometimes big men they were guards growing up. Did you ever play forward or forward?**

MALIQUE EWIN: Yeah, I played guard. I like to assist more. That's what I did tonight. Got it done.

**Q. Trevon and Malique, you guys have great guards, but you had a lot of plays with each other today. How has that developed? What does that open up for you?**

TREVON BRAZILE: I just think our team has a lot of chemistry. Obviously we got great guard play. We got Am, Nick, Billy will play some four sometimes. Like I said, we all got good chemistry with each other.

**Q. Meleek Thomas went to the clubhouse or bench for about five minutes early in the second. I wonder what that was. Is Pringle available moving forward?**

JOHN CALIPARI: He might be. And the stuff with Meleek, you can imagine what I was thinking. Like, we're down to two and the rent is due. He was like, No, I'm good.

It's like Darius, right? They say they're good. I'm like, All right, let's go.

Nick wanted to play today. I said, Nope, you are not playing. You get these guys to win so you can maybe play this weekend.

If he's not right, then I won't do that. It's nothing serious serious, but it's enough to say, Don't put yourself in that position.

**Q. Coach, you had a really great game today. How long do you get to enjoy it before you're moving on to focusing on High Point? Looking at High Point, how are you not underestimating the fact you're playing a team that took out the No. 5 seed?**

JOHN CALIPARI: First of all, I'll be walking the streets of Portland tonight enjoying this. But, I've got three tapes that I got to watch of High Point.

They're good. Wisconsin found out they are good. And they're not afraid. I recruited Cam to Kentucky. I know how good he is. So they're good. I mean, we're not walking in thinking, Okay, this will be an easy one. No, it won't. None of 'em are easy.

I've been telling these guys, You're going to look and you're worried about somebody in front of you, and they get beat. Then you're playing somebody else. That's why you don't even need to watch games. Just stay in the moment. Let's stay in the five-minute segments. Let's stay locked in.

**Q. Coach, you mentioned how they answered every time Hawaii started hitting shots. A couple times they cut it to 12, to 10. How important was it for them to answer back quickly, not make it a possession game?**

JOHN CALIPARI: I was trying to call a timeout. They kind of looked me off. The out-of-bounds play where he got the lob, they called it. I didn't call it.

They said, We're running this.

I said, All right, go run it.

If I can get these guys empowered where it's their team, we can do some damage. And they're getting there. But like I said, this thing, every game is its own game. You can't look at this game and think it will affect the next game. It will not.

We couldn't make a jump shot. We were 4 for 21 from the three. Four for 21. Still did the stuff that we did, plus 10 rebounds against a team that's one of the tallest, biggest teams in the country.

**Q. Coach, the two guys next to you are your two big men on a night where Nick isn't able to play. How impressed were you with their performance, stepping up in some added more minutes?**

JOHN CALIPARI: Well, Malique Ewin could have been starting. But I want to keep Nick engaged and doing what he was doing. But he's had the last month of the season, like he is a difference maker for us. He just is. Proud of what he's been able to do. It's not been easy. Not been easy.

The ups and downs, which they all have, but he's overcome 'em. Now let's go forward. Now he told on



himself. If you don't see that kind of effort tracking down balls, rebounding with two hands, all that, you're going to go asking, Why didn't you play today like you played yesterday?

All these guys are capable. I'm not talking shots. I'm talking effort, energy, spirit, all the stuff that doesn't take skill. These guys add athleticism, length. Their hand-eye, their skill. You add all that to who these two are, special players.

**Q. Trevon, were you certain on that one-handed catch that you were going to catch it and finish? Any initial thoughts on where that ranks on your greatest hits?**

TREVON BRAZILE: Yeah, I was certain. Once I got it in my hands, I knew I was going to be able to get it.

As far as ranking it, I haven't seen it on film. I got to go back and look at it.

JOHN CALIPARI: If you have anything better than that, I got to see that (smiling).

Thank you, folks.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

