

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Round - Akron vs Texas Tech

Friday, March 20, 2026

Tampa, Florida, USA

Benchmark International Arena

Texas Tech Red Raiders

Coach Grant McCasland

Jaylen Petty

Josiah Moseley

Christian Anderson

Media Conference

Texas Tech 91, Akron 71

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with a statement from the coach, then questions for the players.

GRANT McCASLAND: What an unbelievable Akron team we played. Coach Groce, I told him when we shook hands, what an awesome team they have. One of the most fun teams I ever scouted. The way they put pressure on you, the way they scored, their pace, their next actionability. We challenged our team to keep getting better defensively, one, and to finish it with rebounds.

They had six offensive rebounds, I think it was, in the first half. And ended up with 11. We felt like if we could continue to take away rhythm 3s and rebound, we could win the game. Man, we got some great contributions from different guys. One of these guys sitting down here, Josiah Moseley, had an unbelievably awesome switch game. And the way he attacked the basket with the ball was relentless and really made a difference in our team.

Tyreee Bryan, man, came in and gave us such a great lift defensively, his ability to get steals and read passes and be physical and also to rebound for us was huge.

Always a team game, but tremendous amount of respect to Coach Groce and Akron for an amazing season. We knew it would take everything to win this game.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the student-athletes.



Q. When JT went down, you could have folded the tent. You didn't. How did you get there and get back to this point now where you're in the tournament?

JAYLEN PETTY: I think just not losing our intensity and our competitiveness. I mean, I love this team. We all want each other to be better. Like I said, every day in practice, whatever we talk about, it's what's the next steps to get better and how can we still compete.

It's tough, because we all care for JT. I love him. He's my brother. It's tough.

JOSIAH MOSELEY: Similar to what Jaylen said, everyone knew they had to step up in every way because JT did a lot for this team. Not having him, we miss an area. Everybody has to step up and push each other harder. That could cause a lot of teams to fall apart. For us to stay together, get this W.

CHRISTIAN ANDERSON: Like they said, everybody had to step up. But I think we were ready. We practiced how we want to play and everybody puts in so much work. When somebody like JT went down, he was super valuable to us. I think guys were ready to step up and step into that role and play and help us still win games.

Q. My question is for Jaylen. Early on, you and Donovan were getting it done. In the second half, it developed to be a team effort. You finished with five in double figures. How did it come to be a team effort in the second half? Is that how it allowed you guys to pull away?

JAYLEN PETTY: Yeah, it's always team. They trust me, I trust them, and I'm never worried about that. I'm worried about competing and trying to win. It's always team.

THE MODERATOR: Any other questions for the student-athletes? Thanks, fellas.

Now questions for Coach McCasland.

Q. Coach, same question for you. When Toppin goes down, you got the Player of the Year in the conference, you had to make some changes. What were the big changes you made to get back to this point?

GRANT McCASLAND: I think it was pretty obvious on display today. I mean, our guard play is awesome. I don't know if there's three better guards than Christian Anderson, Jaylen Petty and Donovan Atwell at making 3s and playing together. JT was the leverage point, putting two on the ball. How they had to guard him in the post.

LeJuan stepped up for us today. To start the second half, we'd heard all along how great a second-half team Akron was. Everyone kept saying they're an unbelievable second half team, unbelievable second-half team. I thought our ability to score early in the second half by playing through LeJuan on some cross matches was the difference in us separating during the stretch and getting cushion when you know they're going to make a run.

How do you get stops, but also how do you leverage the paint, and without JT, and we've done it a lot of different ways. Long roll, short roll. And Josiah Moseley had a great game with his ability to put pressure on the rim in the middle of the paint was really effective.

We're always going to do this as a team, as Jaylen said. That's the way we've won the last few games without JT.

Q. Grant, a bit of an unfortunate ending to the regular season, but you come out here, no difference. Did you put that new season approach into effect? How did that kind of work?

GRANT McCASLAND: Not really. I know everybody likes to talk about -- I don't know, man. Everybody has their own opinion on our team. I actually wasn't discouraged. I felt like in the Big 12 tournament, we just didn't get to play our best. We had some unusual circumstances impact that, and give Iowa State credit because we popped them pretty good at their place. I thought they had a great edge going into that game.

The BYU game was a one-possession game. They're playing better, had a great game. The loss at home at TCU, we got bullied. That was the one I was most disappointed in. It was the rebounding effort that got us.

So just challenged everybody on our team. That's what I love about this team. Luke had 6. LeJuan had 6. And then it's like 4, 3, 2, 4. I tell them we'll have to do this as a team. JT was a double-double machine. If we're going to win, we'll have to rebound.

I honestly wasn't thinking new season. I was telling them let's just get better. Let's get better at the things we know. Everybody knows it's a new season. You don't have to say that. You do have to say let's go practice. That's what we

needed to do was practice and get better at some things.

I thought our guys took what we practiced the last week and really applied it to the game today in a real way.

Q. Coach, when you play a mid-major like Akron in the tournament, you know two things. You'll get great guard play out of them and you'll be seeing a lot of juniors and seniors. How important is that to instill on your players, hey, you're playing men; you're not playing boys?

GRANT McCASLAND: Well, you got to start with Johnson for Akron. I mean, I thought he was, arguably, the best player in the MAC. The way he scored, the way he was their motor. I mean, we really tried to key on him to make it as difficult as possible. And, man, his energy and the way he competes, I was so impressed with their team.

And then the other guy was Evan Mahaffey, just honestly his will to win, his nose for the ball. He beat us to a few basketballs early in the game, and it changed the game. He got a kick-out 3 to Scott that I thought was pivotal in the first half, and we actually had a little bit of a grip on the game.

Man, just love their team, honestly. They won 19 of 20 games. We knew going in we'd have to match their fight and physical play and take away 3s.

You have to take away their rhythm. Made them make 2s. We probably let the 2s be too easy. Getting to the foul line was too much. For the most part to hold this team to only five 3-pointers made says a lot about the grit our team played with. I love this Akron team. I really do. I respect the way they compete.

Q. Coach, five players in double figures, but Josiah Moseley coming off the bench, can you talk about his play?

GRANT McCASLAND: Yeah. I mean, if there's anybody that we've coached hard these last two weeks, it's Josiah Moseley. He just started practice, his literal first practice in a Red Raider uniform was January the 28th.

So he's had to make some quick adjustments and he's had to improve in a short amount of time in a tough league, in the best league in college basketball.

So, man, did he respond tonight. I thought that he had a few big-time defensive effort plays where he got some blocks, but his ability to switch and guard the ball really was a difference maker, one.

And, two, his force on the rim, his ability to get the ball and not settle for a difficult shot to go away from the basket, but I thought he put his nose to the rim and bounced it and went right to the basket and had a great dunk in transition.

Even the last offensive rebound, he created the advantage. He could have easily kind of floated, and he didn't. He turned and got over the top. It was a high-level shot. He's capable of that, and I'm glad he put what he's been practicing into the game. He's worked hard for this moment.

You can tell, he was smiling when he walked in here. He was already trying to get in the cold tub. He's never been out here before. He's ready to rehab. He didn't know you get a chance to talk to media.

It's cool to see his heart and competitiveness put into the game.

Q. A lot of people across the country took Akron 12 over 5. A lot of upsets yesterday. Did that help you get your message across to the guys?

GRANT McCASLAND: No. We didn't talk about it, honestly. I've played in this game as a 13 seed. The more you make out of it, I try to show them the realities of this. This team's stinkin' good. They can put pressure on you. Let's not make this more than what it is.

If you put the number by somebody's name and try to determine how hard you're going to play by a number, then you're dumb. To me, let's look at what they do well and let's try to take it away and let's talk about what we do well that they can't handle and let's really focus on that.

So ours was really focused on game plan, effort, and how do we execute on every possession. And let y'all talk about all these seeds and numbers because we saw their jersey and it was blue, and ours was white. We wanted the white team to win, and that's the way we approached it.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach.

GRANT McCASLAND: Yep, Wreck'Em.

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