

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Round - Iowa vs Clemson

Friday, March 20, 2026

Tampa, Florida, USA

Benchmark International Arena

Clemson Tigers

Coach Brad Brownell

Dillon Hunter

RJ Godfrey

Media Conference

Iowa 67, Clemson 61

BRAD BROWNELL: Congratulations to Iowa. I thought their kids played really well. Really physical team. Nothing that we didn't expect.

I thought our kids just early in the game, I don't know, for whatever reason, we just didn't seem really comfortable. I thought we missed some shots around the rim that we probably normally make. Give their kids credit, they made some threes early, which gave them a bunch of juice.

I thought we stayed with our plan and hung in there reasonably well defensively, but the defensive rebounding was a problem, and obviously the fouling with the free throws, that was the big difference in the game.

We couldn't get some defensive stops when we needed them and had a couple opportunities when we tightened the game up and made a couple plays that just were poor.

Credit to them. Super proud of these guys right here. What they did for our team and the leadership that they showed throughout the year, can't say enough good things about these two guys. They're part of a bunch of different three NCAA Tournaments. Just really proud of these guys for what they've done and the young men they are. It was a pleasure to coach them.

Q. For both players, Dillon, you first, I know the last place you want to be right now is out here, so thank you for coming out and doing it. How important is it to not let this taint a really good season?



DILLON HUNTER: You know, Coach came in and had some positive words after the game, and we just understood, like, beginning the season, we weren't expected to be here, so that put a lot of fire under us, me and RJ, so coming into the season, and then had a lot of adversity during the season, and just handling that. We're just grateful. Me and RJ, grateful for our guys, teammates, Coach, and just how much fight we put up this season.

We're not going to let this taint it. We understand it's not what we wanted, but we'll definitely use it in the future.

RJ GODFREY: Yeah, what Dill said was awesome. Nobody expected us to be here, and our team, our staff, just the whole season, we just fought the whole year. I'm glad I got the opportunity to play with the guys in that locker room, the staff, one more last time. Excited to be back. This year was awesome. I'm never going to stop talking about it with my kids, my grandkids, my cousins, all that. This year was awesome, and I'm just blessed to be in the position to be coached by Brownell and playing for Clemson Nation.

Q. RJ, I'm going to share a text I got from one of the coaches. He said, you missed your calling. You should be in Death Valley playing defensive end. Any thoughts of going down that road?

RJ GODFREY: No, I don't think I'm going to hit the football field anytime soon. But it's in my blood. All my cousins and my dad obviously was a big-time football player. But at a young age I fell in love with football, so I'm going to see what God had planned for me with basketball and I'm just going to try to maximize my potential wherever it is next.

Q. Their length, especially defending you guys around the basket, was that a problem for you tonight?

RJ GODFREY: Early on, I just think we missed a couple easy shots, especially me, around the rim. I know some of our guys missed some easy ones, but that was in the game plan. They're going to be disruptive, and they're very lengthy. But I think it was just us just missing shots around the rim.

^ Jr start **DILLON HUNTER:** Yeah, I think not having



Carter definitely affected us a little bit, but still, there was a lot of easy shots that we should have made as a team, so we felt like it was kind of our fault. We've played high-level competition with like-sized guys, and we just didn't make the shots we needed to.

Q. Dillon, the program has been to three straight NCAA tournaments. Obviously not what you wanted tonight, but what can you say about the trajectory of this program?

DILLON HUNTER: I'd just say I'm grateful, coming in, leaving my mark. Me and Chase talked about this even when I first came in, I wanted to come in and affect the program, and just being here, being a Clemson basketball player has been one of the greatest moments of my life, so using this going forward will definitely help me, but coming in, leaving my mark.

I'm a winner so I wanted to win every game and wasn't able to this time, but definitely in the future.

Q. How frustrating was it to just get beat on that offensive glass tonight?

BRAD BROWNELL: Yeah, it was. You know, I'm anxious to watch the film and just see what happened. Certainly some long shots by them, long rebounds. I'm sure there's a couple that just bounced their way, but there were others that we needed to win; 50/50 balls you have to get. We just weren't quite as hungry as we needed to be to win those.

What makes that doubly hard is then you don't get to start your break, and you don't get any easy baskets, so we were constantly playing against their set defense all night. That became a problem, as well.

Q. Coach, when you see how much RJ and Dillon care about Clemson and care about the program, how tough is it just to see them not get the result they want after all the work they've put in?

BRAD BROWNELL: Yeah, it's really hard. It's really hard because we're with these guys so much. Blood, sweat and tears, and we have all of it, right, throughout our careers, and even these seasons.

When you have guys who lead like they do and are unbelievable examples, you just want the best for them. They're phenomenal young men. Proud of them. So proud I got to coach them and grateful for that.

I think if you just listen to them, it speaks to our university, our Clemson community. It speaks to the culture of our

basketball program, the type of people that we have. These two guys will fall in that line of great Clemson basketball leaders.

Q. You could never get it to one possession. Do you think that if you got there, Iowa may have felt a little bit of a pressure situation?

BRAD BROWNELL: Yeah, obviously that's what you're trying to do. We had a couple of times when we got it close. We fouled a three-point shooter. Just an awful foul. Then we missed the front end of a one-and-one and we needed a stop or two and just didn't quite get them. Fouled them a couple times, and they made free throws.

That's what's going to be haunting with this loss is you had a chance -- I told the guys at halftime, we're in a good position to win the game. We really are. We haven't played great. They've got a little bit of a lead. You're kind of right where you want to be when you're a team that maybe played a little better the last part of the first half, built a little momentum. If we can just get off to a good start in the second half we can really make a shot at winning the game. There's plenty of time left.

We just didn't quite have it tonight. We just couldn't quite make the timely play.

Again, some of that is Iowa. They're very well-coached. The kids play extremely hard. They don't give you anything.

Obviously they made a couple more plays than we did throughout to keep the lead at two or three possessions.

Q. You've talked a few times this year about how you guys maybe don't have a guy who can go get you 30 points just like that. Is this a game where that can really hurt you, and do you think that's something you really need to address in the portal this off-season to find people --

BRAD BROWNELL: Yeah, you're always trying to do that and you're trying to develop players that -- maybe an elite offensive guy. That aren't as many of those as people think. Iowa has one, so there was really only one guy on the floor that was probably separating himself from others.

But yeah, it takes pressure off your team when there's a guy that you can rely on to either go score, go get fouled or create a double-team, and it just makes life for the other players easier.

So yes, we've had those guys in the past. Love to have one in the future. This year's team, maybe we just weren't

quite wired that way. But again, I give a lot of credit to our staff and to our players for finding different ways to win this year.

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