

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: Second Round - Iowa vs Florida

Saturday, March 21, 2026

Tampa, Florida, USA

Benchmark International Arena

Florida Gators

Todd Golden

Boogie Fland

Xaivian Lee

Urban Klavzar

Isaiah Brown

Media Conference

Q. Boogie and X, tell me what you know about Iowa thus far and maybe a little bit of a scouting report on Bennett Stirtz?

BOOGIE FLAND: They're a good team. Bennett is a great player. Just got to contain him, no threes, and all team defense.

XAIVIAN LEE: Yeah we haven't really gone through film yet. We're about to do that. But we know they like to slow the game down, try and control the tempo. So we're going to try and impose our will and play how we do.

Q. What is the hardest thing when it comes to -- when you try to impose a will on some team that is going to be really stubborn and not want to pick up the pace like you guys are going to want to play? What's the challenge in that, please?

XAIVIAN LEE: Yeah, I'd just say especially in March Madness, sometimes games can get kind of tense or tight and whatnot, so we've just got to do a good job staying composed and understanding there's probably going to be less possessions or whatever. So when we have the ball we're going to get out and run like we usually do, but in the half court we've got to execute and play our game.

URBAN KLAVZAR: Yeah, what he said, I think we've got to do what we do and get defensive stops and try and get out in transition because that's how we play the best, and



everything opens up a little more. We're just going to try to play our game.

Q. What did it mean for you yesterday going 6-for-6, how important was your confidence in the first round just going into tomorrow?

BOOGIE FLAND: It was big. I was just playing with swagger and staying within the offense. Like you said, we're trying to go 6-for-6 in the regular tournament, so for me to go 6-for-6 yesterday was definitely big.

Q. Isaiah, when you say Big Ten, what comes to your mind in terms of playing a Big Ten basketball team?

ISAIAH BROWN: I'd say I don't know. Big Ten, Iowa, our next opponent, so main focus. Worry about what the next move is. We'll coach scout over them in minute, so yeah.

BOOGIE FLAND: Definitely a physical team. Got to be ready for the fight. We've got to bring it to them, definitely got to be composed, like X said, and just play with great purpose.

Q. Last night on a, quote-unquote, neutral site floor, what did it feel like to you all to have as many Gators fans as there were in the building last night, and do you think it serves you well tomorrow night as well?

URBAN KLAVZAR: I think it felt awesome. It's really nice to see this many fans come here to Tampa and support us. It was also, like when we were getting on the bus, I was shocked how many people there was trying to support us, and then the atmosphere was awesome.

It really helps to see that many Gator fans here supporting us, and it's easier to play like that.

BOOGIE FLAND: It felt like we was back in the O Dome honestly to see that many Gator fans. Then when Ali got his chance to shine everybody was going crazy. So it felt like we was back in the O Dome.

Q. When you get to see those guys who help you prepare each day get run like they did last night, obviously you felt the energy from the crowd, but for you all on the bench after you've gotten your night



done, what's it like to go out and have a little bit of a moment?

XAIVIAN LEE: Yeah, it's awesome. Obviously we see them do it every day in practice, so happy for them to get an opportunity in the game, and then it's just fun for us on the bench, you see us reacting and stuff. It's just a good time for everyone. I'm happy pretty much everyone scored and got in and did good stuff.

Q. Isaiah, I would love for you to kind of reflect on a year ago at this time and where you are now. Can you take us through what that feels like for you, the difference in that short 12 months, where you were with your arc of development, obviously a year ago with that group, and now here as a member of this eight-man rotation?

ISIAH BROWN: Yeah, definitely. Last year was definitely a different story, being behind three NBA players and having the opportunity just to sit back and just watch them go through this course and through this tournament. You definitely learn a lot of things that you can implement into your game and kind of build yourself up to be what Coach needs you to be.

Honestly, I was definitely blessed with the opportunity and just with a chance to just come and just prove myself and just be what the team needs and do whatever I can do on the court to help the team win.

Bring that into the tournament is honestly a blessing, and I hope I can do to the best of my ability to help this team win every game.

Q. For the guys that were here last season, how do you feel like your energy or your mentality is different from when you guys were going into the second round last season?

URBAN KLAVZAR: Yeah, me and Isaiah obviously have a different role than last year. As he said before, we were behind three NBA players, and the team is different this year than last year, but it really helps that we basically played every game last year of the Tournament, so we really know how to get this done. The experience really helps us just trying to win these games.

Q. Boogie and Xaivian, with this quick turnaround, it's not the SEC Tournament where you're playing the next day and you've played an opponent before. You mentioned you haven't worked on or seen a whole lot about Iowa. How important are those points of emphasis and the information Coach feeds you to be ready to play?

XAIVIAN LEE: Yeah, they do a great job. They have both teams scouted before they even play, so they have a great idea of what's going on. But obviously for us we're not really focused on them until we take care of Game 1, which we did last night.

But yeah, the coaching staff is on their P's and Q's and making sure we get everything we need and are prepared for the game. We're about to go over that in practice and figure out how we want to guard them and attack them, so yeah.

BOOGIE FLAND: Honestly this season I feel like we seen everything, so I feel like it's not going to be nothing that we didn't see. We've just got to stay on our P's and Q's and execute what they're going to give us.

Q. Todd, a year ago you were still looking for your first NCAA Tournament win as a head coach. How much does the perspective change for a program after a National Championship or as you approach a tournament opportunity like this, how different is it when the lens is a little longer?

TODD GOLDEN: Yeah, I believe we're more prepared this year, obviously going through last year's tournament. As I just discussed with the radio guys, just the ups and downs that we had earlier on in the season. We've been able to get through some adversity and get back to playing together, playing the right way, having really good success.

So coming into the Tournament, I feel like we're more comfortable, better prepared. I believe our guys had a great mentality after this week's practice going into the game last night and played with great purpose and intent, and I expect to try to do that again against a really good Iowa team tomorrow.

Q. Todd, looking at the Iowa matchup, you guys are one of the faster-paced teams. Iowa is the exact opposite. What kind of challenge does that present for you guys?

TODD GOLDEN: Well, I mean, a lot of teams want to dictate tempo when you play, and for us, I think we've got to make sure that we just focus on the things we can control. Defensively they're going to take their time and try to find matchups they like and play with a ball screen. We've just got to make them miss and make sure they don't get a second chance.

That was an issue for Clemson last night. They got some first-shot missed but they allowed Iowa to get back about 45 percent of their misses or something like that, which is a

really bad formula against a team like that.

Then on the offensive end, we're at our best when we're playing with pace. They want to slow the game down; we want to play fast. We have to make sure we do what we can to impose our will and not allow them to slow us down. We've got to be able to win no matter what the pace looks like.

Q. You mentioned kind of the ups and downs and obviously you guys didn't have the start to the season that you wanted. When did you feel like things were starting to click for you all to maybe get to this point?

TODD GOLDEN: Yeah, you know, in December really, once we got through the UConn game that we lost and got to 5-4, I think we had a little bit of a break after that for finals and everything. Our schedule softened up a little bit and we started having some success from a winning perspective, and guys started having a little more individual success.

For me when I thought we really started playing well was when we played Tennessee at home in conference play, which was I think our third league game or maybe our fourth. Boogie had a breakout game, we were able to get out in front of them and we won by 24 and played really well in all three phases, offensively, defensively and on the glass.

That's when we kind of hit our stride. I feel like we've been playing pretty dang well and consistent since then with the exception of the Auburn home game and Vandy last week in Nashville. But once Xaivian and Boog settled in and Condo got back to being the hardest playing guy on the floor, that's what we started playing our best basketball.

Q. How were you and the rest of the team able to feed off the energy from the crowd last night? Obviously being in Tampa, a lot of Gators fans made the trip. How did that impact you and the team?

TODD GOLDEN: Yeah, we're incredibly grateful for the support. It started at our hotel coming down to get on the bus for the game. We had a great Gator walk and just awesome how many people were there to support us, and then coming in here last night and having a majority of the Gators fans is just a great feeling, and something that I know all of our players appreciate and our coaching staff, as well.

You know, it's a great advantage of finishing where we did and being able to stay close to home and playing in Tampa and something that we definitely don't take lightly.

Q. How do you approach the next game coming off such a big win like that? How do you balance staying grounded but also using it as momentum?

TODD GOLDEN: Well, I want us to be confident and continue to play with the same mentality we had last night. Obviously Iowa is going to provide a much different challenge. They're very well-coached as well, and obviously they have one of the best point guards in America, and they do a great job playing together.

This is going to be a game where in my estimation defensively for us we've got to be on our concepts and tendencies. They run a lot of ball screens. They don't reinvent the wheel offensively. They try to find matchups they want and exploit those. Offensively as always for us we have to do a great job taking care of the basketball. We're at our best when we value the basketball and get shots on the rim.

One thing that we have and will continue to talk about with our team for tomorrow night is this is going to be a very physical game. Iowa, they're smart, they play hard, they play physical, and I think we have to be ready to run to the fight if we want to have success tomorrow.

Q. You yourself came from a mid-major and took over a D-I program, kind of the same thing that Ben did this year. What can you say about the job that you feel like he's done this year?

TODD GOLDEN: He's obviously done a fantastic job, to be able to make the Tournament in your first year at your spot is really impressive. I know he is probably very comfortable with all the continuity and players that they brought from Drake. That was a big kind of starting advantage for him, and they play like a team that knows each other and has been with each other for a long time.

Yeah, he's done an exemplary job, and he's a very good coach.

Q. What are the challenges that Bennett Stirtz presents to a defense?

TODD GOLDEN: He's just a great ball screen point guard. We have a couple of them in our league. I think of Labaron Philon as a guy that is really hard to guard, Darius Acuff. They're different types of players in terms of what makes them who they are, but all three of those guys are kind of ball-dominant guards that like to play out of the pick-and-roll.

We've had some experience guarding those guys this year. I think this matchup tomorrow we can use some of the

things we learned in those games to game plan for Stirtz. He's a little different obviously. He's a bigger guard, very good passer out of his right hand, very good shooter out of his left hand off the bounce. I feel like for us to be successful, we've got to use our quickness tomorrow to bother him, to get in his hip and not leave his side, and we've got to wear him down. That doesn't mean solely on his offensive side of the floor, guarding him in ball screens but also when he's guarding, we can't allow him to rest on the defensive end.

It's one of the things that I think should show up for us tomorrow, playing multiple ball handlers. He's not going to be able to just sit there on a guy that is not in action. He is going to have to be guarding ball screens. He's going to have to be involved in those things. So over the course of 40 minutes, my hope is that'll wear him down a little bit.

Q. How did having Thursday and just that extra day to prepare and be in the arena, you said in Nashville last week that it was difficult obviously shooting the ball, but last night 64 percent from the field, how did having that extra day to prep and get used to the arena impact that performance?

TODD GOLDEN: Yeah, it's always great, you get 40 minutes the day before and then 20 minutes the morning of. We took a lot of shots in that hour of time.

Again, our guys, they were ready to play, and I thought their mentality was really good and having that extra time definitely helped us prepare to be comfortable coming into the first round last night.

Q. Coach McCollum has found a lot of success at the D-II level going back to back. With your guys' pursuit in trying to go back to back, what is it like facing a coach that has been in the shoes that you're now trying to achieve with as well at the Division I level?

TODD GOLDEN: Yeah, I don't know, to be honest. I haven't thought about that too much. I would know that they're going to be very well prepared and it's going to be a big challenge tomorrow, and obviously he's very comfortable and had a lot of success. Always has his team ready to play.

But in terms of our pursuit and Coach Ben's success, I'm not sure. I might have to think about that a little bit more to give you a great answer.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports.

