

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

Sunday, March 22, 2026

Tampa, Florida, USA

Benchmark International Arena

**Florida Gators**

**Coach Todd Golden**

**Alex Condon**

**Thomas Haugh**

**Xaivian Lee**

Media Conference



Iowa 73, Florida 72

**TODD GOLDEN:** Overall a disappointing result for us tonight, but credit Iowa. I thought they played well, especially in the first half. Had us on our heels a little bit, and I thought they were physically tougher than us in the first half. And it took a little bit for us to regain our footing and then they got off to a good start in the second half.

Really proud of our guys and the way we fought. Obviously came back and took the lead, got up by as many as -- I think we were up three or four at one point late in the second half, and just did a poor job executing on both ends in the last two minutes.

I thought obviously on the last play, we wanted to take a foul to prevent them from getting off a three, and they got away from us. We weren't able to take it and they knocked it down, so credit to them for that. Just a tough way to go out.

But really proud of my group. I love these guys. They did a great job for us all year, gaining the second 1 seed in a row, and tough one for us to swallow. We'll be thinking about this one for a while.

**Q. Thomas, it seemed like you guys just never got in sync the whole game. Is that pretty much it?**

**THOMAS HAUGH:** Yeah, yeah, it did feel like that, too.

**ALEX CONDON:** I think we went on a run where we found

it, but Iowa played well for a good period of time. But yeah, I think we just didn't play up to our capabilities in the last two minutes.

**Q. Xaivian, approximate 4.5 seconds left, it seemed like you got down the court really quick. Did you feel like timing was there for the dunk or how did you feel that last offensive play went?**

**XAIVIAN LEE:** I don't know. I felt he stepped up, maybe I could have shot a floater or pull up or something. I was going pretty fast, and I thought I had time for the dunk in, but I don't know.

**Q. Alex, just how tough is this one for you, man, after the comebacks defining this team and this one comes up short?**

**ALEX CONDON:** Yeah, it's a tough one. I'm going to remember this feeling for a while. I'm just going to use it as motivation. I think it's going to make us better players individually just to know what this feeling is like, working hard all year to get into this position as a 1 seed and just letting it get away from us a little bit.

Yeah, we're going to use it for positive to make us better players in our careers.

**Q. Thomas, I know you're obviously emotional, I can tell. You kind of struggled early, but kind of got it going. After you made the pass to Alex for that lay-up, did you guys feel like you guys were going to pull this one out? How did it unfold for you in the last minute or two in your mind?**

**THOMAS HAUGH:** Yeah, in the first half I was just out of it. I just feel bad, I didn't make any plays, didn't do anything to help the team out to win the first half. But yeah, second half I thought we started to get in it. But they're a good team, and they just played way harder than us and hit more shots and just made more plays in the end.

**Q. Their physicality, how much did it maybe take you guys back early? Did you expect it from the scout? I know they outscored you in points in the paint. What about their inside game offensively and defensively threw you guys a little bit?**



ALEX CONDON: I didn't think it was physicality for us. I think we met the standards with physicality. We were even on the rebounding. But that doesn't tell the whole story. I feel like personally I wasn't imposed by their physicality at all. I was happy with that side of things. I think they just hit more shots down the stretch.

They were unselfish, they handled our press well, but they just hit more shots down the stretch.

**Q. Alex and Thomas, I know it's too soon for this now, but when do you guys think you'll be able to look back and say, we had a hell of a run over the last two years?**

THOMAS HAUGH: Yeah, I mean, I don't know.

ALEX CONDON: Yeah, it's hard in this moment to say that. You've just got to cop this one on the chin and take it in stride, I guess.

**Q. When you got into that tussle there down the stretch with Alvaro, what went on from your standpoint? Did he throw a punch at you or what did you see?**

ALEX CONDON: I just thought it was a jump ball and I just wanted to set the standard for the game with -- I'm going to make sure I get every loose ball and set the standard with our physicality. Ended up with a double technical and they got the ball back. I didn't really know if he hit me or not, but I'm sure we'll see it and look back at it.

**Q. Rueben gets one shot. What were they doing to keep the ball away from them?**

TODD GOLDEN: I think it was more of a function of their ball screens and the way they guard ball screens. We were not strong enough around the rim in the first half, nor were we able to get any deep post catches. A lot of his opportunities around the glass as well, he had no offensive rebounds tonight. So I think a combination of that was the reason he was not as effective as normal.

**Q. Todd, I know you're not allowed to criticize officials --**

TODD GOLDEN: I am but I'm not going to do that.

**Q. Can you tell us how the play with Alex was explained to you by the officials?**

TODD GOLDEN: Yeah, I was told that they threw a punch, but it didn't connect so it didn't go any higher than a flagrant 1. I'm not exactly sure what this means. I still

don't understand why Condo got a technical. They were both fighting for the ball equally, Condo was just stronger and pulled him down to the floor. But they were both grabbing the ball. It was a confusing play and I'm not really sure how that landed on that result.

**Q. Who hits the shot in the end? That's got to stick in your craw a little bit, I would think.**

TODD GOLDEN: I didn't really care who took it. I was just more disappointed that they made it. I wasn't thinking about the loose ball double technical in terms of him being the one that made the shot.

**Q. Just in terms of the way the team rallied, though, on the positive, and especially Alex, just the inspired kind of play he had. He finished with 21, seven assists. He was pretty unbelievable I thought.**

TODD GOLDEN: Yeah, he played great, had great spirit. To Condo's point, I thought we competed. We were competing hard, we just didn't play well enough early.

Offensively I thought we missed a lot of close range shots we normally put in. We were a little loose with the basketball in the first half, some uncharacteristic turnovers that you just can't make in a game like this if you want to win. We had two guys step out of bounds in the first half. We threw a ball away that -- unforced turnovers that showed up. And some bad transition defense decisions that led to easy run outs for them.

Obviously when we started applying some pressure full court I thought we were able to change the complexion of the game. We got a decent -- a couple basket lead, and they hit some big shots. And as I said, we had that two-point lead late. We wanted to foul them, force them to make a couple free throws and then have a chance to have the ball with a chance to win the game in regulation. And if we didn't, go to overtime.

We had a feeling they were going to try to end it and try to walk us off and we just did not execute on the last play.

As I told the team, it was a 67-possession game and a lot is going to be made out of the last possession, as it should in a game like this. But there were a lot of things that we did not do in the other 66 possessions that allowed the game to be in that type of situation where they could hit a three to walk us off.

That possession is going to be talked about a lot, but I think when we watch the tape, especially in the first half, we didn't finish well enough around the rim and we did not prevent them from finishing well enough around the rim.

Even though we were only down two, I felt like they controlled the first half.

I thought we did a good job after they got out to that 12-point lead with 14 minutes to go. Obviously we played really well the last 14 minutes, but we dug ourselves too big of a hole.

**Q. You mentioned it already a little bit, but just in the first half, was there something that was a little different that Iowa is doing in their pick-and-roll? Because it seemed like you denied Stirtz pretty well in the first 20 and they still made a bunch of tough twos.**

TODD GOLDEN: Yeah, that's what they did. I think you've got to give credit to Banks. He was really good around the rim. We tried to go vertical. I thought we did a decent job getting up there and trying to prevent him, but he wasn't feeling our verticality as much as I would have expected him to, and so putting the ball in.

And conversely on the other side of the floor, I think we had four or five point-blank lay-ups that we normally put in that just rolled out, a tip in we couldn't get. And it just wasn't going our way. And I was so proud that we were only down two. And they executed really well coming out of the break. They made tough shots. I think they were 6 for 6 coming out of the break.

For us to hold them 14 for 26, we did a better job after that, but we just dug ourselves too big of a hole. It's a tough team to come back on. Obviously we did a decent job to do that, but too little, too late that way.

**Q. The play with 4.5 seconds, it was kind of a desperation, but Xaivian got down to the ball really quick. Was that designed to dump off to Tommy or would you have preferred him to get something up?**

TODD GOLDEN: I would have preferred him to obviously get to the rim on that. I thought he had a good advantage on the guy that was defending him. His defender was not in legal guarding position, so I feel like if he would have kind of jumped back into the body and shot a lay-up, we would have either scored it or got fouled.

But a split-second decision, he's out on the floor. And he obviously played a really good game for us tonight. We've got to live with the results on that, but I thought he did a good job getting around his guy. I would have loved to have seen him go finish it.

**Q. Last play for Iowa's last possession looked like Fland overplayed the pass which gave Stirtz a 3 on 2 down the sideline. Obviously that seemed like that**

**opened up the court for Iowa. Your intention was to foul. Was the thought process to pressure them in the backcourt or did you want them to bring it up the court, maybe foul them earlier? What was Fland's --**

TODD GOLDEN: The idea was to keep the ball out of Bennett's hands, let him throw it to somebody else. So we wanted a face guard and throw it to somebody else and then take a foul and put one of their role players in a pressure situation. But they ran a little kind of double stagger, got him loose.

We just didn't make a good enough play off the ball there to stop him from getting down the court, and then we had to make a split-second decision and we just didn't make the right one.

Again, I think we had a good plan in terms of what we were trying to do, but we didn't execute it very well. They still had to step up and make a tough shot in a big moment, and they did that.

**Q. You touched on it for a second, but can you explain what you said in the time-out around the 14-minute mark. You went on a 12-4 run in about three minutes, Tommy had a three and five total points in that run. Can you explain what you said in that time-out?**

TODD GOLDEN: I'm not sure it was much different that what we normally say with the exception of we wanted to create a little more tempo and try to see if we could make them more uncomfortable offensively. Because they were just getting what they wanted.

We're generally a really great half court defensive team. We have been all year. But they were bothering us in the short role and their bigs were doing a good job finishing at the rim. And so we wanted to make them play a little sped up, and it bothered them a little bit. Obviously they were less effective down the stretch. So maybe we should have gone to it a little bit earlier.

But I think our guys understood that it was about that time that if we didn't figure out a way to make a little headway in terms of the lead, that was going to be tough to come back.

**Q. Normally you're a team of runs. Your biggest run was six points. Playing Iowa basket for basket, that's pretty tough, isn't it?**

TODD GOLDEN: Yes.

**Q. Coach McCollum when he was in here said that late last night he was watching film and saw something and he was, Aha, we could maybe exploit that. Was**

**there anywhere in the X's and O's that you felt they did counter you guys in a different way than what you had seen on film that maybe made things more difficult?**

TODD GOLDEN: Again, I think we did a good job guarding the three-point line. We did a great job on Stirtz. If their plan was to try to finish over our size at the rim, I would live with that any day of the week. That's been a really bad formula for teams all year. We've been one of the best two-point field goal defenses in America. We just didn't to it tonight.

So credit them. I thought they were tough and physical and did a good job finishing around the rim and we did not. We did not do a good enough job preventing them from finishing it, but if that's what they saw and they exploited it, then credit to them.

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