

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: Second Round - Texas Tech vs Alabama

Monday, March 23, 2026

Tampa, Florida, USA

Benchmark International Arena

Texas Tech Red Raiders

Coach Grant McCasland

Christian Anderson

Donovan Atwell

Media Conference

Alabama - 90, Texas Tech - 65

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Texas Tech head coach Grant McCasland and student-athletes Christian Anderson and Donovan Atwell.

GRANT MCCASLAND: What a tough night for our team. Man, Alabama was awesome. I thought they were so much more aggressive on both ends of the floor. They got after us defensively.

They disrupted us, and then they were downhill on every action, and I just thought they were in attack mode. And this one's on me. I didn't have us ready to go.

I told these guys, man, I'm so thankful for Donovan, for Christian, for this team, because they do love each other. They really care about each other. And I just didn't help our team be ready to go. That's on me. I wish I had it back because of how much fun this group is to be around every day and how, every time we challenged them and told them things that we needed to get better, they would bring it. They would work.

Ran into a team that I thought was more determined, that was tougher than we were, and that's always our standard for winning. And I told these guys, games like this make you kind of go, is it worth it? I told them it is. It's always worth giving everything you have, no matter what. Especially being a part of a team like this, with guys that you love and that you care about. I mean, I love this team, and I'm extremely disappointed I wasn't able to do a better job helping us be ready to go tonight.



But give Alabama a ton of credit, man, they were awesome. And they were tougher than we were.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Christian or Donovan?

Q. Donovan, it's going to take a while to get this one out of your system. But how is it going to be to not tank the season you had with this one loss?

DONOVAN ATWELL: Like you said, it's going to take a second to get past this one, but we did have a tremendous season in total. I mean, I felt like we went through so many trials and tribulations throughout the season. We were able to bounce back from those. You know, it sucks to end it this way, but we did have a pretty good season. Yeah.

CHRISTIAN ANDERSON: What Don said. It's going to take a while to get past it, but we've had so many ups and downs during the season and what a great group of guys we had, so many unique, different players than what I've ever played with. No, I think we had a special group of guys, and it's hard to take away from the season we just had, especially with the loss, but yeah, it's going to be an unforgettable season.

Q. Could you take me into the huddles and timeouts, what are you guys talking about as the games -- you're still trying to stay in it but the deficit is kind of big. What are you saying to each other to keep your heads up until the end?

DONOVAN ATWELL: Just fight until the end. Don't let up. Don't let the score determine how we play. We're going to play to the final buzzer. Basically just trying to stay in the fight.

CHRISTIAN ANDERSON: What he said, stay in the fight. Felt like at times they kind of punked us, both offensive and defensively. Just to go out and execute and stay poised, stay solid and try to chip at the lead one possession at a time.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Coach.

Q. I know you won't use this as an excuse, but you're fighting with a hand behind your back without Toppin, correct?

GRANT MCCASLAND: I told the guys in the locker room, when you go through tough times together, you've been on a team -- I was sad for our team that we just didn't have JT there because he's been such a leader for us, such an inspiration and his competitiveness.

I don't know, in life, you get punched. Things are difficult. It's hard. And it's who you get to do it with that makes it awesome.

JT had his surgery, so he obviously wasn't with our team. But it just didn't feel right that he wasn't a part of it, whether it was good or bad. But especially when it's bad, because we love him. We appreciate him. He makes such a difference with our team. But we had the right team. We had enough to play better than we did tonight. I just didn't do a good enough job helping us be prepared.

Q. Just a little bit about Leon coming and giving you guys some energy when you kind of needed it. What does that say to have him kind of be able to do that in this situation?

GRANT MCCASLAND: Yeah, Leon was great. Thinking back to the Arizona game where he got the huge offensive rebound, he made the 3, he played great there. Wouldn't have won that game without him.

I thought Nolan came in, gave some great minutes late. It's fun to see just the fight and the scrap of this group. And we needed to lean on somebody to help get us through some tough times. We had different people step up all season long.

Man, Leon was a great example of that tonight. We needed some grit and some fight. Leon practices hard every day. So he was ready for the moment, and unfortunately, we got into too big of a hole for us to climb out of it.

Q. Your guys kept battling, but, man, Alabama hit 19 3s tonight. Can you just talk about that?

GRANT MCCASLAND: Yeah, well, I was talking to Christian and Don back there. It started with offensive rebounding. We actually made them miss a few times to start early in the game.

Mallette got an offensive rebound, dagger 3, and obviously Wrightsell got hot. But his was kind of on those second attempts also. And then once they saw the ball go in, you can just tell, their pace and attack really grows when those offensive toughness plays happen on offensive rebounds. We just couldn't grab the ball in a stretch there. And it was

impressive. It really was. You look at them and you know you're going to have a tough time on your hands. But the way they did it tonight was different.

Q. You've mentioned how you love this team and now this season's over. But can you just talk about how bright the future is, a lot of great things happening at Texas Tech?

GRANT MCCASLAND: Yeah, I told these guys, man, this isn't going to define who they are as people. It's not. I mean, it's all tough. Nobody loves going through difficult times like tonight.

But, man, I wouldn't want to do it with anybody else. We had some great moments and games. It's really not the time to talk about it. I just love those guys and thankful for them, and thankful for the way they competed all the way through some tough times.

It's always worth it to give your whole heart to them. I told them it's always worth it to give your whole heart to each other, even when it gets tough like this, and you kind of wonder, like, man, how did that happen? Because it did happen fast.

And, but, no, these guys are amazing and a lot of amazing things happened this year that we'll be able to look back on with a lot of gratitude.

Q. How frustrating is it for you sitting there and this tsunami just keeps coming at you and there's nothing you can do to stop it?

GRANT MCCASLAND: There's probably a lot I could do to stop it. I just didn't do a good enough job at it. That's the part that's hard for these guys because I know what we were capable of. And I would love to have played better for Texas Tech, for Lubbock, for the great people of West Texas and all the people that support us, because a lot goes into this, as you know.

Just feel like I let a lot of people down not having our team prepared the way we needed to be to play, but obviously Alabama was prepared and did an awesome job. Nate did an awesome job with their group, and you could tell that they were ready.

We'll learn from this and grow from this. Our program will definitely be better because of it. But I love this team, and genuinely thankful for the way they competed all season long in some tough circumstances.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach.

