

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Round - Miami (OH) vs Tennessee

Friday, March 20, 2026

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

Xfinity Mobile Arena

Miami (OH) Redhawks Coach Travis Steele

Peter Suder

Luke Skaljac

Media Conference

Tennessee 78, Miami Ohio 56

TRAVIS STEELE: Congratulations, to Tennessee. They were very, very physical with us with our offense. They were super, super physical on drives and cuts and just couldn't get loose. I know we scored a little bit there at the very beginning of the game, but, man, it was a physical game. On the other end, Gillespie was unbelievable. We got deep threes, NBA-range threes, and he's got that type of range and make five, I think, in the first half, but he's hard because you have to keep him out of the point. They send him off a lot of off screens and Coach Barnes puts him in a really good position to be successful. 29 points and nine assists, he dominated the game.

Congrats to them, but that doesn't take anything away from our team. Our team has had a heck of a journey. The quality of human beings that we have in our locker room, man, we're everything that's right about college athletics in my opinion. These two are a big part of that, they spearhead it, but I couldn't be more proud of our group.

Q. Peter, before you got into the game, he just said, everything that's right about college athletics, what do you think that means about you and to this program? What's that definition to you about everything that's right in college?

PETER SUDER: Yeah, I'm just going to keep repeating what I've been saying. Culture. I have so much fun playing with those guys and I wouldn't change it for the world.

Q. Pete, Luke, he mentioned it and you just asked



about it, everything that's right about college athletics. For you guys, as a mid-major program, to see the crowd you guys had today, the crowd you had in Dayton, and the buzz you have generated through your season, what can that mean to Miami University? What can that mean for your conference and for mid-major basketball as a whole in a time like this?

LUKE SKALJAC: Yeah, the support this year was special. When I first got here, we didn't have a ton of fans at our games. And then after winter break, every one of our games was sold out at home and away. That was special to be able to play in that type of an environment. Every single became was awesome. It just created a lot of buzz around mid-major basketball, and it's really cool to see.

Q. Guys, I know it's hard after a loss, but historic run for this team. How do you reflect on just the legacy that this unit has left behind at Miami?

PETER SUDER: Yeah, like Coach said, this loss doesn't take away what we have done all year. Our culture and connectivity, the brotherhood we have, we're best friends on and off the court and I think it shows when we play.

Q. A lot has been made about the scheduling and the high point. Coach said the high-major should do more to play mid-majors like you guys. What are your thoughts on that and would you like to play some of the high-major feasible that these games could happen merit often?

PETER SUDER: I wouldn't say they're afraid. It's a numbers thing, an analytical thing. We would like to play them. It's a great opportunity for the mid-majors to go out there and prove they're just as good. It's more of an analytical thing.

LUKE SKALJAC: Yeah, I don't really care who we play. We're going to play the same way, the right way, every single time. Regardless of who is on our schedule, whether it's NAI schools, high-majors, mid-majors, we're going to play the same way.

Q. Peter, last game of your senior season. You have been here for two years. What is it like to or how have you grown and what has the last two years been like



... when all is said, we're done.®

for you?

PETER SUDER: Yeah, I started at Bellingham University the first two years, and I transferred here, and it's been uphill since I came here. The community is showing support. It's like I said, the brotherhood, the coaching staff. It even goes down to the managers and trainers. They've just made me so much better as a person and as a player, and I can't give them enough appreciation for that.

Q. You say we're going to go down in history at Miami and all this. What's the one thing you think people are going to remember about you guys?

LUKE SKALJAC: I would just say the unselfishness in this group. We have so many good guys on the roster. Even the guys not playing are really, really good players. All time, but not many so it's definitely very special.

PETER SUDER: Yeah, just winning a bunch of games together and our brotherhood on the court. People enjoy watching us because we're so connected and unselfish.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks, guys, congratulations on a great season.

Questions for coach?

TRAVIS STEELE: I would say a little bit like what Pete mentioned, I think a lot of it is analytically driven. I think there needs to be adjustments made to a lot of these, whatever you want to say, the analytical data or whatever, the skid pom roadways or the predictive numbers, the net specific needs to be adjusted, right? I think you can always make things better. I don't know when's the last time they made an adjustment to it or if they have. Fans want to see those games. Our fans do, their fans do. They want to see brands. It went viral.

I think Jonathan Holmes e-mails our staff. He's in charge of scheduling, most scheduling is done over the phone. It's frustrating. We didn't finish our schedule until October, mid-October. We didn't play until two weeks later, which is ridiculous. Especially in today's college landscape, you want to stay away from quad two and quad three games. It does nothing for you. Nothing. It's almost like a lose/lose situation if you're them, so I get it.

I think we may have moved up to a quad two, which hopefully, will help us, but if you're in that quad three range, man, good look, you have no choice.

Q. Rick was just in here and said you would win some games in the SEC. What are your thoughts on that?

TRAVIS STEELE: We didn't get a chance to play in the SEC. Give Tennessee credit.

Q. Undefeated regular season, first tournament appearance in 27 years. Just how much has this season meant to you and what's the attitude looking forward look like?

TRAVIS STEELE: I'm obviously very proud of our guys. I'm happy they got to experience this. The rebuild, they saw it from the ground young. One senior, Eli, he was a walk on for us to all of a sudden we went 31-0 in the regular season this year. Proud that they were able to experience all that, but I think the thing that gets lost a lot of times is everybody sees the result but the journey, the day-to-day is even better. I couldn't be more proud of the guys that we have in our locker room, the way that we do things. It's not the result but it's the way we do things. How we do it I think is what makes me even more proud.

Q. You mentioned the rebuild that this team has undergone. After is season like this with 32 victories, how do you look forward and say how does this team be consistent in the success and have this repeat and make the NCAA Tournament once again in the years to come? How does that process look for you?

TRAVIS STEELE: You're hopeful that your culture, the development of each individual player winning, getting a great education will help us keep, retain our players. Not that we're going to bat a thousand for baseball terminology, but we did pretty well last year. We kept six of our top nine guys from last year's team. We won 25 games last year, record in team history. Your retention allows you to keep your culture so you're not constantly starting a new culture every single year. We tried to build something that was sustainable. While everybody else was zigging, we just zagged. Everyone was recruiting from portal only, get old stay old. We're not afraid to have high school guys. We're confident we can develop our young men into really good basketball players. Retention is at a premium in order to create sustained success.

Q. Similar question I asked to the players but you see the crowd that you guys had here traveling after the crowd you guys had in Dayton and the crowd you guys have had throughout the year, this season, for Miami University, for MAC basketball, what does it say about the power of mid-major basketball?

TRAVIS STEELE: I think it shows that it can be done anywhere. Just being honest. From where -- and listen, Miami has a very, very proud tradition. All-time winning-est program in MAC history. Ron Harper, Wally Szczerbiak, Wayne Embry, Ira Newble. All those guys who came back

for games this year which we're appreciative of. But there'd been that gap for about 20 years or so where we didn't have the success that we were used to and we're back now and it just shows that it can be done anywhere. You just got to invest in the administration from coaches to players, all have to pull in the same direction, have the same vision, which I think is very, very important.

It does make me feel proud where we were, but we're not done yet, though. We're not where we were, but we're not where we want to be yet, either. My goal is to get this thing to the second weekend of the NCAA Tournament. Fell short of that goal this year, but we'll be back. I'm very, very, very confident of that.

Q. Travis, you coached a lot of players, Xavier at Ohio State and Indiana. What's the thing with Pete Suder that's going to stand out when you look back, not only him looking back but him out here competing today. Just to things about Suder.

TRAVIS STEELE: Probably can't say enough good things about Pete. Ultimate winner. He has zero agenda. Zero. He doesn't care about himself. He doesn't care whether he scores or not. He'll have a game where he scores 30, and the next game he has 6, and he doesn't care, Which is unbelievable.

In today's landscape, a lot of these dudes are just collecting hollow stats out there to get more money. He only plays to win. He leaves it all out there every day, that's in practice, that's in the spring, playing three-on-three, one-on-one, five-on-five. He's the ultimate winner, man.

Leadership, just everything you want in a young man that guy is. He's a great basketball player, skilled and all that but his intangibles are ridiculous. Best I have ever been around.

Q. Coach, you mentioned before that every team is a part of the culture and tradition at Miami. With this unit specifically, what do you think that legacy is?

TRAVIS STEELE: I would say connected, unselfish. Those guys mentioned it as well. They truly play for one another. They care about each other. Deep relationships. Not surfacey. Just paying to, I'm going to buy this guy and buy this guy from the portal, and put the most talent out there on the floor. That's not what we're going to do. I think they've only strengthened our culture just with that connectivity and it just shows how successful you can be when you have it.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks, Coach. Congratulations on

a great season.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports...

