

# NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Round - Furman vs UConn

Saturday, March 21, 2026  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA  
Xfinity Mobile Arena

**UConn Huskies**  
**Coach Dan Hurley**  
**Tarris Reed, Jr.**  
**Alex Karaban**

Media Conference

UConn 82, Furman 71

THE MODERATOR: All right. We're joined by UConn head coach Dan Hurley, Tarris Reed Jr. and Alex Karaban.

DAN HURLEY: Just thrilled to advance and it was, I think, right before the Big East Tournament, I watched Furman and East Tennessee State on my couch before we left to go play in the Big East Tournament, and I was praying that they weren't in that 15 seed line because just watching them and being familiar with Coach Richey, that guy's one of the best young coaches in the sport, their style of play, their offensive schemes, their culture, their level of play.

I just couldn't say enough about the respect I have from -- you watch nine or ten of an opponent's games and you really study the quality, and that is just a big-time program. He's a big-time coach.

So, thrilled to advance, get the win. Obviously, historic performance by Tarris and then the captain was awesome. We were able to survive some shooting woes from three with the exception of Alex. Thought we got some great shots, but obviously, rebounding was huge and these two guys' performance was huge, but just shout out to Furman. I got so much respect for them and Coach.

**Q. Tarris, amazing game, historic performance, congratulations on the win. Is there anything you think you can take away from this game that you could even improve more so?**

TARRIS REED JR.: Yeah, I feel like I let my foot off the gas a little bit in that second half. There was a period of



stretch where I let a couple rebounds go by, wasn't as strong with the ball. So I feel like playing that complete 40, not losing any bit of focus and trusting in the guys around me, trusting in my teammates. Feel like I could have done a better job playing the full 40.

**Q. You had 31 points, 27 rebounds. You surpassed your season high with 16 rebounds in the first half. What was your mindset coming into this game and what you wanted to accomplish?**

TARRIS REED JR.: My mindset coming into the game is really just to be dominant. This is my last March Madness. My days are numbered in college basketball. Just giving all I got and having fun with the guys around me. We have a special team and special coaching staff. Really just have fun and enjoy the process and enjoy the journey.

**Q. This one is for Alex. This is your fourth first-round game in March Madness. Does it feel any different this time around or are you kind of used to how things go around this time of year? Can you talk me through that a little bit?**

ALEX KARABAN: I think it's a mix of both. I think you're obviously used to it. I've played on the biggest stages of March Madness, obviously, but you still get that nervous energy. You still get that excitement where it's March Madness. March Madness is here, and that nervous energy knowing that you have to get everything you got, and you lose, you're done.

So I think nervous energy, that's exciting, but also never being satisfied knowing that you're playing in March Madness.

**Q. Tarris, you talked about the pressure on you with this team, you're without Silas today, and you needed to respond from the Big East Tournament. Can you talk about the mental preparation that went into this week and have a performance like you did?**

TARRIS REED JR.: Yeah, I feel like for me, knowing that I'm a huge man of faith. And for me, just feeling all these different types of emotions and pressure coming off that tough St. John's game. Honestly, I was just in my room praying, Lord, you have to have it all, it all to Jesus, carry



all this weight, all this whatever you have to for me, really. Really go out there and play great. Play for the guys around me. Play for this guy right here. His days are numbered, too, a legend in a UConn uniform. (Laughter) just go out here and have fun.

ALEX KARABAN: What? Play for UConn, don't play for me.

**Q. For you both, with Silas out tonight, Malachi seven assists, just the one turnover, what did you make of his performance?**

Then, as a follow-up to that, you guys got to experience March Madness before. You guys got to experience March Madness before, he didn't with an injury. Are you guys just happy for him that he got to go out there and experience in the starting lineup today?

TARRIS REED, JR.: Yeah, Mali's my roommate. We talk about that all the time, about how fun it is to go out here and play in March Madness. Knowing that, he had to step up tonight, and he really did his job. All credit to my guy, Mali.

**Q. Alex, obviously, Tarris dominated the first half. Not much else going on for you guys. Only at four at halftime. Did you feel the need personally to step up in that second half? A, you didn't want it to end like that, I'm sure, and B, you he needed help up there offensively.**

ALEX KARABAN: Definitely, I'm always going to trust my teammates, but it's my job being the veteran guy on this team, having the most experience in college basketball. I can't go out like that personally and make sure I step up when my team needs me. That's something I wanted to do this game. That's something I want to do the entire tournament, but I have so much trust and confidence in my teammates, too, knowing how we're going to respond and how Tarris is going to keep playing like this too.

**Q. Alex, Dan mentioned that Furman kind of -- he mentioned how good he thinks Bob Richey is as a coach. What did they do to make it a difficult scout? Do you have a relationship with Alex Wilkins? I saw you go up to him after the game. I know you're both from Mass.**

ALEX KARABAN: Yeah, Furman, they run so many different actions that they do what we do. They have a counter to a certain action, because it looked like the same action with a counter. I think that's what makes them so difficult to prep. When we were scouted, it felt like we were going over a new play every day with how many actions

they've got.

We didn't execute at certain moments what we heeded to as a team, but I'm going to give credit to Furman. They're one hell of a team, and they're an outstanding program.

About Alex, yeah, he's from Mass. He's worked out with my trainer a couple of times. He's from the area. I have seen him a couple of times and seen him grow up and be this type of player and step up as a freshman, especially, being fearless in his first March Madness game. It was awesome to see. I'm happy for him.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you very much. You guys can go back to the locker room. Questions for Coach Hurley.

**Q. Dan, at halftime.**

DAN HURLEY: (Snoring) (Laughter) Wait, wait. Sorry. What time is it?

THE MODERATOR: 10 after 1:00.

**Q. Dan, appreciate you staying. In the first half, you had the physicality advantage but the threes weren't fuelling. How much of a concern, if any, was that part?**

DAN HURLEY: A coach like that, a staff like that, and, again, I really hope -- enjoy having him at Furman. I don't know how much long you're going to enjoy having a coach like that. So everyone at Furman, enjoy whatever time you have remaining with that coach because that coach is going to be coaching at a big, big place soon.

I would say with us, Tarris, we were getting great threes. It was stunning just the opportunities we're getting. I think it was a little bit frustrating, but we were just -- you almost didn't want to wear Tarris out, you know? So obviously, we knew we had an advantage there. They started the game with Johnston on him, which I think really got him going because he had a bigger physical advantage over Johnston than he did over Bowser.

And any time something broke down where we couldn't get somebody downhill driving or couldn't get a clean three from one of our perimeter people, just throw the ball inside and they were smart, started trapping the post. We got great threes, and obviously, I think we were due for a big shooting night.

**Q. A followup to that, Tarris Reed put up the first 30-25 game in the NCAA Tournament in nearly 60 years. Is that something you thought you could take advantage of on tap or with Silas out and the shots falling did you have to call his number more?**

DAN HURLEY: I had a flash back to a New Mexico State where I was like oh, this is a really good team. I was having a little bit of a Buffalo flashback to '22, which -- just because they were so tall. You don't play many 15 seeds or mid-majors that legitimately go 6'10" or 6'11" at the four and five and both guys are skilled. When I saw them at the open practice yesterday, I was stunned how tall Wilkins was, how tall House was, and how tall Thomas was, their wing. Just a really tall team.

We knew it was going to be a hard-fought game. We're missing a starting point guard who would have been, I think, a much better match-up for Wilkins because Silas has size and is a ball hawk and could have made it tougher on him.

And then Jalen Stewart being out, too, who is our sixth man. I have so much respect for the SoCon conference. It's a heck of a league and much respect to Furman. I'm not sure if I answered your question, pan. That was just a word salad of crap.

**Q. Picking off of that, we heard on the TV broadcast, they said Tarris was the game. Can you talk about how he was dominant in the game and allowed your team to go. Can you remember back to the last time you had a player that dominant or have seen?**

DAN HURLEY: In a particular game? Just from a stat line standpoint, no. I would say he has dominated the games. He dominated the St. John's game at home in a similar fashion without the numbers. He was so good defensively, so good on the backboard dealing with a guy like Zubey who should have been a first-team All-American level player. He's had games, but I think that's also why we're on Tarris so much.

I've said it a lot recently, you know? He's a top two or three center in the country. When he plays like that, we can win any game against any team in the tournament when we're healthy.

We can't afford when Tarris just plays like a top 10 or top 15 center in the country. Then we're not an elite team. We don't necessarily need 31-27. But Tarris is a guy that every time he steps on the court should be 20-10.

**Q. So Dan, obviously, 1:00 in the morning. How do you handle the next two days in terms of practice?**

DAN HURLEY: It's beneficial that the game is later on Sunday night. That gives us more time. We played a late game last year versus Oklahoma, and I think they gave us the noon game on Sunday. At least they pushed that

game back. Everyone is going to sleep in, and we have been preparing for Central Florida and UCLA with scouts, and obviously, we got to figure out what our health is here. We got to -- hopefully, one or both of those guys is available is available for Sunday.

If not, obviously, we'll prepare for a great brand match-up. UCLA, UConn. Some pretty good games in here on Sunday, Virginia, Tennessee, UCLA and UConn, pretty good in Philly.

**Q. Malachi, efficient with the ball in his hands, he was open a lot of that second half. You can also just be really happy for a guy like that after this long road, he gets to experience that stage?**

DAN HURLEY: Yeah, the guy is such a good guy and he's got such a great spirit and he's probably a guy that will be on our coaching staff at some point when his year ends professionally. So happy he was able to play 30 minutes. He got tackled right before we left, so he was not even, he was like 80% tonight.

We thought he hurt his knee in a catastrophe on Wednesday at the end of practice. So he was banged up out there playing 31 minutes. The guy's a warrior and showed that New York toughness today. I thought him and Braylon -- Braylon had a bad shooting night, but I thought he did a lot of stuff in the paint, six assists, one turnover and two huge steals for Braylon. But I'm proud of Mali. He's a good egg. Appreciate it, everybody.

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