

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: Second Round - Tennessee vs Virginia

Sunday, March 22, 2026

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

Xfinity Mobile Arena

Virginia Cavaliers

Coach Ryan Odom

Dallin Hall

Thijs De Ridder

Media Conference



reasons that we brought them to Virginia. Their families, it's just really special. I think that's what helped us win overall as much as anything. These guys are just good people.

We talked about it in the locker room. They're going to be connected for life. They're always a phone call away from one another when they're going to be in separate places. But a lot to be proud of overall.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for either of the student-athletes.

Q. For both of you, what led to the come back there in the final six minutes? What got clicking and was it something that you could have clicked in sooner or just the urgency of the moment?

DALLIN HALL: Coach called a good set that allowed us to get downhill into the paint and make some reads and we started making really good decisions and finding shooters and guys stepped up and hit really big shots, so that was something that worked going down the stretch. Credit to them. They're really good defensively and did a good job of taking some things away from us. We had a lot of guys who stepped up all year and they responded in that big moment.

THIJS DE RIDDER: Just same as he said. Of course, the whole game was a close game so just toe-to-toe with each other and became one point in front and made some tough shots, and, yeah.

Q. Dallin, the out of bounds Cal with the challenge, do you know if you touched it?

DALLIN HALL: Yeah, it happened pretty quick. I knew it hit me, barely. Hopefully, unfortunately it worked out the way it did. It was a super fast play, but there was a lot of opportunities and it never comes down the one play, so.

Q. For both of you guys, first year for Coach Odom here. The team has a lot of newcomers but you won 30 games. You won a game in the NCAA Tournament. That doesn't just happen everywhere. What happened that you guys grow over the season to have such -- I know it's not the end that you wanted but how did you

THE MODERATOR: Coach, opening statement, please?

RYAN ODOM: Yeah, just really proud of the guys overall. Tremendous season. They have so much to be proud of. Just really thankful for the five seniors that chose to come to Virginia and lead this team and try to get us back to the NCAA Tournament.

A lot of tears in there. A lot of gratitude. Certainly, rarely does it end like any of us want it to end. You have to just try to put things in their proper perspective, which is not easy to do in moments like that. That was a good game and our guys fought. They just fought and fought and fought. Had a chance there at the end when we took the lead but it wasn't meant to be.

It's unfortunate, but it doesn't take away the fact that I'm proud of these two guys sitting right here, but the entire team, the staff, just everybody in our locker room, GAs, managers, there are just so many people that have impacted in a really positive way. Carla Williams for giving me a chance to be the coach at Virginia. I will forever be thankful for her.

These guys, I don't know that I've ever had this much fun coaching a team. I've been very fortunate in my life. Last year we won a lot of games and that was a fun year. These guys took it to another level. The respect that they have for everyone is evident. I can't tell you how many times I get e-mails from people, just random people that come across these guys in situations and literally send me an e-mail out of the blue just saying, man, I was so impressed with your guys in this interaction. I think that says a lot about them and their character and one of the



come together to have the season that you had?

THIJS DE RIDDER: Just like Coach said, from the very beginning, it was amazing. Even with my years overseas, I never had a group this tight. Also like Coach said, we're going to be brothers for life. It's really painful that it ended like this. We know we have more in us, more games, but it is what it is and I'm very proud that I can call my teammates my brothers for life.

DALLIN HALL: Yeah, I echo what Thijs said. We had two goals at the beginning of this year when a bunch of guys, myself included took a chance on a new staff and a new situation, new school and our two goals were to really connect with UVA as an institution and really connect with one another as a team. We did a really good job with that, I think. The coaches created this incredible family culture where everyone felt like family. That was a big reason why I chose to come play for Coach Odom because I knew what he was about and his values and how he helped people grow as individuals and to grow on the court as well. That's what we did all summer. We spent time bowling, playing games off the court, really competing on the court and became super tight and built some relationship that is will last for my whole life, which is something I'm super grateful for. I look at every one of those guys back in that locker room as a brother. That's why I shed a lot of tears. They shed a lot of tears because this season was something really special and you hate to see it end, but you got to find gratitude for what it was.

THE MODERATOR: All right. We're going to dismiss the student at this time. Congratulations on a great season.

We'll take questions for Coach Odom.

Q. Coach, obviously in the past you've had some experience with Virginia. Think back to that UMBC upset. This is kind of a full circle moment for you. As you look back on your first season here this Virginia, what are the main takeaways you can take forward to improve on the season and make a deeper run in coming years?

RYAN ODOM: Yeah, I think the biggest thing is when you are able to assemble a group of people that have very high character and care about one another and choose the situation for all the right reasons and really develop some shared experiences together, that special things can happen.

This team really bought in from the beginning. They came in eyes wide open and listened and listened to one another and just gradually became closer and closer and closer and closer. When you have that type of togetherness, you

have a really good chance to win. We have some good players. There's no question about it. The depth of this team was the strength of the team overall. It was the character first that helped us achieve the goals of -- Devin Tillis, I wish he were up here. He talked to the team after the loss. He's obviously distraught at that point and just really put things in perspective.

He said, I came here with the goal of making it to the NCAA Tournament, and to do it with you guys was so special. I think they all could relate to that. He literally said, if you ever need me, just call me. I'm a phone call away. That's all these guys. They invested in trying to be the best that they could be and realizing it's going to end at some point. Every team has one life, and unfortunately, ours ended a little sooner than we wanted it to.

Q. What did you accomplish program building in this first year? Obviously, the season it was great. The coaches talk about their first year at a school sometimes being foundational. What did you accomplish program building wise?

RYAN ODOM: Yeah, they understand the value of a Virginia degree and being part of Virginia basketball and the history of Virginia basketball. They added their own legacy to it. I don't know what the exact number is, but it's hard to win 30 games. This particular group found a way to get to 30 and advanced in the NCAA Tournament. We want to continue to advance and cut down nets in our own conference and in the tournament. That's the goal for all teams at our level. This particular group, they represented the school in a really positive way. They set the table and set the bar really high for future teams. I'm really proud of what these guys did.

Q. You mentioned setting the bar high for the teams going forward. Would you say there's any players that are expected to still be on the roster next year that have really taken ahold of the culture that you built that you expect to step into the roles your seniors are leaving?

RYAN ODOM: Yeah, there's no question. We have players up and down the roster. The five seniors, they can't come back. We would love to have some of these guys back, but not in the cards. Like all coaches out there, now begins the process of retaining your players and building the roster again just like we did this past year. We're in a good spot right now, and these guys had a good experience here and love Virginia for all that it has to offer. Our job as coaches, it doesn't ever stop. It keeps going. We'll have to take some time to let this digest, but you always have to go back and evaluate and figure out where we can improve a little bit and all that. I'm excited about

where we're at.

a great season.

Q. Coach, I want to expand on a point that Dallin brought up. One of your goals earlier this season was for the team to immerse themselves in the university. How special is it to see someone like Dallin, even only in his first year take so much pride in Virginia?

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RYAN ODOM: Yeah, it's huge. That was the goal, no doubt about it. I experienced it as a youngster and I wanted them to experience it. This is the first job I ever had where I knew it in an intimate way and knew the place really well. I just wanted these guys to feel it. First tailgate at the football game. What a season they had. Coach Elliot, seeing the fans, cheer for their teams and all the teams on campus. We have so many good coaches on our campus. Our swim team just won the national championship again.

Incredible dynasty. So many -- these guys were at soccer games. They were at football games. They were tailgating. They got from the place and made the most of their time there. I'm really proud of the fact that they did that. Did you have a question?

Q. Ryan, just looking at Tennessee, it seemed like the one thing that they had that no one else had that you played this year, a lot of height. It seemed to throw off your interior game a lot.

RYAN ODOM: Yeah, they definitely have size upfront. They play two five-men basically for the majority of the game. We played some teams, Texas was one, that had that type of size. I thought the guys did a nice job from a rebounding perspective, where did it end up? We held them to three in the first half. They obviously got some more in the second half, but we had 16. That was one of the things that we talked about from an offensive rebounding standpoint, rebounding in general. They're so good at offensive rebound, we can't not go on our side. We're good at it, too. They definitely have guys that can switch, and they started switching at the end of it that are 6'9" and 6'10", and the first half was hurtful for us because we had too many breakdowns. Shouldn't have been at 36 based on some of the things that we did defensively in that game or in that half.

I think we did a little bit better job of getting the game going in the second half. Obviously, they made some free throws down the stretch, but you got to give them credit. They made the plays they needed to make and answered at the end when we made our run, and that's how you win games.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks, Coach. Congratulations on

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®