

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: Second Round - UCLA vs UConn

Sunday, March 22, 2026

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

Xfinity Mobile Arena

UConn Huskies

Coach Dan Hurley

Braylon Mullins

Alex Karaban

Media Conference



UConn 73, UCLA 57

THE MODERATOR: We have Dan, Alex and Braylon up here. We'll start with an opening statement from Coach. Then we'll go to questions for Alex and Braylon.

DAN HURLEY: Just thrilled to be able to beat the program of UCLA's caliber coached by not only Mick who is one of the great coaches in the became, but one of the best staffs, too. Obviously, we're fortunate that maybe their best player doesn't play in the game and we get Silas back, and obviously, Silas gutted it out. It was 20 and we went a little bit over that. This game was all about Tarris's workman-like performance. Braylon stepping up with big-time performance as a freshman in a big spot and just the greatness of the man next to me, should be celebrated at all corners of the media, and he's getting uncomfortable right now.

But yeah, this man's greatness and what he's done in college basketball for four years, literally, outlet should be doing a story on this man and his career in college. No one's been better in college sports the last four years in terms of being a winner. So thank you, Alex.

ALEX KARABAN: Thank you, Coach.

Q. Alex, on that note, heading back to the Sweet 16, how does that feel? What are your initial thoughts going into this game? What were your thoughts?

ALEX KARABAN: It's amazing. Just to be part of the Sweet 16 is a blessing. Every time you win in this tournament, the feeling gets better and better. It's

unbelievable. To be going to the Sweet 16, it's a blessing. I know everyone on the team is super happy and the great thing is we get another week with this team to continue to practice and compete and really just be together.

Q. Alex, you seemed to play with excellent amount of determination tonight, as much as you played in your career it seemed like, especially in that 14-0 run, again, facing the end of a career, you kind of were determined to not let it end, right?

ALEX KARABAN: That's the reality of it. I definitely don't want my career to end so doing everything in my power to help lead this team to make sure that happens and get the win. Do anything possible to make sure I get the win. Whether it's my night or someone else's night, help, contribute, and lead. It's a motivating factor for myself. I ultimately came back here to win. Every time I've had a decision to come back, I came back just wanting to win and help this team out but also just enjoying every second I have in a UConn jersey.

Q. For Alex, what you did, was that something you imposed your will over the flow of the game? What you did in the second half, was that you doing this, stepping up or in the flow of the game?

ALEX KARABAN: I think just the flow of the game, just reading what the defense gives. So much attention is on Tarris Reed today that it opened everything else up perimeter wise. Playing in the flow, playing confidently, trusting my teammates out there and leaning on the experience I have in this tournament, not being shy of any moment.

Q. For both of you, Alex you just mentioned the attention Tarris got. Did them doubling him pretty aggressively, is that something you guys were expecting? Did you work that into the game plan?

ALEX KARABAN: Yeah, obviously. The coaching staff does a terrific job preparing us offensively and defensively. We knew they were going to pack the paint and come from the baseline site for Tarris. We knew what was expected and just making sure we did that right.

Q. Braylon, took you a little bit to get going with your



three-point shot. How did it feel to break that seal and let it fly?

BRAYLON MULLINS: Yeah, you have to just break every game with confidence. Missing my first three shots rattled me a little bit and getting my composure on the bench. All my teammates believe in me. Just coming in, letting it fly with all the confidence in the world. One of them has to go in, right? So happy to see them stick in the first half.

Q. Mali hit you on that first three. What can you say about his impact this weekend? 13 assists, stepping into the starting point guard for you guys?

ALEX KARABAN: Yeah, since he's stepped on campus, he's one of the best passers I have played with, being so unselfish out there he knows he comes in and brings so much energy and plays with a spark. The way he plays really is a reflection of his personality, just all the moves out there, the flashy passes and how tough he is defensively. We need Malachi if we want to reach our goals and he's done a great job stopping up so far.

Q. When you sit next to a winner of Alex's caliber, how much of that reflects in the confidence that you were able to show tonight and game that you have?

BRAYLON MULLINS: I think just having him on this team and having the experience in this tournament. I think he can just take us wherever we need to go, and we all have the confidence with him and he's our leader. We all look up to him. He holds the standard with this program. Unbelievable tonight, so, yeah, keep going where he needs us to go.

Q. Alex, I know you don't want to think about the fact that your career could end with a loss, but does that thought creep into your mind at all? Has it crept into your mind at all?

ALEX KARABAN: No, not at all. I'm so focused on trying to win every single game and trying to do my part for this team to help this team be successful. I don't go into a game thinking what if we lose? That's the worst mentality to have. Think about winning nonstop and just helping this team out.

THE MODERATOR: Alex and Braylon, thanks. Good luck next weekend down in D.C.

We'll start taking questions for Coach Hurley.

Q. You've coached Alex for almost 150 games now, I think. Something like that. Did you see something tonight? Even a little extra, a little different with the

determination? Especially in the second half, you see something a little different and extra tonight from him?

DAN HURLEY: I think what you saw with AK tonight was a guy who I think in some of those late season games, some of those losses that were disappointing for us, he left those games with some -- where he didn't go out guns blazing.

What you're going to see, what you saw or what you've seen in this NCAA Tournament is a guy that's attacking the game. He's aggressively looking for all of his shots. He's working his way to the ball. He's driving the ball. I just think that he learned a lot from that Big East championship game, that game at Marquette where he left those games not going out on his shield the way a player of his caliber should. I think that's the difference. He's not going down without firing all of his bullets.

Q. Towards the end of the first half, you had a couple of guys, a couple of starters on the bench with a couple of fouls, but it felt like Jayden Ross changed the game scoring nine in a row. What did that stretch do for the team?

DAN HURLEY: Yeah, Jayden has been on a great trajectory. I think he's been around 25 minutes a game recently quite a bit. Today, he would have been 25, 27, maybe even higher if he doesn't get in foul trouble. We were struggling defensively. He came in and changed that. The three was huge and the free throws, but this team needs his athleticism on the court, his size, and you just see a player that's really, really developing, coming into his own right now, especially with Jaylin Stewart out.

Q. This is a real good night for the Big East between you and St. John's. What does it mean for the league to have two teams advancing next week?

DAN HURLEY: Yeah, I think it speaks to the quality of what us and St. John's are this year. I think they're a great team. I think we're a great team. I think it was much needed. I think with coming off of a three bid year, obviously, Seaton Hall was close. They did their part in the non-conference. Seat Hall got hurt by the overall league this year. Shaheen did a great job. Shaheen just had no help by the conference this year. He should have been in this tournament based on what he did in the non-con. I just think us and St. John's is two of the best teams in the country.

Obviously, we both hoped a fourth meeting in D.C. It stinks a little bit that they threw us both in the same region. It feels like the combination of St. John's being under-seeded, as well as putting us both in same region. I don't want to get myself in trouble with the selection

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

committee or the NCAA, but I'm not a rule breaker. They can't make stuff up on me. It will be a live building. It's probably a little bit early, but obviously, I think we've got to true to support each other.

It's pretty brutal on Twitter, I think, and socials between our fan bases, but I think we have to try to come together Friday night against our opponent so we can have a blood bath on Sunday.

Q. Obviously, great to have Silas back, but talk about Malachi and what he's done this past weekend. It's been real impressive.

DAN HURLEY: He saved us. He saved us. I already talked about what I think of Furman. Furman's a heck of a team, but 32 minutes with the pressure that their guards put on you, guarding Dent, guarding Clark, guarding Perry. That's not easy. Having to switch on to Dailey because we were switching some things and his toughness, his will to take care of the ball. He got great shots and he was stabilizing. Him and Silas today were great for one field goal between the two point guards, that's where numbers lie. Their impact was huge defensively in taking care of the ball.

Q. You spoke a lot here about the quality of this game. What does it say about the resoluteness of you guys really stepping on the gas towards the end there and put it away?

DAN HURLEY: Yeah, the thing about UConn is I think the first round games are scary. The uniform is heavy in the first round. I've experienced it. I throw out the Indianapolis bubble one. That was a mess. It was a lot of bad things going on there. I'm going to say in '22, just -- it's wearing a UConn jersey in the first round is heavy. When we got out of the first round, we become very dangerous because when Huskies get out of the first round, you start believing that a run is coming. And I just think you saw, obviously, the team feed off of the level that Alex was playing at. When the two-time national champion has that look in his eye and is making that type of shots and plays, that's when the group was able to put the group away.

Q. Earlier in the season, in preconference play, you talked about the defense to the being where it should be. You said UCLA was one of the best three-point shooting teams in the nation. What worked for your defense and how close is your defense for where it needs to be in your eyes?

DAN HURLEY: Part of our problem, and listen, 31-5 is pretty good. Any time you have 30-plus wins, you have had a great year or at least a very good year. We have

had some inconsistency at the defensive end of the court. I think the guys were able to follow the game plan.

Where they were so good on offense is when Dent is probing with the dribble. We were willing to let him be a shooter and more of a scorer tonight and finish with nine assists. But I think we were able to take away some of those threes that they get when he's probing and help starts to get sunk in, and he starts spraying that ball around.

We had pretty good discipline that way. Obviously, we had trouble with Booker making threes. That's a center. But for the post part, the guys were able to blanket the three-point line better than we have.

THE MODERATOR: All right, Coach, appreciate it.

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