

# NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Round - Cal Baptist vs Kansas

Thursday, March 19, 2026

San Diego, California, USA

Viejas Arena

**Cal Baptist Lancers**

**Coach Rick Croy**

**Dominique Daniels Jr.**

**Jayden Jackson**

**Martel Williams**

Media Conference



**Q. I've obviously seen you play in this building once before. Curious if you could just take us through your backstory. You didn't get any offers out of high school and just how that made you feel and what was your journey like?**

DOMINIQUE DANIELS JR.: Not getting any offers out of high school definitely hurt me when I was younger. I was only 18 at the time. So, I had to do a lot of rethinking. I almost quit playing basketball around the time COVID started. I prayed and the Lord told me to keep going. So I kept going.

I did a post-grad year at TMG Prep. Then I ended up at San Bernardino Valley College where I did two years of junior college. That led me to coming to CBU.

So it's just truly a blessing and a testament to the faith that I had in myself, just to not give up on myself and just keep going and keep the faith. So that's a little bit of my backstory.

**Q. For any of you, the WAC was interesting this year in terms of the travel for you guys, I imagine. It's only six or seven teams in the conference. What was it like going through that season, navigating travel to Utah and Texas, and now kind of the irony of maybe getting a game here that's like really close?**

JAYDEN JACKSON: It was definitely interesting. I mean, I'm coming in from a different program over from Northern Arizona, which, the Big Sky, they had their own crazy

traveling schedules as well.

But the WAC was unique just with small amount of teams. So everybody knew what everybody was capable of. We're playing each other three times, maybe four times in a tournament as well.

So it's definitely a unique experience. But it was definitely a lot of fun, especially getting to know some of the other players and stuff like that, getting to band together with my guys more and more, and just playing against some great competition.

**Q. Dominique, following up, (indiscernible), you had a standout season. Your highlights have been going a little bit viral these past couple weeks. How do you plan on attacking the length of the Kansas wings, Melvin Council and Darryn Peterson and company, and really putting Cal Baptist on the map as a possibly darling of the tournament?**

DOMINIQUE DANIELS JR.: Just playing the way that I know how to play, playing well with my guys, finding my open teammates, because I'm not the only guy that can score on the team. We got pretty good guys up here next to me in Jayden Jackson and Martel Williams.

So just being able to figure out the game in real time and just being able to play the way that we play and hunting singles as we always do.

**Q. Dominique, for folks that haven't watched you before, how would you describe kind of your game and your skill set overall?**

DOMINIQUE DANIELS JR.: I like to say I play hard every possession. I don't want to toot my own horn, but I feel like I'm a pretty tough guy on the court despite my size and what other people may think about me as a basketball player. I just compete every possession. I'm a competitor.

**Q. Martel, what stands out about Dominique in his game? Like how would you describe how he plays and what do you like about what he brings to you guys?**

MARTEL WILLIAMS: I think Dominique is a very good



point guard. The fastest player I've ever played with ever. You know that really helps. Like he said, he brings a lot of toughness and leadership to the squad. Helps everybody else's roles become a lot smoother.

**Q. Dominique, I read when you were trying to decide, I don't know whether it was this year or last year, maybe both years, going into the portal, and there's a lot of money out there for a player like you, that you fasted and you prayed. Could you just take us through where you did that and why you did that, and what was sort of the whole outcome of that?**

DOMINIQUE DANIELS JR.: I pretty much just did it on my own time. Being in my own space, no one really around when I pray. Just talking to the Lord, asking him to direct my path or what I need to do to put myself and my family in the best possible position.

And I just ended up staying at CBU. I feel this is where he wanted me to be. Clearly, I mean, we worked hard at what we needed to do to get here today.

Just the prayer and all the fasting, I feel like it definitely paid off in the long run.

**Q. How long did you fast for?**

DOMINIQUE DANIELS JR.: At least two, three weeks.

**Q. Just drank water?**

DOMINIQUE DANIELS JR.: (Nodded).

**Q. For Jayden and Martel, you're obviously aware of his talents. And you're probably aware of the kind of money that he could get if he went elsewhere. What does it say about his character that he decided to stay? And how does that sort of bond the team together?**

JAYDEN JACKSON: It speaks huge to his character, because he's one of the most humble guys I've ever met. He's not flaunting anything or anything like that, and he's always been a team-oriented guy.

It just also shows his competitive spirit because Coach Croy and his staff were able to bring in some guys that were wanting to win and willing to band together and fulfill their roles and stuff like that.

And for Dom to come back and be with this winning program and also be a leader as well in the fight every day, because, again, I haven't seen guys work as hard as Dom ever in my career.

So just to see him every day, seeing his process continuing to build upon even up until this moment right here, it speaks very highly of him.

**Q. Another one about Dominique. It's such a rare thing now for players like him to not leave for money's sake. What does it do to the locker room just to have someone who is so committed to your guys' program and you guys as a team?**

MARTEL WILLIAMS: I think what Cal Baptist has going is really special because bringing back the best player is very critical for most teams.

I think we've built a relationship with the coaches and the staff and they trusted him and they trust all our players enough that you want to come back next year. There's enough love and support that the coaches give you, and confidence, that you want to come back next year, you want to play for Croy the next year. I think that really kind of helps players come back.

**Q. Sorry to keep asking about the fasting, two weeks, how much weight did you lose?**

DOMINIQUE DANIELS JR.: I think I lost about 10 pounds, maybe. I'm not too sure. I didn't really step on the scale or anything. But I think it was about 10 pounds.

**Q. This was during last summer?**

DOMINIQUE DANIELS JR.: The summer before last.

**Q. The summer before last?**

DOMINIQUE DANIELS JR.: Yeah.

**Q. Once you made that decision, you were not -- this summer, it was already made?**

DOMINIQUE DANIELS JR.: Yeah.

**Q. For any of you, first trip to the NCAA Tournament for your school. What's it been like this past week on campus?**

JAYDEN JACKSON: It's been a little chaotic, I'm not going to lie. I mean, not only did we achieve something so great, but also the women's team as well. There's other programs that have been very successful this year as well.

Just to see a winning culture on campus and everybody banding together, and just seeing our fans who we call the Crazies, just coming up to us, saying what's up and just

congratulating us, and how they want to pull up to the game as well, it's been a little chaotic, but it's been a lot of fun. And I can't say enough about everybody over on campus.

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Coach Croy.

RICK CROY: Grateful to be here. It's been amazing, the support we've received from our community, our city, the Inland Empire. Obviously we've been blessed with a bus ride down to compete in San Diego. But we couldn't be more proud of our senior class, the guys in our locker room.

The fact that we're here is a testament to the people that we have in the locker room. We have an old-school group that plays for the front of the jersey. They support each other, and we've had some special moments throughout the season. But this is a wonderful opportunity for our university. So we're grateful to be here.

**Q. You mentioned the blessing of having a bus ride here. I'm curious, when you look at the whole season, playing in a conference where you don't have bus rides -- maybe you do. I don't know how you get to Utah and Texas and everything -- but what it's been like playing in this conference this year in particular with it being so unique and it being the last year?**

RICK CROY: Yeah, really unique. We joke that we earned the bus ride. We feel like we're one of the most traveled teams in the nation. We went on a crazy gauntlet in December. We played six straight games away from home, four of those at Oregon State, at Colorado, and then BYU on what we would call a neutral in college basketball, but it was in Salt Lake, and then finished up playing at the University of Utah.

We made that trip and put that schedule in place to prepare us for moments like this. We were a well-traveled team. We went through some storms. We had a crazy trip to start conference.

The WAC decided to put us at Utah Valley on a Monday night. On a Thursday we played in Arlington, Texas and we finished that trip and sat at Tarleton State on a Saturday. We went 0-3. We lost the final game in overtime.

We flew back home after being on the road eight days, and I knew then our team had a chance because no one pointed fingers. Nobody made any excuses. And we were determined to find our way here. And we won 15 out of 17 games to get here.

**Q. Given all that, you've got players returning, guys you are able to bring in obviously. Is it a challenge when you're recruiting to a difficult situation like you guys had this year?**

RICK CROY: Yeah, it was a very unique conference setup. You played everyone three times. Some of those were advantageous. Sometimes you were playing a really strong team and you had to play them twice at their place.

But, ultimately, it prepared us for some tough environments. We got better. We put a tremendous amount of focus on improving throughout the season because we've been doing this long enough to know you've got to win the conference tournament.

And although we had a great regular season -- we went undefeated at home, we had some great moments -- our goal and our mission was to win the conference tournament. We talked a lot about process, a lot about improvement. And thankfully, we had the maturity in our locker room to achieve that and go do that.

**Q. How did you find Dom? Did you know about him because he was down the street? And how did you recruit him?**

RICK CROY: Amazing story. He did not have a single Division I scholarship out of high school. He played in the Inland Empire, Heritage High School. He was just a little guy. People underestimate this piece of Dom. He's about 185 pounds at five and a half percent body fat, and he is a dynamo. He packs so much power in that frame.

But he wasn't that coming out of high school. He had to get organized academically. It was right in the middle of the pandemic. He ended up at a prep school in Las Vegas. It wasn't a great experience.

He loves his family, loves his church. He came back home and enrolled at San Bernardino Valley College to play for Quincy Brewer, a legendary community college coach at San Bernardino. And he went and became two-time state player of the year.

We jumped on him early -- actually, late in his freshman year. And we just felt like we knew what he was about. His Christian faith, his love for his family, we felt he could be a great fit at our university, but also in our program.

We have been able to max our point guards, whether it was Milan Acquah or Taran Armstrong. And we've had a great run of helping point guards compete at the highest level. And we just thought the timing was perfect. We had to beat out some big universities.

But I think more than anything, it was Dom's character, the fit at CBU, all those things. It was just God's timing. And he came to our university. We've been very fortunate to retain him because he's incredibly loyal. And I think last year, when we finished the year, it was like unfinished business.

We lost in the semi to Grand Canyon. We felt like we were close. And if we could get the right guys back, we had a chance to be where we're at today.

But he's the leader. The belief that he's created in everyone on our team, I would say in our region, because there's so many kids that he's inspired because of his size.

He's not the 6'7" prototype. It's, like, people come watch this guy play and they go, man, I could be great too. And he does it with such character. It's been really amazing to be around.

**Q. When you have a guy who is that committed to his faith, do you recruit him on the basketball court, or do you also recruit him in his church?**

RICK CROY: Yeah, we knew early on that Dominique was not going to miss church on Sunday. He plays the guitar at church. And his dad's on the keys and the drums. Grandma's playing the organ. I mean it's an amazing faith family.

We knew that that was a good fit at CBU with us being a Christian university. And so we made sure he knew that he could be himself at CBU. And he could lead with his faith. That's exactly what he's done.

**Q. Looking forward to tomorrow night, talk to me about going against Bill Self and all of his accolades. And more importantly, how do you plan to attack them and potentially shock the world?**

RICK CROY: Yeah, I mean, first thing is when the draw came out, everyone -- I should say many people have suggested, well, Kansas has been up and down or Jekyll and Hyde.

I told our team right away, this is one of the great college basketball coaches of all time. He's going to have his boys ready to compete. I mean, the best version of Kansas will be here in San Diego, and that's what we're preparing for.

There's so many things that they do well, but I think one of the things that can help us compete is staying assignment-driven. Our group's been great and elite with preparation.

I think you can reduce some of the pressure if you're just constantly talking about what you've gotta get done. And against Kansas, there's so many things that you have to do. I mean starting with Council on the outlets, he's as fast at that spot as we've competed against.

We've got our hands full. But it's a great challenge. And when there are great challenges, that's when great things can happen as well, and great opportunities are borne from great challenges.

We're excited. Obviously we have full respect for Kansas basketball, for Coach Self, for their players, but we couldn't be more excited about the opportunity.

**Q. You mentioned opportunity, respect for Kansas and the challenge of being here. If you do win tomorrow, do you consider it an upset?**

RICK CROY: Well, I would put it like this. Our group's been great at preparation. I would say elite. We talk about this all the time. Be elite with our preparation and be elite in competition.

We're trying to outcompete Kansas. We're not trying to shock anybody. We're trying to outcompete them. There's things that we have to do. They present tremendous challenges.

But, yeah, on paper, right, it's an upset. And we know that there are things that are put on paper but then you've got to go on the court and compete.

We have a confident team. We've worked through some storms. We've tried to learn from our experiences. I mean, we got smacked around pretty good at the Delta Center by BYU. We've been in some big scraps. Obviously, this is a bigger stage, but we have a confident team, but there's a lot of things we're going to have to do well.

**Q. So much has been made about Darryn Peterson's season for Kansas. Just what's your perspective of what he's gone through and just the challenge he might present for your team?**

RICK CROY: Amazing player. I mean, I think players that are in that rare air, that have been identified at such a young age as being guys that can be top 10 picks. We went against Dybantsa at BYU.

There's always been a lot of pressure on those guys, but I don't think there's ever been more pressure than there is today in 2026.

And obviously he's had some physical struggles, that the only people that know the details of that are, it's going to be kept internally at Kansas. But when you watch him on film and he's healthy and he's playing, you can see quickly why he's been identified as a number one pick.

I mean, he's a very, very skilled player. Obviously he's a tremendous athlete. But I just have such respect for those guys. You can tell -- we believe in the 10,000-hour theory. This guy has put in 10,000 hours on his game because when he's open, he makes shots. And when you force him to put it down on the deck, he can make a lot of plays.

He's an elite player. We think we're going to see the best version of Darryn Peterson. And we're going to have to be really switched on to make things tough for him.

**Q. Dom was just talking about how he fasted for two weeks to help make his decision. Obviously you understand the spiritual side of that. But as a coach, were you aware he was doing that? And at what point do you try to intervene and try to understand the physical component of that for a high-level athlete can be quite dangerous?**

RICK CROY: Yeah, Dom is -- the one thing with Dom that we've tried to do is make sure he knows that we support him in his faith. It's been so important for him because he, in a different realm, has had pressures on him.

I'm sure Darryn Peterson's had a lot of pressures coming from externally, extrinsically that none of us -- we would have a hard time associating with.

Dom's a guy that, he knows who he is, but he's faced pressures, in terms of leaving in this climate, going out, accessing other opportunities, a lot of people pulling at him. He stayed true to who he is, what he believes in, and he very much wanted this moment. But at the same time it was never about him.

So it's been incredible. So I didn't know it was two weeks. If I knew it was two weeks, I maybe would have intervened. But I do know what's most important to him and that's what's fueled his journey.

**Q. Another one about his fast. What does it say about his discipline, for that to be the way that he wanted to make that decision, to do something pretty extreme that most athletes wouldn't even be able to do?**

RICK CROY: Yeah, I mean, Dom's amazing. He is an incredibly disciplined person. I mean, from how he spends his time, to what's important to him, to his commitment -- there's been times where we get back from a road trip at

1:00 a.m., really, on a Sunday, but from a Saturday night game. It's not a question of whether or not he's going to Church on Sunday. He's going to be at Church on Sunday with his family, in Compton. He's going to make the drive to Compton, and he's going to lead at Church.

He's going to lead in our locker room, he's going to lead in our university and he's going to lead at Church. He's not going to listen to what everyone else is saying. He's going to do what he thinks is right. And our guys feel that, and that's where he's been such a great teammate, such a great leader. But he knows what fuels him.

**Q. Being a mid-major coach, how rare is it for someone of his caliber to not leave for money's sake?**

RICK CROY: It's very rare. And we don't take it for granted. I would put it like this, because I'll come back to his belief, and this is what I really appreciate -- and we'll continue to try and do this moving forward; I mean, we've learned from him. I think 10 years ago, or even five to seven years ago, when you met with recruits, the number one question for the coaches was, how do you help me become a pro?

And you had to answer that question as a coach and you had to do it effectively. And you had to be able to do it at the mid-major level, and I'm sure had you to do it at the high major level.

Where that paradigm shifted is that now oftentimes it's not how do I become a pro. It's how do I make the most money that I can possibly make during this four- to five-year window of college.

What I would say is I think the best ones, the very best players, they still believe they can play in the NBA. Like, I believe Dominique Daniels Jr. will play in the NBA. I think he believes that. He'll find his way. I would never bet against him.

So I think the best ones are still focused on their development, how they max out as players. Dom needed to demonstrate he could grow as a leader, as a vocal leader, as a passer, as a defensive player. And I don't think Dom would have gotten lost in the shuffle anywhere. I think he could have been great at any university.

But in our program, he knew the level that we believed in him at, how we were going to utilize him, what we were going to ask him to get better at, what we were going to do demand from him.

And his mission is I want to play at the highest level. This is not about the next four or five years; I want to play

professional basketball for 15 years.

And I think for us, the more we can find guys that are interested in that at the mid-major level -- because they're out there; you just gotta be exhaustive in hunting them -- that's a great example for guys, because we've had a lot of NBA teams call about Dominique Daniels Jr. because he's that special as a competitor.

**Q. Coach, both men's and women's teams made the NCAA Tournament. What's the relationship between those two teams, and how exciting a time is it at Cal Baptist today?**

RICK CROY: Incredible relationship. I just texted with Jarrod Olson today. I joked last week. Coaching with Jarrod as your counterpart is tough. It's like coaching with Geno.

I'm sure Dan Hurley feels that this guy is a legend -- that's all they do is win. But the programs, the players, the sweat equity that they put in the gym. We obviously practice in the same facility, compete in the same facility.

There's just a momentum, I think, that comes from both programs winning, both programs having high standards, the university having high standards. There's great connection and there's a great shared appreciation.

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