

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

Thursday, March 19, 2026

San Diego, California, USA

Viejas Arena

**Kansas Jayhawks**

**Coach Bill Self**

**Darryn Peterson**

**Flory Bidunga**

Media Conference

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Flory Bidunga and Darryn Peterson.

**Q. Darryn, there's been a lot of circulation surrounding you within the media. How do you plan on blocking out the noise so you all can go on a run in this tournament?**

DARRYN PETERSON: I think I've been doing it all year. Just focus on what I can control, and that's being a great teammate for my teammates. And just doing whatever I can to help my team win.

**Q. Darryn, obviously there's been a lot of expectations of you, people talking about you potentially being the number one pick in the upcoming NBA draft. How have you always dealt with expectations through your life for pressure moments like this, this is the biggest stage in college basketball?**

DARRYN PETERSON: Just trusting the work. I feel like this is my destiny, like, my purpose in life. I've been hooping my whole life. So nothing really changed.

**Q. Darryn, this is your first NCAA Tournament. How excited are you to be here and to play in this?**

DARRYN PETERSON: I'm super excited. This is something I've dreamed of since I was a little kid. To be a part of it this year is huge for me and my family.

**Q. For both of you, to put this team to the test in this tournament, we've seen a lot of versions of Kansas basketball. How excited are you to play in this**



**tournament and show how good you can be when it really matters?**

FLORY BIDUNGA: We're really excited, just need to take one game at a time and have to respect everybody.

**Q. Flory, second appearance at the tournament. What do you take from last year to kind of build into this season?**

FLORY BIDUNGA: I really want to make it to the first week, I would say, because last year it wasn't the case. But I have a pretty good group with us. And I think we work hard enough to make it past this week and then look for the second week.

**Q. Darryn, so much said about, are you going to play, are you not going to play all season long. What would you like to say to people about that situation? Is there just stuff that people don't know behind the scenes that's happened with you?**

DARRYN PETERSON: I kind of said it before. If I had the ability to play in the games that I missed, I would have. It just wasn't smart at the time. I really didn't know what was going on with my body. But once I got it figured out, I was out there and did what I could.

I know there was like a clip where I asked Coach to come out of the game and stuff. It was just me saying, like the cramps, it's starting, I'm going to need one. I ain't going to be able to go play defense. That's the main thing. If I was able to be out there I would have been out there for my teammates and for my coaches.

**Q. Darryn, you mentioned after the Houston game, you were hospitalized due to a full body cramp. Throughout this season in struggling with those consistent cramps, how have you sort of prepared yourself mentally and physically just throughout the season?**

DARRYN PETERSON: Just trying to be optimistic through it all. Like I said before, people were saying a lot of crazy stuff about it, making up rumors. But, yeah, I leaned on my teammates, leaned on my coaches.



We knew what was going on in the locker room. So I really didn't care what was going on. But physically, did a lot of stuff. Mentally, just like I was saying, being optimistic.

**Q. Darryn, how hard was it day to day to block out the social media noise? It's hard because it's everywhere. But how was it day to day?**

DARRYN PETERSON: It wasn't super bad at first, but then I feel like it kind of went global for a little bit. Like after the all-star break, it was on ESPN and everything. That's a part of the game. I knew what I was getting myself into coming to Kansas. This is the life that I chose for myself. So every part of it I have to accept.

**Q. Do you think it taught you anything, just about how to deal with media and being in such a big spotlight, like how to handle all that?**

DARRYN PETERSON: Yeah, I probably will get injured again in my future. So just to be able to go through adversity, and now I know I can get through it.

**Q. Darryn, how has Coach Self helped you deal with all this adversity, how has he helped you block everything out?**

DARRYN PETERSON: I would say he's challenged me consistently. I think the biggest part was he didn't change how he coached me. He didn't feel sorry for me because people were on me. He still coached me the same and still was on me like I'd been out there every day. So I respect him and appreciate him for that.

**Q. Focusing on your actual assignment tomorrow, what's the key on attacking Cal Baptist and Dominique Daniels?**

DARRYN PETERSON: Great team. Approach it like it's the championship tomorrow. So that's what we're going to do, try to get the win.

**Q. Darryn, with your cramping issues, it's unseasonably hot here. They're setting records every single day. I'm sure you've not been in this heat probably since last summer. Are you taking any extra precautions because of that? What's your concern level that the heat could trigger?**

DARRYN PETERSON: No concerns anymore. I've been, the last I don't know how many games in a row, I've been getting through without any issues. I feel like the cramps are behind me. I've been fine.

**Q. Flory, talk about just the importance of the bigs and**

**your guys' presence in tomorrow's game, maybe getting that high-low working again with you and Bryson?**

FLORY BIDUNGA: I feel like it's going to be a big part of our game. I feel like me and Bryson, we really need to show up. I feel like it gives our team some momentum when we're going out pretty fast. So just like be able to play big, I feel that will help our team towards a victory tomorrow.

**Q. Obviously, Darryn, you're a fantastic player, highly recruited. What do you know about Dom Daniels on the other side? He has kind of a different story, a different path, but he's been doing a pretty good job putting up points this season for those guys.**

DARRYN PETERSON: I didn't hear it.

**Q. What do you guys know about Dominique Daniels on the other side? And what have you seen from him on film?**

DARRYN PETERSON: Dominique Daniels is a great player. Just be prepared to guard everybody. I think we're watching film and watching the scout. Just prepared.

**Q. How frustrating, if at all, has it been for you guys as teammates to have to hear all these narratives about your team when you don't really have control over that?**

FLORY BIDUNGA: I think the biggest thing is people are going to want to say whatever they want to say. And our side, we just need to be locked in and focused on what's good for us.

As an inside circle, we know what's going on. People outside don't really know. So just don't pay attention on all those narratives outside.

**Q. Your coach has so much experience in this tournament. Is there one piece of advice that's really stood out that he's given you guys heading into the rest of the month?**

FLORY BIDUNGA: Obviously we have been on, you guys know, some ups and downs. But obviously March is the time of the year that we need to be our strongest ever.

I feel like, as a team, we just figure out each other. I feel like we're closer to becoming a team right now. So I feel like right now it's actually the most important time.

So he has been telling us that we need to be our identity

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toward this.

So I'll probably just say, for right now, Bill Self told us that our identity needs to talk for us. So I don't know if that makes sense, but ...

**DARRYN PETERSON:** I think the biggest thing for me was he told us it's 0-0 now. It's a new season. Everything that happened preseason and during the season, it's over with now -- the wins and the losses, the ups and downs. Like, it's a clean slate now. It's a new season. Let's go win six in a row.

**THE MODERATOR:** We're joined by head coach Bill Self.

**BILL SELF:** I think this is the first time I've done a media room or center outside the arena. So that's nice. But we're thrilled to be in San Diego. We're thrilled to be in the tournament.

We obviously didn't finish the way that we hoped we would, but still it's a new lease for everybody. We couldn't be more excited being here and having an opportunity to move forward.

**Q. We just left the locker room and the guys appear to be relaxed and kind of looking forward to tomorrow. Do you sense they are?**

**BILL SELF:** I think there's 68 teams in the field that are looking forward to the next day and the opportunity to play in it. And our guys are no different.

We had a really good, spirited workout just a little bit ago offsite. They seem to be in a very good frame of mind right now.

**Q. You mentioned after the loss in the first round last year that you were really looking forward to next year's team. It's now next year. How much more well equipped is this team than last year?**

**BILL SELF:** I think talent-wise, we're definitely more equipped. We're more athletic, those sorts of things. We've got a player that is a true potential difference-maker.

Unfortunately, we haven't had him at full speed the vast majority of the year. But he tells me -- and I believe it and I see it -- that he's moving and this is the best that he's felt all year. I'm excited about moving forward with our full complement of guys closer to 100 percent.

**Q. How do you sort of prepare for a guy like Dominique Daniels on Cal Baptist?**

**BILL SELF:** Well, he's good. And he can score on anybody, any level. He's capable of getting 30, 35 any night. You've got to limit his touches.

The thing that I think is so interesting about him is he is so downhill and he's a good shooter, without question. But his speed and strength and shiftiness makes it hard to switch, makes it hard to hedge without being split. He can just put a lot of pressure on the defense every possession.

We've played against some good scorers this year. And obviously he's different from a size standpoint from A.J. or something like that. But he's a real guy. He can score the ball.

**Q. I was wondering how has having G in practice as sort of a scout team version of him helped with that preparation?**

**BILL SELF:** Yeah, G was him in practice. He can't simulate it as apples to apples, but he did a good job. We basically told him, if G gets a shot off, whether it goes in or not, it's not good enough, because we've got to limit his good touches and his good looks.

**Q. How have you and the rest of your coaching staff helped Darryn this year recover from his cramps both physically and mentally?**

**BILL SELF:** We haven't helped physically. We've got a medical staff that obviously does that. We've talked a lot about it. And to be candid, I feel like he's made improvement basically week-to-week, maybe just not at the rate that he had hoped and maybe we had hoped it has been.

But the end result is he's good now. So the biggest thing is, hey, Darryn, you're going through some stuff and you're going to go through more stuff in life and in your future. There's still an opportunity to get the last laugh, but you have to prepare every day for that later on down the road. And this is the later on down the road.

**Q. Have you ever heard of Dom Daniels before? He's kind of a West Coast --**

**BILL SELF:** Yes, I have, but not to the level that he deserves to be heard about.

No question heard about. You look up stats, the best scores in the country and all that and certainly he is on that list. But after studying him and knowing coaches in the league, his league that have competed against him, it's very impressive what he's done. He is a competitive pit bull that can score the ball.

**Q. How important are the bigs going to be specifically in this game on both defense, and then offensively getting Bryson and Flory working that high-low?**

BILL SELF: You're not going to guard Dominique with one guy. So on ball-screen action, the big needs to become a defender on him. If you switch, it obviously does. So they're going to be so important.

But the other thing is you can get hung up on him on their perimeter, but they're what, plus seven and a half or plus eight rebounding the ball and they've got depth inside. So our bigs gotta play big against their bigs.

**Q. As you look at this Cal Baptist lineup, is there anybody besides Dom who jumps out to you as somebody who can make an impact tomorrow?**

BILL SELF: I would say their size at the 4 and 5. You can go out there and watch them just stretch or shoot-around and their standing height is every bit as much as ours. So they play -- they're not big on the perimeter with who they start, but they're certainly long and big inside.

I'd say that's something that, in that particular league, I would have to say it would be hard for other teams to match up at the 4 and 5 from a height standpoint with those guys.

**Q. I know you guys need to win a game first, but what have you thought of Zuby Ejiofor as far as his development, and were you surprised at how far he's come at St. John's?**

BILL SELF: I love Zuby. I'd say pleasantly surprised when you're talking about All-American and Big East Player of the Year. But not surprised at all that he's a pro. Not surprised at all that he's done extremely well. Rick was obviously a great fit for him.

I've enjoyed watching him grow, be a complete player, because when you talk about complete, you're talking about a skill set, posting, drawing fouls, using both hands, passing, stretching it, blocking and altering.

When you lead a team that good in four major categories, you know you're a good player.

**Q. You mentioned All-American. He was an honorable mention. He wasn't named on any of the three AP's All-American teams. Was that surprising to you?**

BILL SELF: Yes, the Big East Player of the Year absolutely does surprise me. To me, when I say

All-American, to me he's an All-American. You lead the 10th-rate team in the country in scoring, rebounding, assists and blocked shots, you're playing at as high a level as anybody. Am I right on those stats?

**Q. Everyone in New York was surprised that he wasn't on it.**

BILL SELF: But he leads the team, yeah, so you know obviously he played to a ridiculously high level.

**Q. We've been asking you a lot about Dom Daniels. He's like a guy who didn't go in the portal. Not like a four-year at the program guy, but like a guy who kind of stayed. Do you have any comment on that kind of player? Is it just, you know, that it's rare now and we should just admire it while it's here, or is that something you'd like to see more of going forward?**

BILL SELF: Well, I think Cal Baptist obviously, I'm sure, loves his presence on campus. But probably should even -- that's probably understated on how much he's meant to that particular program and school, because what you said, you just don't see it very often.

And I don't know, from an NIL standpoint, where he's at or whatnot. But certainly loyalty was very, very important to him, or he could have gone somewhere else and probably, at least from an NIL standpoint, got a bigger paycheck. I think it's very admirable.

**Q. Can you talk a little bit about how everything Darryn has dealt with this season has, like, improved his mental game and how he's gotten tougher mentally and how that might pay dividends later on in his career?**

BILL SELF: Well, I actually think that everybody goes through stuff and the best players go through stuff. It can be anything from an injury to how people are playing them or what a narrative is and how he's perceived or whatever.

I think there's been a lot thrown at him. I think he's handled it as maturely as a 19-year-old kid can. But it won't be the last time that something happens. So hopefully he can draw from this to help him down the road as well.

**Q. You guys have won 11 games when Melvin scores more than 15 points. Can you just speak to what he adds to the team at this point in the season?**

BILL SELF: Well, Melvin's our energizer. He's our personality. People feed off his energy and personality probably more so they do on anybody else on the team.

And when you talk about portal gets, to me, he's probably about as good a portal get for us as anybody's had as a portal get because without him, especially not having a Darryn full speed, he's saved us multiple times.

**Q. You have an assistant on your staff by the name of Tony Bland, played and coached here at San Diego State. Has he told you anything about playing here at Viejas and/or playing under Steve Fisher?**

BILL SELF: Absolutely. You know, I know Steve well. He's an Illinois guy, as far as growing up. We played against San Diego State a couple times since he's been there, and, of course, played them when he was at Illinois, too, in the tournament.

But, yeah, Tony speaks very fondly of coach Fisher and his family, as they do of him as well. You know, to hear Tony tell it, he's probably the greatest guard that's ever played here, to hear him tell it. So, no, he didn't say that.

But he's very proud of his alma mater and very proud of the relationship that he has with everybody here.

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