

# NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Round - Long Island vs Arizona

Friday, March 20, 2026

San Diego, California, USA

Viejas Arena

## Long Island Sharks

## Coach Rod Strickland

## Mason Porter-Brown

## Greg Gordon

### Media Conference

Arizona - 92, Long Island - 58

ROD STRICKLAND: This is a game, we knew what we were up against. We knew it was going to be a tough game. That team is predicted to win the tournament. So we knew it was going to be tough.

I think the lights might have hit us a little bit in the beginning. I thought we played a competitive, really competitive second half.

But I've got to give Arizona a whole lot of credit. They've got a great team there. They're a big team, big bodies, physical. But I thought we had a hell of a second half. I was just happy to see us pick up the pace in the second half.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Greg or Mason?

**Q. Greg, what are you going to remember about this year? Obviously it ends today, but you had the best season LIU has had in 14 years, what are you going to remember about this season?**

GREG GORDON: I'll remember the moments with my teammates, my coaches, all the tough times and all the times that I remember that I wanted to, like, quit. And we just never caved in.

I'll remember everything. This is an unforgettable season for me. It means the most. It means the world to me.

**Q. Greg, it's easy to kind of remember this season for the way it ended, but what do you want other people to**



**know about what you guys did this season and beyond just like this last game?**

GREG GORDON: All the credit really goes to Coach. I mean, when I tell you he believed in us, I mean, like, he truly believed in us. He never once lost faith in us. That goes for Brent, Coach Dalmar, Coach Brionne, Coach J.D., Coach Josh -- I'll name every single one -- Coach P and Justinian.

Those are the guys, they set the foundation for us and they allowed us to elevate. And they truly stored belief and faith in us that we could do it. I'm just excited to see what happens next year.

**Q. That moment for Eddie, when he scored that 3 off the backboard, what did that mean to him, and what did he say after? How does it feel for you as teammates to see that?**

MASON PORTER-BROWN: I feel like it means a lot. I see Eddie, Eddie comes in every single morning. He works so hard. So to see like him to get that shot and to make it, it means a lot, especially on this big stage. He really deserved that.

GREG GORDON: Definitely did.

**Q. Greg, when you entered the transfer portal, what was it that the coaching staff presented to you that made Long Island attractive in terms of laying out the vision of what the program could be?**

GREG GORDON: When Coach Dalmar first presented the opportunity to me, I 100 percent at the time not on board. I didn't know who Coach Strick was. I didn't know how he was as a person or anything.

And they kind of presented me, like, just a genuine relationship. Like, they told me from the jump that they'll be honest with me. They'll never sugarcoat anything with me.

No, they'll be rough and they definitely were, but they always kept it real with me. And for that I appreciate them to the moon.



**Q. Learning who Coach Strickland was, was there ever a point during that process when you pulled up his Blazers highlights on YouTube?**

GREG GORDON: On, yeah, definitely, definitely. He actually owes me a one-on-one when we get back to New York.

**Q. What did it mean to see the LIU fans make the cross-country trip? And what does that mean to you and the program you guys have built to what it is currently now?**

MASON PORTER-BROWN: I feel like it means a lot. LIU's very far away, so for them to just come all the way out here, especially we build a really strong fan base, it really means a lot. And the move we did with fins up, it means the world.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Coach.

**Q. Rod, for you, personally, you obviously want to win every game. But to get the program back on this stage -- kind of can you talk about the significance of what you guys did this year moving forward?**

ROD STRICKLAND: I mean, I told the guys after the game, like, basically you know, we should be proud. I think we know, I took this job four years ago with three wins, and now we're at 24. But we kind of made -- we made it exciting.

If you go from the beginning of the year, just our fan base, how many people walked in that gym to those last couple games, like, you could just see the turnaround. I'm excited for the future.

But, honestly, more proud for these guys. We hate that it ended the way it ended. I think we walked in there really believing we could win, especially compete.

But we was up against a juggernaut -- and I'm going off on a tangent, excuse me.

But we always said, through this whole year, in the NEC and even in non-conference, we always said that we wanted to defend the 3-point line, and we wanted to see how many teams could make more 2s than us.

For the most part, that worked. But then you walk in here with a team, physical, big, we found a team that could beat us making 2s. And we're not a 3-point shooting team, so they got the back end on us.

I think we also, even in the beginning -- I know I'm going on

a tangent, but I want to talk this game because it's in my head, because I feel so good for these young people, and I want them to understand why things happen and why this happened.

We played in the NEC, and we played a style. And we came in here and we tried to play that style, but we were playing against the top team in the country in length. And I think we started out with nerves and making some questionable decisions, and it kind of steamrolled.

But I'm proud that the second half that we came out and we fought because I spoke to Stan Van Gundy before yesterday, and the first thing he said was you guys play hard. And that's what I wanted to see. I just wanted to make sure we played hard and we went out the right way.

That's a great, great, great Arizona team. Look forward to seeing them, I'm sure, move further.

But I'm super proud of what we've accomplished, as a group, my staff, but more importantly, these players. This is a moment, a lifetime moment. They're going to always remember this.

Whenever they go back to New York or they come back to LIU, people will remember them for building a culture. And so I'm proud and I'm happy for them for that.

**Q. Three wins to 24 wins, an incredible journey. You've had such an incredible basketball odyssey yourself. How special has this chapter been for you, for the program, bringing winning back to LIU and to New York where you're rooted and where you're from and that special history?**

ROD STRICKLAND: Yeah, it's a big deal. It's one of the reasons why I took the job. Sat down with Dr. Cline and had a conversation about LIU and what we wanted to do moving forward.

But it's New York City, too. It's home. My mother traveled with us on this trip. My 90-year-old mother gets a chance to see us play every day. I'm from New York. So it's special.

Like I said, going from three wins to 24 wins, I think I've done a lot in my basketball career -- I mean, a lot in basketball during my career in different areas. So it was a personal growth and a personal challenge to be able to conquer something else.

So me becoming a head coach and being able to move the environment, I'm proud of that and still growing, still looking forward to the next chapter, still looking forward to next

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

year, looking forward to being better and better as a coach,  
as a leader.

But this has all, you know, this has been everything for me.  
This opportunity, I appreciate it. And it's been full of  
growth and full of wins, full of triumphant and success and  
building. So I'm happy and I'm proud for that.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

