

# NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Round - Utah State vs Villanova

Friday, March 20, 2026

San Diego, California, USA

Viejas Arena

**Villanova Wildcats**

**Coach Kevin Willard**

**Bryce Lindsay**

**Duke Brennan**

Media Conference

Utah State - 86, Villanova - 76

**Q. Bryce, I guess you knew you would need to make a lot of shots to win this game. Did you take as many 3s as you expected to take? And personally for you, how did you get going?**

**BRYCE LINDSAY:** I think we took enough 3s, and for me personally, I just got going early. My teammates found me. I just found an open slot in the defense and I just let it fly.

**Q. Duke, some foul trouble early in the game. Climbed out. They got a lot of free throws. What were they giving you guys in the paint? They didn't shoot a lot of 3s, they were poor. What did you see from the paint as a big man here with Villanova that they kind of gave you trouble with?**

**DUKE BRENNAN:** They were getting to the paint a lot. They have good shooters, some good shooters. Like you said, they weren't shooting too much. So they were driving the paint. They were just getting fouls. I think they shot a ton of free throws to our little amount of free throws and that was a big factor in the game. We just weren't defending without fouling.

**Q. Bryce, I know it's fresh, how do you kind of put into perspective what the season was like for your team, for yourself, and how will you kind of remember this journey?**

**BRYCE LINDSAY:** It was a great year. Hell of a coaching staff, hell of a teammates. This is the year that I'm going to remember throughout my two years that I have left in



college. I feel like we meshed together. We came together quick. I feel like we did that during the summer and that's why it translated during the game.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Coach.

**Q. How do you kind of summarize how the last four minutes went? Did you think it was experience versus inexperience kind of playing out?**

**KEVIN WILLARD:** Yeah, I mean -- you know, we got up 10 and we gave up three offensive rebounds and that's kind of been -- give them credit. They're a veteran team, older guards. They did a great job getting in the lane. But we had our opportunities. We missed 73-71. I think we were up and we missed two layups that kind of really hurt us. Give them credit. They capitalized on it.

**Q. Early in that game, Utah State was doing good on the out of bounds. They got a couple of scores off that. Where do you think you guys flipped the script on that and kind of was able to get --**

**KEVIN WILLARD:** I don't think we did. We gave up a big 3 late. Yeah, I'm probably going to have to make some changes to my staff, just because of how bad we were.

**Q. You knew going in how tough Falslev and Collins were when they attack. I mean, watching it play out, what kind of difficulties did they present that you guys weren't able to overcome?**

**KEVIN WILLARD:** Yeah, I thought the kid, Templin was the difference in the game. I thought he came in with energy and just changed, you look at his numbers, he's 1-for-3. He's got five rebounds. I thought he did so many good things defensively. And I thought he gave them energy that gave those other guys some driving lanes. We got mixed up on switches, which I was a little shocked that there was three or four times we got mixed up on switches. Especially in the second half, when we had a six-, seven-point lead.

But again that's going to happen sometimes when you've got freshmen and sophomores out there. It happens.

**Q. You mentioned making changes to your staff --**



KEVIN WILLARD: It's a joke.

**Q. That's what I want to ask. You gave an interview during the game. It went viral. You're being criticized pretty heavily online.**

KEVIN WILLARD: I don't care. Welcome to my life. It's a joke.

**Q. Yesterday you said that one of the things that impressed you about Utah State is how connected they are and how well they communicate. Is that something you saw again today that kind of helped you get the edge?**

KEVIN WILLARD: No, they're impressive. Again, I think even though we scored 76 points, I think defensively they're really connected. They play well together. I don't think Drake Allen gets enough credit for just running that basketball team and how well he runs it. I thought he played great, offensively and defensively. He came up with two big steals in the second half.

Yeah, you could tell they've been together for a couple of years. You could tell they've had guys there.

**Q. Despite the losses, this is the start of a coaching career here at Villanova for you. When you look at this as a first year for you, how do you kind of reflect on it now that the season's kind of come to a close?**

KEVIN WILLARD: I'm very blessed to be the head coach of Villanova. It's a very special place. I've enjoyed -- I've been at three great programs, and this is my fourth. I can honestly say that I'm just blessed to be here. It's a great place, with great people.

I've never had more fun coaching in a year than I did this year with this group and at this place. I'm just really blessed to be the Villanova head coach.

**Q. Bryce had one of his best performances all season, especially after kind of going through a midseason slump. What do you make of his scoring in today's game?**

KEVIN WILLARD: Bryce has been great all year. I know he went through that tough stretch in February, and I think the Big East coaches did a really good job of being physical with him. But he's had that year for us all year. He really has.

I mean, the non-conference, he was so good. Bryce, he's a really good player with a great attitude. So I was glad to

see it. He made that first one, which I think was good for all of us, because he gives a lot of confidence to the rest of the guys.

But he's been consistent. I know he struggled to shoot the basketball, but he's, plus-minus, he's again really good for us all year. For me, that's been Bryce all year.

**Q. You've talked a number of times over the last couple of weeks about how this, getting to the tournament, was the first step. What is the next step, and how do you get there?**

KEVIN WILLARD: I just think we did a great job of developing a really good culture, setting the tone of how we want to play, getting back to that. I just think, again, it's getting some of these young guys back, developing them some more and just adding in the right guys. I think we need to become a little bit more physical. I think that's the biggest thing.

We were a little -- especially when Matt went down. We just became really small. So just making sure we add the right pieces to a really good, young core that's fun to coach.

**Q. Utah State only forced one turnover in the first half. I think they forced eight in the second half. What did you guys do to succeed in protecting the ball early on?**

KEVIN WILLARD: I thought we did a good job of spreading them out early on in the first half. He switched to his match-up zone.

And I thought, again, Bryce plays 37 minutes. Tyler plays 37. Acaden played 36. I thought some of our turnovers late were a little bit of fatigue, a little bit of tiredness.

But for the most part, you gotta give their defense a little bit of credit, too. I thought they did a good job switching out in passing lanes. We had a couple of careless turnovers late that I don't really count. But you've got to give their defense a lot of credit for switching out in passing lanes.

And like I said, the kid Drake Allen doesn't get nearly enough credit for how good of a player he is. I thought he had three big steals. I thought he switched the game more than anybody.

**Q. Listening to the players, one thing that's been consistent throughout their comments is the culture and the mesh that they have with one another. What would you say walking away from this season is one thing that you want Villanova fans to know about this specific team?**

KEVIN WILLARD: This group had a great attitude all year. They were a great group to coach. They did community service on their own that nobody knows about that they didn't post on social media. I think they represented this university at a very, very high level.

There weren't a lot of expectations early in the year. A lot of people were talking down about them. I think they were way beyond what everyone thought they were going to be, and they did it with a great attitude and a great bunch to coach. Like, this group was one of my best I've ever had coaching. I looked forward to getting to practice every day. I looked forward to games every day.

They were just a really good group, and I think they represented the university at a very high level.

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