

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

Friday, March 20, 2026

San Diego, California, USA

Viejas Arena

**Cal Baptist Lancers**

**Coach Rick Croy**

**Dominique Daniels Jr.**

**Martel Williams**

Media Conference

Kansas - 68, Cal Baptist - 60

THE MODERATOR: For Cal Baptist, the student-athletes are Dominique Daniels Jr. and Martel Williams.

RICK CROY: I told the guys in the locker room just my tears are tears of gratitude. Incredible. Tonight was just a true incredible representation of what these guys are about.

They've been -- they said they were going to do it and they did it. And that's take CBU to March Madness. And it means everything to our university. These guys mean everything to me.

As long as I do this and recruit from here on moving forward, I will double down on character, double down on work ethic, double down on teammate-ship because of these guys.

Talent matters, and these guys have a ton of talent, but what these guys are about is people, they showed it tonight.

And really special experience for our guys to be able to compete the way they did in the second half after a really tough first half. Kansas was switched on like we knew they would be, and they had a lot to do with our first half.

But, again, this ride, this journey that these guys have taken our university on, truly, truly special. Some of the guys tonight were wearing shirts that said "A Thousand Moments."



I know March Madness is one shining moment, but where those T-shirts come from is one of my best friends came and spoke to our team, and he spoke about you build trust and confidence in a thousand moments -- early morning lifts, our mile conditioning run, all the sacrifices these guys make, study hall, getting back late, getting up early, going to class. And that's where trust and confidence is built, in those thousand moments.

I can't thank these guys enough for all the moments that we shared together. So thank you, guys.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the student-athletes.

**Q. Dominique, obviously you started out a little bit of a tough start. But you obviously got it going in the second half. What do you think they were doing maybe that bothered you? Was it just size and length? Were they doing something schematically? And what did you see that allowed you to get going in the second half?**

DOMINIQUE DANIELS JR: The game of basketball, as a small guard, you kind of have to get used to the length on the floor. It was a little tough for us in the first half to get it going. But I just doubled down on who I am and who God made me to be.

And at the end of the day, I just got it going. He allowed me to get it going. And we almost came back and won the game. It's just the fact that I got in a rhythm, it felt good.

**Q. Dominique, you put on a performance that epitomized the whole underdog aspect of March Madness in the second half, and you talked about yesterday how hurt you felt when you had zero offers out of high school. What's your message to those people who you proved wrong tonight and more importantly, undersized guards who are going through the same adversity?**

DOMINIQUE DANIELS JR: Small guards, keep working. Don't let nobody tell you what you can and can't do on the court. You gotta have that mindset that you could do anything because anything is possible with God on your side.

And so the people that have doubted me up until this point, they see me now. So that's that.

**Q. You also went for the juco route, San Bernardino, I believe. What message do you send to juco players looking for a home as well and just continuing that grind?**

DOMINIQUE DANIELS JR: Same thing, juco, I'll forever be grateful for going to the juco route. It is a grind. I had a job during juco and I had school on top of that.

You just gotta have that mindset that you're going to get it done by any means necessary.

And I had a dream a long time ago that I was going to be playing in March Madness. You know when I stepped on the court yesterday and it said "March Madness," it was like a dream come true for me. That just goes to show that anything is possible for anybody, with, you know, God at the forefront of your life.

**Q. Martel, out of the eight teams to play here today, CBU arguably had the loudest crowd and the energy was felt the entire game, despite the deficit for the first 30 minutes. What message do you have for the students and fans that made the trip down south?**

MARTEL WILLIAMS: I appreciate all the support from the students and the fans. I mean, they gave us energy when we scored, and they're cheering. We feel that energy. All the crowd, we really appreciate that. We couldn't have done it without you guys.

**Q. Martel, similar question, but the crowd was so loud, as a competitor, how do you know how to know how to lock in -- we're playing Kansas, we gotta lock in -- but also when do you allow yourself to feel that energy feel like it pushes you through?**

MARTEL WILLIAMS: There are moments where when you get a big bucket, the crowd is screaming and it gives you energy to get a stop and get another stop and play harder. Then when you we get a bucket and a media timeout or something, then we feel the crowd and celebrate and cheer (indiscernible).

**Q. Was your recruiting journey very similar to Dominique as well? I mean did you feel like that you were an underdog? And how much are you going to look back at your CBU time and just gleam and smile at the experience?**

MARTEL WILLIAMS: Yeah, I was a walk-on at Southern Utah, I played there for three years. Then I went juco. And

then after that, I got recruited by Croy and Cal Baptist. And then after that, I mean, I put my head down and worked and worked and worked. And here we are, March Madness.

**Q. Rick, can you talk about at what point in that second half this team went from maybe playing just for pride to this game could be winnable? When did you kind of see that in that team in that second half?**

RICK CROY: It would be tough for me to pinpoint how much time was left on the clock, but it was kind of -- it was a combination of factors. It was -- our defense was really solid. We were making things tough on them. Then our shot-making, we started making some shots. And then Lancer Nation came alive.

It was a confluence of factors, and that was a beautiful storm. We were trying to ride it and hopefully get it to one possession. And I kept looking at the clock, like, can we get it there? But the clock kept moving, and we just, essentially, ran out of time. We did. But the guys, they showed so much heart.

Even, Darryn played great, but I thought Martel played great defense. So it was just an unbelievable -- it was a true March Madness game.

So we're grateful for the competition. We knew Kansas was going to be ready. Obviously, we would have loved to played -- played, not competed, but played better in the first half. But for these guys, again, to show what they're all about, it was pretty amazing.

**Q. Miles Daniels, he averages about 10 minutes, four points, he played most of the rest of the game. Do you think he just gave you a big lift offensively, defensively? I don't know, what did you see from him?**

RICK CROY: Yeah, the biggest lift that all of our seniors have given this program is no one cares who gets the credit. Miles is a really good player. He had an injury early in the year. Jordan Muller stepped in and played great basketball, and Miles supported him like a brother.

And so when you do that, it seems to come back to you. So none of the guys tonight were surprised by Miles, his contributions. I mean, he's a great player. He showed it tonight. He's had some amazing moments for our team.

And I'm really happy for him, because he showed what his competitive spirit is all about. That's the Miles Daniels that we know.

But all five seniors, the character's off the charts. Off the

charts. That's why we're here tonight.

I mean, we were 10-6 with three straight road losses to start conference and had to win 15 out of 17 games to get here. And it was led by that senior group.

**Q. I know you touched on Lancer Nation a little bit, but your student section is kind of better than I've seen. Just what did that mean to you guys tonight, and how much did that fuel your comeback in the second half?**

RICK CROY: Yeah, it meant everything. And I've said this a couple times this week. I think the really special thing, and this will resonate with people from So Cal, is that that's not easy to get in Southern California. There's a lot to do. We're in one of the most beautiful places in the world. But what I said this week was, this hasn't been a bandwagon effect.

We went 15-0 at home. We sold out opening night. Senior Night, we drew 5,000 people. Our guys signed autographs for an hour and a half, two hours after the game.

For our administration, our AD, Donovan Ellis, our president, our VPs, everyone's poured into men's basketball and women's basketball at CBU to try and create something that's inspiring and be a good healthy front porch to our university.

So for the students to pay us back tonight and pay these guys back was incredible, for them to make the drive down and show up like they did. I mean, everyone's talking about it, and rightfully so.

**Q. Obviously a historic season in so many ways, but also an end of an era in the WAC. Where do you think this program sits heading into the Big West, a new chapter for this program?**

RICK CROY: I'll come back to this. I think we're here tonight because we've had really good program continuity. We had a number of good players return last year. We continue to add character, guys that at our school for the right reasons. And you have to do that. You have to get the right guys back.

So we have a number of really good players that have the opportunity to return. They tasted something tonight, I won't just say tonight -- I mean what the NCAA does, for student-athletes with this tournament, I mean, when you touch it, you want to experience this again and again and again.

And it's hard. It is a difficult tournament to make. And obviously you have to win the conference tournament at

our level, but we just want to keep building and keep growing and keep getting guys that want to be at CBU for the right reasons.

That's why I keep coming back to talking about our senior class and the guys we have in our locker room and doubling down on what's more important, because in our program, this year -- and this has rejuvenated me as a coach -- the transactional got crushed by the transformational. I mean, it was a blowout. Our guys were all transformational. And they wanted to get here.

Again, all of them, great attitudes. That's what won out.

**Q. Going alongside the previous question, what has this senior class done on and off the court in terms of elevating the program for the future as you move into the Big West?**

RICK CROY: Well, they set a great example of what it's all about. When you play for the name on the front -- these guys played for CBU. They did it together. They didn't care who got the credit. They pulled for each other. They lifted up our younger guys.

We've had some great senior classes. I thought our senior class last year was great, and that helped set the tone for this year.

All the guys that have paid the price in our program, these guys paid all those guys back. That's how you have to build this thing now. You have to build continuity. And it's student-athlete by student-athlete, but these guys took it to a whole nuther level.

Obviously you can see the excitement in our community, the excitement in our student body, let's go attack this thing again.

You've got to be fearless. Because, like I said, it's really demanding and difficult to make. But we've got something really special.

**Q. A lot of shots in the game were not falling, especially in the first half. Is there anything you attribute it to, whether it was nerves or the defense that the Jayhawks played, or was it anything else in your opinion?**

RICK CROY: Probably a little bit of both. I think their rim defense -- they're a top 15 defense in the country. We knew that coming into the game, obviously.

I did think once we stopped turning the ball over, got some good looks. We finished with eight turnovers for the game.

We had five in the first five minutes.

So we settled in. We had a few bobbles that are uncharacteristic for us. The ball just kind of went through our hands and stuff. Those are probably nerves. And Kansas had some of those, too.

So it was an amazing environment. These are the environments you dream of playing in.

And then Kansas probably had a lot to do with our low field goal percentage in the first half. We had some shots go in and out. But our guys were talking, right? I thought we kept moving the ball. We stayed true to who we are. It's not like guys got out of their roles and started taking shots that they're not comfortable with.

And then in the second half, the basket opened up for us, and we got in attack mode, gained some confidence and made a good run at a great team.

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