

# NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: Second Round - Utah State vs Arizona

Sunday, March 22, 2026

San Diego, California, USA

Viejas Arena

**Arizona Wildcats**

**Coach Tommy Lloyd**

**Brayden Burries**

**Jaden Bradley**

**Koa Peat**

Media Conference

Arizona - 78, Utah State - 66

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Arizona.

TOMMY LLOYD: Just really proud of our guys. Obviously it's an important game. Season's on the line. These guys came out and got us off to a great start. We had to weather some storms.

And give Utah State a lot of credit. They create a lot of adversity, switching defenses and they kind of throw you out of your rhythm on offense a little bit. We weren't as good in the second half of getting the ball inside and just obviously had too many turnovers.

They amped up their pressure and their press, so I'm going to give them credit. But our guys did a good job in there. You hang in there, hang in there. You have a little lead you just need to make one or two plays in a timely fashion, and then you can kind of ride the game out.

And obviously Brayden's 3 was pretty big-time. And then J.B. had some great drives and foul pressure down the stretch of that last 10 minutes. And I thought Koa was really special in the second half and had to deal with some foul trouble.

Really proud of our guys. Excited we get another opportunity to play next week.

**Q. Koa and Jayden, can you talk about what makes Brayden so unflappable, doesn't get nervous. He's a**



**freshman. What is he like from what you guys see?**

JADEN BRADLEY: He's very mature for his age. And for a freshman. You look at him, you would never know the score if he's having a great game, if he's having a rough game.

Just kudos to him. He's having a great season. Offensively, he's a team's worst nightmare, shooter from all three levels, can defend. He's definitely a great piece to have.

**Q. How does playing in a conference like the Big 12 all season long kind of prepare you for the resiliency like you guys had to face tonight?**

BRAYDEN BURRIES: I think it's honestly helps us a lot. I think the Big 12 is one of the best conferences out there. It prepares us physically, mentally, through adversity and stuff because you're playing a great team night in and night out. So just shout-out to the Big 12.

KOA PEAT: Obviously it's huge for us. Especially last week, we had three tough games, back to back to back. And it definitely helped us leading into this tournament. The Big 12 is the best conference in college basketball. So definitely got us prepared for this moment.

**Q. Koa, you were having a great night on the rebounding side of the ball. What were you seeing from the trajectories or angles that were helping you find and track down those rebounds tonight?**

KOA PEAT: Honestly just trying to be like Tobe, man. I look up to him. He's a beast on the glass. And Coach is always on my butt about rebounding. So I was just trying to get on the glass today and stay active.

**Q. Jaden, how are you able to stay calm, cool and collected when the team continuously goes to you down the stretch when the pressure ramps up?**

JADEN BRADLEY: Just trusting in my work. And I know my teammates believe in me. I got great bigs that can get me open with ball screens and duck-ins and all that stuff. And my teammates give me great space. Just trusting in my work and trying to get to my spots and make plays.



THE MODERATOR: Questions for Coach.

**Q. Coach, when Utah State started going to the press and it was working and they were getting a lot of turnovers, do you sense in any way that your team might have started to feel a little rattled? And if you'd seen that at all this year.**

TOMMY LLOYD: For sure, it got us back on our heels a little bit. I just think our guys gotta do a little bit better job of figuring. And I was kind of negotiating my timeouts in my head. How I wanted to manage it, what the point differential was.

I trust our guys to find solutions all the time. And they kind of amped up the heat on their press a little bit. I don't think our spacing was great. I think our initial thrust wasn't great. And that's something that, hey, it's not easy to do. Everyone on the periphery thinks it should be easy to do. It's not.

And when you have a desperate team amping up the pressure, and the jump ball's in their favor, and they're aggressive, it's hard. It's hard.

Our guys did a better job settling it down there the last couple minutes. But for sure, I mean, you know, they're a pressing team. They press a lot. And they give you different variations of their press. Sometimes it's soft. Sometimes it's a harder press with early traps. They do a good job keeping you on your heels.

**Q. Utah State has been pretty vocal this week about feeling like they're under-seeded at a 9 seed, felt like they should have been more in the 7 or 6 range. You guys have played one of the toughest schedules in the country. Just compared to, you know, the Big 12 teams you've played, other high major teams that you've played do you think that they have merit to that argument and how do they --**

TOMMY LLOYD: For sure, I don't get, like I said, I'm not a guy that gets into the weeds on all that stuff. But that's a really good basketball team. I mean, if they were a 5 or a 6 seed, I wouldn't have been surprised.

I mean if you win the Mountain West regular season and tournament, I mean, I think that's a pretty powerful statement.

And we felt it out there today. We felt it out there today. I mean, it's a team that had no quit. And had no quit and they kept coming and they made timely plays and timely shots on both ends of the floor.

**Q. Can you speak to Brayden as well and just what makes him so level headed especially being a freshman?**

TOMMY LLOYD: I think Brayden's a winner, and he has ultimate confidence. And it's been a joy to coach him. You've hit the nail on the head -- he's a laid-back, kind-of-unassuming guy, but he has a killer in him. And that's a beautiful attribute.

There's nothing wrong with being a great human being off the court and being a killer on the court. And he definitely has that combination.

I honestly, when he had that ball in his hands at the end, I was trying to figure out ways, obviously I wanted it in J.B.'s hands, but when Brayden had that kind of that last possession that ended up kind of deep in the clock, I felt pretty good about it.

I know he has an ability to make those shots and get good arc on them. And I also felt pretty good if we get it up and don't turn it over we can rebound. I think we had 22 offensive rebounds, and obviously you know that's a key component to our success as well.

**Q. Have you seen him ever get riled up? If so, how does he do that?**

TOMMY LLOYD: Yeah, I mean listen he's a normal 19-year-old guy. He's had moments where he's had to learn. And even today, I had to kind of explain to him after the game, he picked up two unfortunate fouls. I probably maybe should have subbed him. He hit a 3 right away. And I'm thinking, okay, I've seen this act from Brayden, and he can get hot pretty quick.

And we were kind of managing like a 10-point lead and for most of the second part of the first half. So I just didn't I thought his foul was more valuable to keep him on the bench and save for three fouls for the second half if we had a lead.

And I knew he was tough enough to me kind of taking his rhythm away from him. Because I just wanted to win the game. And I know he wanted to play, and I'm sure he could convince me that he could play without fouling.

But crazy things happen in these games and I was just, my worst nightmare was he picks up his third and then early in the second half he picks up his fourth. Now it really hurts us.

So I was kind of making a decision for the long run, trying

to win the game. And I appreciate him hanging with it.

**Q. Big-picture question, this will be your fourth time in five seasons going to the Sweet 16. But your coaching style is subtle. You think about Rick Pitino, who was standing in the same spot as you a few hours ago. He's a little bit more demonstrative during the games. But clearly you have something working. So, what is it about your style that you think has been effective for --**

TOMMY LLOYD: I mean, one look at my mentor. He's pretty cool, calm and collected -- Mark Few. So obviously when you're with a guy for 22 years, you learn a lot by osmosis, just how he handles himself.

And the other thing, I mean I think the most what's really cool about coaching and basketball is there's so many different styles. And I think the most important thing is just to be your authentic self.

I don't want to be a guy that's constantly yelling and screaming and nagging. It's just not kind of who I am. I want to coach to my personality because I think these players, they know truth. They know truth. And they judges of character these guys are.

I think for me to have the best long-term success with them is to be honest with them, have relationships and be myself. It's not much more complicated than that.

**Q. You were kind of getting the fans going multiple times tonight. What does it mean to just have that volume and what do you do out there for you?**

TOMMY LLOYD: Well, it's important. You know, I thought it was, like, I was thinking this morning I should have did a preemptive strike. We need our fans in these environments to be proactive. We don't need our fans to be reactive and get nervous when the game gets tight.

We know how bad our fans want it for us. So I was hoping they would come and participate. And I thought they did a really good job participating.

And then hopefully we have even stronger contingent at San Jose. And they're going to be there fighting and pulling us through every step of the way.

**Q. This is the second straight year no mid-majors are in a Sweet 16. What are your thoughts on that? And is it damaging to the sort of the overall tournament March Madness content?**

TOMMY LLOYD: Yeah, I mean that's a really great question and a deep question. And we could probably go

a lot of different directions with it.

I think, look, where I came from. I came from a program that was a mid-major program and that made itself into a major, major program. And I think that parity is great for the game.

But things change. And I think once finances become part of it, there's going to be a breaking point for some of the lesser programs that just don't have the finances, and I think that's just an obvious statement.

I mean, there's lots of reasons I took the Arizona job. And one of them was kind of forecasting these changes happening, because right when I was getting the job, the NIL deal was rumored. Then it started in July. I figured Arizona's a place that has a pretty strong, long basketball tradition, and they're going to be excited to invest in basketball. And we have.

So I'm thankful for where I am, but I think that's a great question. I don't have a great answer for you on how to fix it. So let's just leave it at that. But that's a great observation to you.

**Q. Great win today. But obviously things are going to get tougher from here on out. Based on today's game, what do you think you guys have to improve the most moving forward?**

TOMMY LLOYD: I just think managing segments of the game when you have a lead would be great. What did we get up, 16, something like that, 16, 18? Yeah, I, I mean, can you make the next run?

And I know it's so easy to say and hard to do. But sometimes if you can make that next run, get up to 23, 24, you can kind of break a team's will. But that team hung with it today. They were impressive. They had answers for everything, and they hit a bunch of timely shots. And I'm sure they feel like they missed some timely shots or a call or two didn't go their way. That's how the game goes sometimes. I respected Utah State a lot going into this game and they did nothing but reinforce that for me.

**Q. You've mentioned a couple times this season about how much Mo has improved on the offensive end, but the defensive ability to alter shots and whatnot without fouling, how big of a jump did he make in that area?**

TOMMY LLOYD: It's massive. He's been a game-changer for us defensively. I know a lot of the analytic gurus out there have studied it probably more than I have. I just know I feel good when he's on the court. He's got great instincts. M-O stands for mobility at 7'2". And he does a

great job contesting shots up high.

And he does a great job getting those short little rebounds that come around the basket. Those are really hard to get when you're up vertical contesting and contesting a shot, to be able to have good enough hands to get those rebounds.

I need his jump hook to start going in a little bit more, so we'll talk about that this week because I know he can be a force and really control these games at both ends of the floor.

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