

# NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Round - Missouri vs Miami

Friday, March 20, 2026

St. Louis, Missouri, USA

Enterprise Center

**Missouri Tigers**

**Dennis Gates**

**Jayden Stone**

**Mark Mitchell**

Media Conference

Miami 80, Missouri 66

MODERATOR: Missouri Tigers are with us, head coach Dennis Gates along with Jayden Stone and Mark Mitchell.

Dennis, please.

DENNIS GATES: Great atmosphere. I thought it was electric during times where we definitely allowed ourselves opportunity.

Start the game 24 to 17, half their points, obviously was second-chance points. It was evident what hurt us. They ended the game with 19 second-chance points and we just couldn't keep those guys off the board. And when we did that's when we were able to make runs, and I thought our guys responded accordingly.

Late in the game, 7:50 mark in the second we were able to take a lead but from that lead that's when Miami was able to get that run going. The foul with Stone that was called, Mark Mitchell, spin move, no foul called on that one. At that point that's when the lead diminished and Miami was able to go on an I think 11-0 run or 10-0 run or something like that and take a 60 to 54 lead.

I'm proud of our guys. I'm proud of what we've done this year. You want to get to the Tournament and win games, and we wasn't able to do that. Ultimately our team definitely was still in a phase of maturation because our season really started at the new year once we got our team fully healthy.

So I'm proud of these guys to my right, left and obviously



the guys that fought for us, proud of our fans that were consistent and those that showed up tonight.

**Q. Mark and Dennis, Coach Lucas said that Mark was obviously a huge focal point in their game plan. I'm sure that's true of everyone that you guys play. What specifically -- did they do anything different or that you didn't expect that you thought was effective?**

MARK MITCHELL: No. They have some big bodies. Jai knows my game pretty well. I was with him for a couple years. And Udeh is a really good defender along with him also throwing bodies at me. I was trying to get some passes out of the doubles early and things like that.

But they built a wall that made it hard for me most of the games. Kudos to them. But it was a really good game. I couldn't really get going there until late. But, yeah.

DENNIS GATES: As it relates to what they were doing Mark garners attention and ultimately what I thought impacted TO was the change in defenses. They went from zone to man, 3-2 to 2-3 and ultimately that's why I went with Ant Robinson more so because Ant could recognize those plays.

I thought their length obviously defensively helped them. But more importantly our bodies got to moving in the second half more so than in the first.

At the end of the day, when you take half their points off of second chance, it's not about what they were doing. We were getting stops. It's just you can't go two possessions in one trip, and that's where those percentages got the best of us.

But great team. Talented. Size may not have all the height in the margins, but they do have the shoulders and the waists and the hips and sort of the bumps I think got us off base a little bit.

**Q. Coach, you mentioned the non-call on Mark it was 54-54 at that time. And you said the game changed there. Can you share some details of what you saw happened in those final seven minutes?**

DENNIS GATES: What I saw happen in the final seven



minutes, they hit some really -- you know, when you take 30 minutes of the game and you defend at a high level, they ended up making a lot more threes. I believe that percentage really jumped up from the first half. They ended up shooting 30 percent in the first, 60 percent in the second.

At the end of the day, it wasn't the second chance in the second half. It was the shooting percentage. So it was the tale of two different halves.

We responded. We took the lead in the middle end of the second, but the most important part we wasn't able to capitalize and get their shooting percentages down. They made a concerted effort to get to the paint and we wasn't able to build our wall accordingly.

**Q. Coach, I asked you yesterday about Jayden finally getting his chance to play in the NCAA Tournament. What was it like sort of seeing that vision finally realized with him playing in March and what has he meant to this team this season. And for Jayden, what was the experience like today?**

DENNIS GATES: Do you want to answer the experience part today and then I'll answer after you?

JAYDEN STONE: I mean, it's been a great experience. I can't speak more confidently than to my coach and the staff and my teammates. I mean, they really resurrected my career on a winning team, and Coach is like a father figure. He came all the way to visit my family in Perth to see me.

Just certain things like that I'll never forget. So I'm just really grateful for everything they've done.

DENNIS GATES: Our season changed again when Jayden Stone came off his hand injury, that we thought would require surgery but ultimately he stayed in shape, lower body-wise and that's what allowed me to start him right away at the Florida game.

Trent Pierce came about -- I think that balance and that combination helped -- they helped each other. They helped Mark. They helped our team. But from an IQ standpoint, Jayden Stone has a high basketball IQ, very unselfish to give himself to his team. And a guy that was averaging 20 points a game was just trying to figure out how he could help the team win. And that's what he did over the course of the season. He came off the bench early with patience, and obviously ended up taking over at the starting spot. And from that point on, the guys responded a certain way.

This was the first year he was able to have a winning record in college and be an impact player. So I'm proud of his development. I'm proud of him being able to allow us to push him in the direction that we thought our team should go.

**Q. Jayden, you had a big start of the second half. What kind of maybe changed in the second half that didn't allow maybe the production you had earlier in the period?**

JAYDEN STONE: I think obviously just the gravity that Mark has when he's driving. It just allows me to space, and we always practice and push and pull in practice. I'm just basically reading whatever the defense was doing off Mark or off Ant when they're driving. Then it was giving me easy catch-and-shoot shots.

So, yeah, I think that was probably the main focus for me.

**Q. Coach, I know it's still fresh, but how do you think you'll remember this season?**

DENNIS GATES: How I will remember this season, I'm pretty difficult on myself. I'm hard on myself when it comes down to coaching. I don't think any coach could have brought the team to this place based off of where we were, dealing with the injuries that we dealt with. So I pat myself on the back at the same time.

But there was still sort of a goal in mind. I want to win a National Championship, and I didn't. So for me that's a failure. It's just that simple.

**Q. Dennis, we talked a lot three weeks ago about trying to peak at the right time after you guys lost some down the stretch. I know you played good teams close games. But do you see any similarities or the last three weeks, why do you think you weren't quite able to get over the hump, or last two weeks, I guess?**

DENNIS GATES: One possession. One possession away. I think one possession changes a season. We had an opportunity to win the game on two shots against Arkansas at home. We were able to put our team in a position against Kentucky to take a late lead, wasn't able to hold onto it. But when you look at -- and I'll do my job of dissecting this entire season, and the one thing that'll stand out to me, and I'll say this, is that we did not have the lead for more than five minutes of all those games. And when you are putting yourself in that position, whether you get down over a period of time or not, the management of it and it's just one play of execution, whether it's defensively or offensively. But that would be the common theme that I can strike up right now when you look at the box score.

Like tonight we only had the lead for one minute. That's tough. That's tough to do.

And that's the consistency of when you look at each game in the last three weeks. So I credit our opponents as well.

**Q. Mark, this was another game in which you had to obviously rely on your patience, on your on-court IQ. How would you categorize your growth as a facilitator in this your senior seen?**

MARK MITCHELL: I think it's grown a lot. With more reps you get better and better at it. Since I've got here, they've trusted me to have the ball in my hands a lot. Over time I've gotten better at it and been able to show that. So kudos to Coach Gates for allowing that.

When you see certain defenses over time, you kind of get better at that. I know I had five turnovers tonight. Wasn't my best assist-to-turnover-ratio game. But I think over the course of the season my development with seeing double teams, playing in the short roll, playing in the pocket, things like that, it's something I'm proud of, something I wanted when I came here. So I'm glad it could happen.

**Q. I know Coach Gates talked about all the ups and downs of the season. I was wondering if there's a moment or a lesson from the season all y'all will take with you in the future?**

MARK MITCHELL: I would say just staying together with who's with you. In December everyone wrote us off, like oh, they're not a tournament team and this and that. Everyone said that. And now like obviously we lost and things like that, but to get to this point a lot of people said it wasn't possible. But we did, we looked each other in the mirror, didn't worry about any outside noise.

I think you can just take that into life, keep who is in your circle, who's rocking with you, who is loving on you, and love them back and give energy back to them and good things will happen for you.

JAYDEN STONE: Yeah, I think probably just resiliency. Like you said, our season kind of had a major turnaround at the start of this year and just the bounce back. We were always kind of -- it was kind of up in the air every game through the season, and you not knowing what to expect, and I'm sure we kept the fans guessing of what was going to happen. But we knew collectively that just take one game at a time.

So I think the resiliency of the team amongst injuries, amongst any casualties we faced will serve us well into the future and the guys that's continuing be to build this

program into a great pedigree for Coach Gates.

DENNIS GATES: I think at the beginning of the year when you first put a team in the locker room together and they don't know each other, they just have read about each other, know that they decided to play for Coach Gates. And what they did was very unselfishly put themselves in a room with our sports psychologist, Dr. Joe Carr, and had a common goal and that common goal, yeah, we fell short of it. But shooting for the stars, you can land somewhere up there, right? And our guys landed in a place where this program hadn't been consistently in the Tournament.

Yeah, people wrote us off. Our guys didn't write each other off during the difficult times. They held onto their commitments that they made when they first met each other.

So those are the things and the life lessons of consistency, resilience, hard work, giving no excuses. That's where you land sometimes when you fall short. It hurts, but you still land in a place of peace, and the peace that I'm referring to is these guys being able to see a version of themselves that, you know, only they knew could be possible.

So our locker room hurts right now. I hurt right now. It's not easy. I'm sure there will be certain headlines. There will be certain tweets and certain voices out there saying that we failed. My guys hadn't failed anything.

I'll stand on the train tracks for them every day, any day of the week anytime. My guys did not fail. If you want to say something about failing, say Dennis Gates failed. I'll take it any day of the week, with no hesitation, with my head high and protect our locker room like I've always done from a mental standpoint, emotional standpoint.

And that's why they are likely to be successful, likely to run through a wall for us, and they'll always be welcome back to the city of CoMo and obviously welcome back as alumni of Missouri. So I'm proud of these guys, and as a coach, coaches come and go.

Coaches come and go. But these players will always have a piece of Missouri in their hearts forever, and ultimately I'm proud of them. I'm proud of you guys, man. So thank you guys, MIZ.

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