

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: Regional Semifinal - Arkansas vs Florida

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San Francisco, California, USA

Chase Center

Florida Gators

Will Richard

Alijah Martin

Walter Clayton Jr.

Sweet 16 Pregame Media Conference



see our point of view on some things. Just the energy he brings, being a young guy.

And just the chip he's got on his shoulder. People talk about him being young, I think it put another chip on his shoulder that he could do it at his age.

Q. Alijah and Will, I know Walter had a background playing football before he dropped out to do basketball. He's obviously been very physical on the court the way he plays. Do you see the football background come out at all in how he plays on the court?

ALIJAH MARTIN: Yeah, most definitely. Walter is a physical guard. He shows his dominance every night. I'm just proud to be his teammate.

Q. Will, talking to Todd recently, how he's a culture guy, like he's really helped build this culture, and then with you all, but came in before the two of you. How has he kind of set the tone for what's been happening here? And then when it gets to you, Will, could you talk about how your approach to kind of trying to do that for this program?

WALTER CLAYTON JR.: It's been talked about Will was the first guy that Golden got here. When Golden got here he recruited him and committed. He knows what the coaches have wanted, being here a couple years more than me and Alij.

He knows what the coaches want. He knows what is expected out of everybody. Personally I think he's got some goals for himself and for the team, so that he just takes it to another level every day of pushing everybody.

ALIJAH MARTIN: What was the question again?

Q. Culture as well as [inaudible]?

ALIJAH MARTIN: Will's an everyday guy. He's a leader. He comes in with a smile every day. Sometimes that's all you need.

WILL RICHARD: For me, I feel like just being the first one here, I know what the coaches are expecting. Me and

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Walter Clayton Jr., Will Richard and Alijah Martin.

Q. Walter, Kevin Willard just made a Steph Curry comparison. I don't know if you've heard that before. Just your thoughts, were you a Steph Curry fan at all growing up? And what's it mean to be in the house that Steph built here in San Francisco?

WALTER CLAYTON JR.: It's great to be here. I don't know if I would compare myself to Steph. That's one of the greatest ever, if not the greatest point guard, changed the game. Thankful to kind of be getting those comparisons, be compared to such a great player.

Q. Alijah and Will, what do you think about Walter being compared to Steph Curry? Accurate or is there a different player that he reminds you of? Or should one of you been compared to Steph Curry?

WILL RICHARD: He shoots the ball at a very high level, so I get the comparisons. We see him work out too. We definitely can see it as well.

Q. Curious how Todd Golden has shaped this team when you think about the imprint he's put on you guys on this journey, particularly as a young head coach, only 39 years old. How does that play into his interaction with you guys?

WALTER CLAYTON JR.: Coach definitely being young, he definitely connect with us a lot more. I think he kind of



Coach Golden came in with the say mentality, trying to bring Florida back to that national relevance.

For me, just being an everyday guy, making sure the guys know the standard that he wants guys at. Just bringing that edge every day so we can be where we want to be.

Q. I saw a report that you guys practiced at USF yesterday, and Coach was trying to get you guys a reservation, I think at Original Joe's for dinner. Your experience at the school and how dinner was last night?

WALTER CLAYTON JR.: It was good. Coach Golden being here, coaching at San Fran it was good to get back in his old stomping grounds, get some shots up and put some work in.

And the Original Joe's, that's the name, right? It was great food. Great spot. I enjoyed the experience.

WILL RICHARD: Like Walt said, it's good to go back get some work in at Coach Golden's old stomping grounds. The restaurant was good as well, so I enjoy being in San Francisco as well.

ALIJAH MARTIN: I agree with those guys.

Q. Walter, last year I was talking to Steph one time and he was telling me that shooting off the dribble is the hardest shot in basketball, he thinks. Do you agree with that? If so, can you tell us why it's so challenging?

WALTER CLAYTON JR.: For sure. I think it's definitely hard. I think it's kind of hard, you know, mixing in, the catch-and-shoot shots off the dribble shots, because they're kind of two different shots, just a couple more things you need to do to get to the shot pocket. I definitely think it's harder. I agree with him.

Q. What was Coach Golden's message, either at practice today, in terms of how you're approaching the regionals, whether you're supposed to envision cutting down the nets or not?

WILL RICHARD: Yeah, I would just say having an elite focus, one game at a time, not trying to look too forward at anything, but knowing you've got to win the first game to get to the next. For us we're just trying to focus one game at a time and staying locked in.

Q. A handful of us in here actually covered your coach when he was playing at Saint Mary's College. We're old enough to have seen him play. But what was it like

to sort of see some of the places that were part of his journey? So much is made about how he's such a young coach and coaching at this level. But to sort of have a glimpse of his path, and what did that mean, and what do you sense it meant to him to be able to share that with you guys?

WALTER CLAYTON JR.: Him being on a few different stops, obviously all of us, we came from different schools also, so we did see multiple things. I think one of his main messages with that is be thankful what we've got here at the University of Florida. Be thankful of the opportunity, the privilege it is to be able to play here, don't take it for granted. So I think that's been one of the main messages especially with the few places he's been.

WILL RICHARD: I agree with what Walt says, definitely the same thing.

Q. (Indiscernible). What it meant to him to be back there?

WILL RICHARD: It definitely meant a lot just with that being a part of him getting to the University of Florida, which is why it was so special to go there and work out and see him back in his old element. It was definitely special for him.

ALIJAH MARTIN: It was great. He had a smile on his face. His energy was great as well. It's always good to go back home.

Q. Does Todd talk much about his playing days? Do you know much about what he was like as a player? And I'm curious if that dynamic comes up at all?

WALTER CLAYTON JR.: I think he tried to stay away from talking about his playing days a little bit because of how much we joke around. We have a couple of jokes, so we don't talk about it too much. But we definitely know that Coach was a good player, though.

Q. Just the experience of the UConn game, of having a hard game, having to come back from down six in the second half, how do you think that's going to help you guys going forward?

ALIJAH MARTIN: It's going to help us a lot, just having to be in that dogfight. It was a hard game, high scoring game at that. That's what March is about. Just finding out ways to win.

Q. Walter, you have on your bio that video games are your secret talent. But I heard that last weekend Alijah smoked you in 2K. I was sent that quote by another



reporter.

WALTER CLAYTON JR.: That was Cap. I don't even play games.

ALIJAH MARTIN: That was Cap for sure.

Q. I was going to ask if you could set the record straight on who the best 2K player is on the team.

WALTER CLAYTON JR.: By far me. No doubt about it. I've given up video games this last month to lock in on this run, but we played -- I will say Alex Condon beat me at 2K last week, but the input lag on the TV was going on. I'm a PlayStation player playing on an Xbox. So I've got a couple of excuses. I'm going to get him back soon, though.

Q. Alijah Martin, you were with Florida Atlantic, obviously the Final Four good enough team to win the whole title, lose on a heartbreaker; you're the guy with the Final Four experience on the team. How much does that get brought up in the locker room or with these guys just to get that extra motivation in the hard times?

ALIJAH MARTIN: We talk about it sometimes. Not a lot, though, because it was obviously in the past. But it's definitely something as far as being talking about. But we're worried about this year. We're trying to stay locked in on the moment, take it game by game, and when we get there, we'll get there.

Q. Going back to the jokes that you have with Coach Golden, did you say that you don't dare bring up his playing days or he doesn't dare bring it up because he knows you guys will give him some razing, clear that up a little bit, please, what you meant there?

WALTER CLAYTON JR.: We joke around a lot. He probably don't try to -- we talk about it sometimes, but he don't bring it up much, basically. It's him.

Q. You said you know he was a great player, does he get in on practices and show you that? Have you seen his film? How do you know those things?

WALTER CLAYTON JR.: He put up shots with us sometimes, put up shots. He gets in like passing to the bigs and things like that. We see a couple of his skills.

Q. Will, does he dish it back out to you guys, this good-natured banter or whatever you might call it?

WILL RICHARD: Not to the level we joke around with him. But he definitely try to go a little bit with us. But we're at a

different level when it comes to joking.

Q. What's the best one you've gotten him on, I guess, Alijah?

ALIJAH MARTIN: I don't even know. I don't even know. But definitely the whole team's probably laughing. So it was a good one, I guess.

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