

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

Thursday, March 26, 2026

San Jose, California, USA

SAP Center

Arizona Wildcats

Coach Tommy Lloyd

Jaden Bradley

Koa Peat

Sweet 16 Postgame Media Conference

Arizona 109, Arkansas 88

THE MODERATOR: Coach, would you like to start with an opening statement.

TOMMY LLOYD: Proud of my guys. I thought they came out and played with tremendous focus. Locked in. Felt like long stretches of that game we couldn't get a stop. But it's one of those games where sometimes you've just got to keep scoring, keep putting the pressure on them, keep putting the pressure on them. I thought our guys did a good job of that.

I thought their talents were on full display, and their character and teamwork. I'm just really proud to be their coach.

THE MODERATOR: Questions?

Q. Jaden, things started to get chippy, emotional, with quite a bit of time left in the game. And Coach called you over a couple times and was talking to you. Was he just talking to you about, like, hey, you've got to be a senior, you've got to have composure right now, I'm not going to pull you out? Did you talk about that?

JADEN BRADLEY: Yeah, he just told me just take care of the ball; at the end of the game, you've got to do a better job handling press breaks and traps. Down the line we're going to see a lot of traps, and we've got to take care of the ball at the end of the game. That's all he was talking about. Just gotta handle that a lot better.



Q. When the game is getting a little bit chippy, can you kind of talk about trying to keep your composure and not getting caught up in that?

KOA PEAT: Yeah, I mean, just playing basketball, at the end of the day. It's basketball. You can't really get into the other stuff that's not related to basketball. So no, we just try to keep our composure and we're big on keeping our composure and our poise in tough moments like that, when games get chippy.

TOMMY LLOYD: We talked as a program about, we knew the game had potential to get like that. They had a game against Florida a few weeks back, there were a bunch of technical fouls swayed both ways. We've had a few instances this year where it's been a bit of a melee, and we've participated in it as well.

We want to play championship basketball. To play championship basketball, you've got to just stand up and walk away from the action. This isn't the playground, you know what I mean? You can't just throw down. That's not how you win basketball games. These guys have high character and they're winners, but they're competitors, and it's always a fine line for both teams.

Coach Murph did a great job last night at a film session, talking to our guys that, hey, you know if this game goes how we hope it goes, it could get pretty chippy. We have to have a plan on how we're going to respond to that chippiness. Give Murph credit and give these guys credit, they did a great job just keeping their minds and focusing on the task at hand, which is winning the ball game.

Q. When you guys are clicking offensively the way you were, what works so well? What's the feeling on the team when you're scoring at the rate you guys were scoring at tonight?

KOA PEAT: This is the most fun I've had playing basketball, honestly. I love my teammates. Just seeing them be successful, it just makes me happy. Then they find me as well. So we went out there and played our Arizona brand of basketball. And I thought everything fell in place, and I thought the whole team played really good today and a lot of guys stepped up.



Q. You guys only shot eight 3-pointers, really because you didn't need to. Just what was working for you guys down low today?

KOA PEAT: Just putting foul pressure on their bigs, getting in the paint and playing off too, trying to make the right read. If that's score, score; if that's pass, pass out to a good shooter. Just playing basketball, playing off each other, having great instincts.

Q. Looked like you had a different approach in this match-up. Can you take us inside the strategy of breaking the press against Arkansas and maybe what worked better?

JADEN BRADLEY: We had a lot of film sessions with Coach and Coach Murph and everybody. It's something that we need to work on. We had games where we didn't handle it well, regular season and Big 12 play. So we're really putting a big emphasis on getting open, and press breaks is something that we need down the line, so we've got to keep continuing to grow on that.

Q. Jaden, you guys obviously have a lot of dynamics, sort of productive freshmen. How have you seen them grow throughout the season? What's the contrast like, you're playing a team in Purdue on Saturday that has a lot of seniors obviously?

JADEN BRADLEY: We have a talented group of freshmen. They're very poised. They control the tempo. Brayden, Koa, Ivan, Dwayne, if I'm missing a few, just everybody, very poised to get down in there. We're talented. Purdue's a great team, very poised, like you said, an older team. It's going to be a battle, and we're going to go scout, get ready and prepare.

Q. Can you expand on that, what you think of -- were you aware how the Purdue game went right before you guys and kind of looking ahead to that match-up now?

KOA PEAT: No, not really, honestly, I was locked in for this game. We always talk about taking it one game at a time, but we're going to go back to the hotel and watch some film and prepare for Purdue. I know they're traditionally always a really good team. I know they've got a lot of good seniors over there and veteran guys and they've got a really good coach. I'm excited for the challenge.

Q. When did you come to the realization that you truly had the advantage and/or the mismatch down low on the posts and block? When did you finally realize you had the time to take advantage of it?

JADEN BRADLEY: We always talk about taking advantage of our big fellas down there. I feel we've got some of the best bigs in the country in the nation with Big Mo and Tobe. We really put a big emphasis on passing in the post and getting the ball in the post, kind of just taking a breath, kind of reset our offense.

And Big Mo did a great job with double teaming and scoring, and Koa did a great job, and Tobe. They're just a force down there. And it's going to make it easier for the guards to get open shots as well.

Q. When you said you were having more fun, are you saying just in this game the most fun you had or the whole season?

KOA PEAT: The whole season. It's the most fun I've been having in my life playing basketball. I'm happy to do it with these special teammates and special people off the court as well. And special coaches. I just love the whole Arizona program.

Q. You two and four of your teammates all scored at least 14 points tonight. It's the first time in the history of the NCAA Tournament that a team had six players score at least 14 points. Jaden, I'll lead with you. Can you take us into your huddle, your locker room, what the relationships are like that you guys are so willing and able to share the sugar and what it feels like to be playing at this level on this big of a stage this deep into the season?

JADEN BRADLEY: I didn't notice that. It's always good when you share the wealth and you're not worried about scoring and who gets to shine.

I feel like this group of guys really don't care. We just care about when it says 0-0 and that we're winning at the end of the day. Off the court, we love each other. We're supporting each other, whether it's basketball and off-the-court stuff. Always playing games and doing stuff to build our culture. We really did a great job at the beginning of the season setting the foundation with culture, and it's really showing and carrying on right now.

Q. How big were the fans tonight? What were your thoughts on the atmosphere overall?

JADEN BRADLEY: Our fans, we've got the best fans in the nation. At times it felt like a home game. The fans getting rowdy, getting the energy up, and that's always big, playing in environments like that, you get the home fans going. You get the energy, momentum from the crowd. So we really appreciate that. Ready for the next game and the

support and thank you for that.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Coach.

Q. You guys shot 63 percent from the field. That was your best since December. The few 3s that you did shoot, you made, and you got to the foul line exactly how you wanted to. Would you say that today was just the best your team has played so far this season?

TOMMY LLOYD: I'm bad at that stuff, but yeah, obviously we played really well. When I was watching film, I thought we could have a lot of success offensively, whether it's running our flow or transition or just pounding the paint.

Our guys did a great job coming out, executing the game plan and hanging with it. Sometimes, when things are coming easy, offensively -- no disrespect to anybody. Sometimes you just have a flow and it's going easy, a rhythm -- it's hard to stay in that rhythm for an extended period of time.

Whatever, maybe you let your guard down a little bit or you say we're playing great, maybe I'll shoot this three instead of turn this one down and drive it.

So our guys did a great job of just staying steady and making the game simple and trying to find our advantages every possession. I thought our guys were -- I mean, obviously they were great offensively today, and the great thing about basketball and the tough thing about basketball is, unfortunately, that doesn't automatically translate to Saturday. We've got to find a way to kind of recreate that rhythm we had tonight. We know that's going to be a big-time challenge.

Q. You guys win by 21 tonight, but took just eight 3-point attempts. Do you feel like you're defying your peers, the other coaches in college basketball, that you're swimming against the current of the sport right now?

TOMMY LLOYD: Listen, I'm playing a brand of basketball that I think is effective for how our team's built. What's cool about coaching and cool about the game of basketball is there are so many different ways to play. I have no disrespect -- I don't look down on any style of play. We just play a style of basketball that's really effective for how we're built.

You know what, honestly, I don't tell our guys not to shoot 3s. I didn't come out and say, hey, today, let's go single-digit 3s and we'll feel good about that.

No. I mean, we want to take the best shot available. And

it's a possession-by-possession deal. The beautiful thing about basketball, it's a game of random events that you have to make constantly are making decisions.

And that to me is like the most important thing you're teaching is decision-making, and obviously some techniques that help make better decisions.

So I would just say it was a possession-by-possession deal. I didn't at one time today tell our guys don't shoot 3s. When I look up there and I see the bonus, I'm like, okay, we could drive the basketball, you know what I mean? We can go inside and put that foul pressure on people.

Arkansas is playing with a thin bench tonight. So obviously in a one-game scenario they have a thin bench. We wanted to test that, and one of the ways you can test that is constant foul pressure.

Q. Obviously, as deep and as talented as your freshman class is, you have to get them to mesh and learn to make those decisions like you just referenced. How has that process worked? Is some of that traced to Jaden's leadership?

TOMMY LLOYD: For sure, Jaden, Tobe, all those guys get credit. I'll say about those freshmen, they haven't come in acting like they know everything. They've been very, very coachable. And, like, my philosophy is really simple. I coach dudes where they're at. If you need to work on your ball handling, work on your ball handling; if you need to work on passing, work on passing; work on jump stops, work on jump stops.

I don't have a predetermined notion of what they should be. I'm not afraid to challenge them to get better at the basics of the game. And you master the basics. I mean, you have the best chance to be a consistent basketball player. So that's the philosophy.

I'll give those guys credit, because sometimes maybe it is hard for a young player to have a coach like me say, hey, you need to work on jump stopping. That doesn't sound like fun, but it's really effective.

So we coach them where they're at. These guys have been awesome taking the coaching, and our staff's done an unbelievable job. Because, guys, I'm not down in the gym with them doing all those workouts outside of practice.

Our staff has been unbelievable in their commitment to our players as player development and watching individual film with them. I'm really proud of our staff, and I'm really proud of the players for working together to be a cohesive unit, to get better.

Q. I believe after halftime you guys made your first five shots. I mean, in the moment, how big did that feel? Did it feel like a potential knockout punch after that intermission to come out like that?

TOMMY LLOYD: I mean, you're a paranoid coach, you never feel like you knock somebody out. There's probably a reason, maybe I could have subbed earlier, but I'm sitting there thinking, like, okay... probably a little bit crazy because you just want to make sure your team's played really well. You want to make sure you don't do anything to disrupt that and you win the game at the end.

We came out, we started good in the second half, which was really important. Obviously if you have a choice, let's start good. You don't get to push a button that says start good. The guys have to go out and do it. Sometimes they do, and sometimes you don't. Whichever way it happens, there's still a lot of game to be played.

So you just have to get in the flow of the game, get in the rhythm of the game, kind of figure it out, whether it's media timeout by media timeout, possession by possession, however you want to dissect that.

Q. How do you carry this momentum into this next game coming on Saturday?

TOMMY LLOYD: You let it go. You let it go. This game tonight's not going to win us Saturday's game. You go back and then you start the process over again.

You start the basic process of what do we gotta do to beat Purdue, what are their strengths and what our strengths and what are our weaknesses what are their weaknesses, and you just try to figure it out possession by possession. You don't have hubris. You understand how hard this -- you know what I want to say is.

Yeah, I mean that's it. That's exactly what we're going to do. I'm happy we won. But I'm actually looking forward to getting back to the hotel. Hopefully my grandson's up, give him a little hug, and then we're going to get back to work.

Q. You talked about how Coach Murphy kind of instilled the emotional game plan for this type of game. How have you seen your team's emotional intelligence develop over the course of the year, specifically to Jaden and Koa, from the first time you saw them to now?

TOMMY LLOYD: Yeah, I mean, it's gotten better. We've had a few flare-ups in games. Nothing crazy. We've had some issues with that in the past. It's a fine line when you're out there competing. These guys are high-level

athletes. A lot of testosterone and a lot of emotions.

And for whatever reason, people don't want to look like they backed down. My message always to them is the objective for our team is to win the game. So sometimes you have to swallow your pride. You can't just punch somebody in the face. It's not how it works, not in real basketball.

We have to understand we're playing real basketball and the purpose is to try to win the game. So take a breath. Walk away from the incident. We don't need anybody in the bench going over there. I don't even like it when our guys go over to grab a guy, after there's been a melee, because that's the guy that always unintentionally puts his arm up and knocks a guy over and it turns into more.

Just like we had a guy earlier this year try to pick Tobe up. You know what, I don't think Tobe needs somebody to pick him up. I don't think Tobe needs any support. I think he's fine.

So that's been the message to our guys is, guys, let's have a winning mentality, not a false bravado. Tonight you guys are a team that really leans into your size. Purdue, same thing as well.

On the other set of games today, Illinois also picked up the win today, really leaned into their size. I mean, we're kind of seeing this trend where teams are really looking to play big. I mean, what do you think that says about the direction of the sport? You three, and even last year too, the same thing.

MATT PAINTER: Listen, I read this in a book. What was the best candy bar in 1946? What's the best -- the most popular candy bar today? Same as ever.

I haven't flinched. I'm playing the same exact style we learned at Gonzaga that I brought to Arizona. I'm doubling down on it. I'm not worried about trends. I never look at trends. Like, I'm like what do I think is the most effective way to my team play, and what are my strengths as a coach?

You gotta play into that. Why would I try to reinvent myself as a coach when this has been pretty effective. Can I get better at it? Can we double down on our strength?

What I do every day, I look at our strengths and, when I wake up in the morning, how am I going to honor our strengths? When I go to bed at night, how did I honor our strengths throughout the day? We'll work on some weaknesses. But for me, I'm always doubling down on my strengths. That's 100 percent how I think we can be most

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