

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

Thursday, March 26, 2026

San Jose, California, USA

SAP Center

Arkansas Razorbacks
Coach John Calipari

Trevon Brazile

Darius Acuff

Sweet 16 Postgame Media Conference

Arizona 109, Arkansas 88

JOHN CALIPARI: Arizona is really good. If they shoot the ball that way and do the things they did today, wow. You know, I told my team after, I'm proud of them, what they did this year, and I don't want them to look at one game and take away from what they've all accomplished.

But that was a hard one, and they got us from right at the beginning. We kind of kept it a little close, but they're good. Really good team.

Q. TB, obviously Arizona did a lot right offensively. What was the most difficult thing about what they were doing for y'all's defense?

TREVON BRAZILE: Probably getting downhill.

Q. Darius, what will you remember most about this season in Fayetteville when you reflect on your year here as a freshman and all the historic achievements you had?

DARIUS ACUFF: Brotherhood, for sure, with the team. Great support from the fans. I don't know, a lot of good stuff. It was a great year, for sure.

Q. Similarly, Trevon, you played with a lot of guys in the Razorback jersey. Can you tell me a little bit more about how this team maybe stands compared to other teams you played with, or maybe what makes them different in some way?



TREVON BRAZILE: We were really close as a team. We got a lot of chemistry. Sucks that it had to end today.

Q. John, just if you can, Darius's freshman season, how impact do you think it will be in the long run for maybe your tenure here at Arkansas, and what was it like to coach him this year?

JOHN CALIPARI: He was the ultimate competitor, had a will to win, would make baskets because he wasn't afraid to miss late in games.

He and Meleek and the other guys, they set the stage for growth. You're going to have an opportunity to get better, but it's hard. The league is hard. You've got to be a gym rat, if you really want to do this.

So those guys proved it. I had a ball coaching them. I mean, I'm sick that we lost this game, that I couldn't do more to try to make it closer so we could get by. But I hugged each of them after, told them I loved them. I said, what you did for us and how much I appreciate what you did for this program and our state and university. But let me just say this, Arizona was way better than us today.

And I didn't think they'd be way better. I thought we could hang around. I knew it was a bad match-up because of their size. But they're good. They're very well-coached. Tommy's done a great job with that team.

Q. Arizona is the first team in NCAA Tournament game to have six players score 14 points. When you have a team that has that kind of balance, how difficult is it to try to isolate certain guys that you need to take out of it to be able to have a better chance?

JOHN CALIPARI: They made a bunch of shots. I mean, they shot -- that's the highest percentage that I can remember someone shooting. You have to admit, some of them bounced around and went in. You bang the 3 in the corner, we did everything right, bang, bang, boom, it went down. One of those kind of days.

They were on all cylinders, and we weren't quite what we've been. That's why you get a 20-point bulge. I said it yesterday, every one of their guys, they've got a bunch of



... when all is said, we're done.®

guys that can play, and they've got a couple other guys that do exactly what they need to do to help their team win. But they're good.

Q. I know that you previously said that you haven't had any meetings concerning next year's roster yet. But, I guess, when do you expect to have those? I guess, just how important is retention, as you move into the offseason?

JOHN CALIPARI: Normally, when a season ends for me, I'm out of town and we could do stuff by Zoom. You can't do that right now. Now, you've got to figure out your own team, what does it look like? Who wants to come back? Who's putting their name in the draft? How serious is that, if they put their name in the draft? You've got to go through all that. And I've done none of it right now.

I just know that a bunch of guys gave me great hugs, and they appreciate what happened for them. I hope every one of them have a chance to do what they're trying to get done.

I had a great group of guys. We just didn't quite have it. And they played out of their minds.

Q. You've played against a lot of really great teams before. I'm curious to see, does Arizona just kind of fit that mold of having all the right pieces to be able to cut the nets at the end of the season?

JOHN CALIPARI: Florida kind of did this same thing to us and for the same reason, because of their size. Of all the match-ups that I didn't want to see, it was this one. I told my staff, this is a bad match-up; let's figure out how we keep this thing in check. And then maybe if we're close, the pressure flips to them. We never made it where we could get it to 8, 9, 7 and flip the switch. They're good.

Florida beat us -- they had us down 30-some, for the same reason, same size.

Q. What is it about teams with size like Arizona tonight that allowed them to dominate in the paint, dominate down low, and allowed them to take over the game?

JOHN CALIPARI: Combination of physical play, along with size. So their duck-ins are more to move your men out of the way so they can shoot layups. And their bigs are big enough, if you don't do something, they can back you toward the basket and make shots.

But it's not just size, it's girth. And Awaka, we've seen him, obviously, from Tennessee, but just one more big 260-pound body to deal with.

Q. You're talking about Florida and Arizona, their size and physicality. You've got three really good high school players coming in. Does the size and physicality from those two teams that gave you all trouble, does that kind of change how you approach building your roster for next year?

JOHN CALIPARI: Well, I made sure the guys we're bringing in are all five-star players, but they're physical. They've got a beast to them, which you have to have if you're going to play against 25-year-olds. So those three do.

And bringing some guys back, getting a couple other guys that want to be a part of this, seeing how we play and how kids improve, we'll see. We're all in the same boat right now. How about this? You have no recruits. You have no idea who's coming back. You don't have the money you had a year ago. You do not. Now all of a sudden you're trying to keep guys, figure out who else out there wants to come, and who wants to put, like, a bidding war, which we wouldn't be involved in. But that's all there, that we all have to deal with.

Then guys going pro, okay, do you think they may come back or not? You're guessing. It's a little bit harder than it's been.

Q. You obviously had one of the best freshmen in the country in Darius Acuff. But what did you make of Brayden Burries tonight? Is he everything as advertised, and how does he compare to the rest of this elite freshman class?

JOHN CALIPARI: Yeah, this freshman class is legit. And part of it is, they're a bunch of kids physically able to play. If you're not mentally prepared, NBA is no boys allowed.

If you're not mentally or physically ready to play or your skills are not to the level they need to be to be in that league and have an impact immediately, you'll struggle. But there's a bunch of them in this class that are physically able to do it or have a skill level that sets them aside, sets them apart from others. So, no, there's a bunch of them in this class.

Q. Trevon stuck around for you as you kind of started to implement your culture at Arkansas. How do you sum up what he's given you over the course of these last couple seasons?

JOHN CALIPARI: Oh, he's been terrific. He didn't have a great game today. But he still did some good stuff. We needed him, you know, when they talked to me yesterday

about the game, I said, he has to have a big game. He played good, but we needed more if we were going to have a chance, and we knew that. But he's gotten so much better.

I mean, you're talking about a 6'10" athlete that can guard multiple positions, that's going to get stronger and more physical, that has good skills for someone his size. No, he's got a bright future.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports