

# NCAA Men's Basketball Championship - Final Four: UConn vs Michigan

Sunday, April 5, 2026

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Hinkle Fieldhouse

Michigan Wolverines

Coach Dusty May

Nimari Burnett

Will Tschetter

Finals Pregame Media Conference



really, really good guys that are high achievers, that want to do it the way we want to do it.

And when the Oklahoma City Thunder won the championship last year and I'm friends with Coach Daigneault and a lot of people in that organization. I wasn't judging them because Shai Alexander was drafted by the Clippers or because they signed Isaiah Hartenstein as a free agent.

I thought, wow, those guys played beautiful basketball, that's a great team, that's a real model for young players to watch, a group that obviously cared about each other, that played the game the right way, that represented their organization, their city, their families, their last name.

Whatever the rules are, we're going to go at it, but our job is to put a competitive roster/team on the floor that represents Michigan the way we think they deserve to be represented.

**Q. Dusty, a lot of players talk about what they get out of practices. The practices in many cases are harder than the games. Talk about your toughness building and what goes on in those practices.**

DUSTY MAY: Well, we just try to create an environment that will prepare our players to play well in the games. Player development is helping your guys perform better on game nights while also always looking towards their future and their individual careers.

Our practices are designed to challenge them, to make them think, to figure out solutions on their own, to lean on their teammates when things aren't going well.

We feel like if we don't play well in the games, it's because of our poor planning in the weight room, conditioning, individual workouts, team workouts, whatever the case.

I think that's one of the reasons we play with a level of looseness at the biggest moments, because we feel like we've either won or lost these games a long time ago.

DUSTY MAY: I heard the topic of conversation was my hair and my age, Coach Hurley --

**Q. I think it was how well you're aging. A credit to your skin and hair care routine.**

DUSTY MAY: Well, when God gives you the raspy voice and height and lack of vertical jump he's got to bless you with something.

Obviously still, it's an honor to be one of the two teams still standing, playing in the last Monday of an amazing college basketball season.

**Q. I know neither you nor your colleagues designed the system that college sports is operating under right now, but there are a lot of people who look at a team like the one you have and say, this is not what college sports should be; you should not be able to go compile a team like this the way you did. The question I have is as a coach, how would you describe the value of taking guys who maybe were not the best versions of themselves previously and making them the best versions of themselves with your program?**

DUSTY MAY: Look, I know this is going to set off a Twitter firestorm, but I think we all are better in certain situations than others. There's an environment that's right for me. There's an environment that's right for you. Sometimes you don't choose the right environment from the beginning or sometimes as people we change and we need something different, for a number of reasons.

The way we choose to look at it, we're going to bring in



**Q. Just a few weeks ago the team was pretty distraught when they lost the Big Ten championship to Purdue and they had to refocus and regroup before the NCAA Tournament. Now this team has been so dominant. What did you say to your team or what did the team do to refocus and regroup in this tournament run to regroup from that terrible loss a few weeks ago?**

DUSTY MAY: We didn't have to say a lot. We have a very bright group that's very self-aware and we have great leadership. We knew we had lost our edge a little bit.

But also, we're starting a new season, so it gave us a chance to take a deep breath, recalibrate, refocus and also reflect on what we did when we were at our best and what we were thinking about and what we were focused on. It was more of just a reboot, just a restart, reboot.

There weren't any wholesale changes. There wasn't any faith, family, and the Michigan Wolverine speech. It was just, let's get back to doing what we know are the right things.

**Q. What can you tell us about Yax? I believe he did get an MRI this morning.**

DUSTY MAY: Yeah, all imaging has come back clean, and he's getting treatment and doing rehab all day today. I'm sure he'll give it a go tomorrow, but that will be entirely up to him and the medical staff. They'll tell me if he can go, and if he can -- we were laughing. He played the second half like a 38 year old at the YMCA -- and a really good 38 year old at the YMCA.

Whatever version of Yaxel we get it's going to be somebody that helps us play better basketball.

**Q. A lot was made in your preparation for the Final Four having been there before. Now having won that first game, how beneficial do you feel like that experience was, and now heading to the National Championship game, what does the preparation look like for you not having been here before? I remember back to the first Final Four you mentioned calling your past mentors and whatnot. You do that again or how do you go about that?**

DUSTY MAY: Well, if experience is a major factor we're in big trouble tomorrow. Obviously Coach Hurley has been here often and recently. We are versed in short preps. You make these multi-team events, you play conference tournaments, and we do have a style of play that we felt like from the beginning would be difficult to prepare for in a short turn.

In the Big Ten you get some scheduling breaks where you might play a team on Tuesday and then play someone else on Friday and someone else on Sunday. So there are quick turns.

Based on how our system is designed, we do feel like it's a challenge to prepare for us, but I also feel like UConn on a short prep is challenging, as well. Maybe one of the reasons we're both still standing and have been able to advance in these tournament settings.

**Q. I'm curious how your experience as a student manager under Bob Knight, how did that shape you as a person and help you succeed adds a coach?**

DUSTY MAY: Well, my high school coach Mark Barnhizer was a lot like Coach Knight. I think Coach Hurley has a lot of those same attributes, where if these young guys leave our program with the ability to bring it every single day, maximum effort, focus, whatever they need to be great at their job, then we've succeeded because that's probably the hardest thing to do is to have these standards where you have to at least bring your best effort every single day.

I think that's the thing with Coach Knight. Obviously there's a fear element and a fear of disappointing him that you wanted to be thinking ahead, you wanted to be on your toes. You're always anticipating what's next.

And looking back, I think that's probably one of the biggest components of problem solving where you're anticipating what could be the next problem or problems, you're figuring out solutions or contingencies in advance, and if those become a problem you're ready as opposed to just always being shocked at what's in front of you.

I think that's probably the things that -- those are the things I learned most from Coach Knight, the preparation, the anticipation of whatever comes next.

**Q. I want to stick with Bob Knight. The first immediately eligible players in college basketball were JuCo guys. Bob Knight wasn't afraid to take some of those players, William Gladness, I think Rob Turner when you were there. What did you learn from bringing guys from other places and maybe the advantages of that as you move forward in your coaching career?**

DUSTY MAY: That's a great point. A couple of those guys I was friends with for a long time, William Gladness and Len Washington, some of those guys, and they brought a lot to the program, and key smart. Thank goodness they brought him in as a none freshman or they wouldn't have the '87 National Championship.

We've spent a lot of time deconstructing our programs, trying to figure out what we've done that's worked, what's been luck, what's been great processes, and one of the things that I think are -- what we do as well as anything is see the best in people, and instead of bringing in a player and saying he's too this or too that, it's okay, how can we use that as an advantage. How can we use his weakness as an advantage, and what can we build many in our system that can help be successful and then try to breathe life into him and pump him up with confidence and hopefully get him to believe that they could conquer the world and tackle any team.

So that's the way we choose to do it, but I enjoy learning from new people. When I have an assistant coach leave, I don't get mad and try to hold them back. I just think, what an opportunity -- Justin Joyner on our staff, what an opportunity for him. I'm excited that we'll either elevate someone into a new role or we'll bring someone else in that can learn from and they can add something new to our equation.

I think it's a lot like that where if a guys leaves, yes, it stings for a minute, but some of our greatest wins are because someone chose to leave and then the skies opened up and dropped an Alijah Martin in your lap that takes you to the Final Four.

**Q. How do you change what you do defensively against UConn's off-ball screening, and how does Yaxel's injury potentially play a role in how you defend all that action off ball?**

DUSTY MAY: It's going to be a challenge, healthy or injured or somewhere in between. Obviously, the most difficult thing about UConn is their ability to get from one thing to the next to the next to the next. There's no stoppage. Once they get you in action, they keep you in action. They have amazing counters and layers to their offense.

It's going to take an extremely disciplined and focused approach every single possession because if you let your guard down, they take advantage of it, and we've played teams like this in our league.

I think Iowa is a great example of a team that plays not stylistically similar but philosophically. They challenge everything. Their physicality jumps out. It's going to be a lower possession game than we're used to.

Like I said, if we're not committed to defending the full shot clock every single possession and finding a way to rebound those long threes, then it's going to be a tough

night for us.

**Q. I wanted to ask you about Alex Karaban. We were talking about transfers earlier, that's a guy that's won a lot of games at one school, connective tissue to two national championship teams. As someone who's been around the game, how do you evaluate the value of someone like that on a roster when you're trying to build a winner?**

DUSTY MAY: I feel like we have a couple guys like that on our team, and Will Tschetter is a great example, the first call I made after accepting the Michigan job was to Juwan Howard. I wanted to get a layout of the roster, and obviously his son Jace was on our team, so he was no longer the former coach, he was the father of one of our players.

When he told me about Will Tschetter and Nimari and Tarris Williams and these guys he had unbelievable things to say about them, so we felt like we're building a foundation. We need people like this.

So when you look at how many he's won and when you hear Coach Hurley say about him, those are the type of guys that can bring a group together and they walk the walk, they teach all of your unwritten rules. They share the culture of their experience in UConn basketball.

It streamlines the process. I give Roddy Gayle and Will and Nimari and LJ as much credit as I do our staff for the recruitment of our new guys. We took four guys out of the portal. If you listen to the college basketball gospel, we took 17 of them, and that's all we have and whatever case in year two and we should have a bunch of fifth year seniors in year two, we just don't.

But I give those guys a lot of credit because they brought them in because they wanted to be playing on this stage. It's not always common for guys that could potentially lose minutes, shots, accolades, personal ambition things for the betterment of the group, and that's why we're here, because our guys have put the team, the unit above themselves.

**Q. You mentioned Coach Joyner. UConn has Coach Murray in kind of a similar situation. How have you seen Coach Joyner juggle both responsibilities the last couple weeks?**

DUSTY MAY: I feel like he was tampered with, first of all. He was under contract at Michigan. (Laughter).

He's done a great job. We obviously -- there's a process of -- he started with the normal responsibilities and then I



grabbed him and just said, I would prefer this to be your last scout, and he said, no, I want to do this right. I told him, I said, I feel like you're a lot like me personality-wise; you're going to be obsessed with putting together a good team and staff for Oregon State next year.

I think it's very fair for you to stay here and still bring your personality and your coaching to the equation. But as far as the details and the 15 hours of scouting an opponent, I think you should use that time to get off to a great start for Oregon State.

We've had him going up, going out west, coming back, but we also felt like it's very important for him to finish the job with us, and he's done both roles really well. They're off to a great start in Corvallis, and he continues to do an amazing job with our guys.

**Q. Danny Hurley was talking about the unique challenges of being such a dominant team, his team two years ago set all sorts of records; you guys are following that same sort of path. Your team has been called the Monstars from the movie. How do you handle that, and does it present a unique challenge for you and your players?**

THE MODERATOR: The movie is Space Jam, by the way. It's the second Space Jam reference of the week, just for everyone keeping track.

DUSTY MAY: I think it's a great problem to have. We've talked about that. We have a team that we think is elite. But we also know that doesn't -- once the ball is tipped, that means nothing. You still have to do all the things that got you to this point, and you have to weather storms. You have to handle success.

So we're very, very grateful that we feel like we have a roster that can match up with any team in the country. These aren't best of seven series. These are one-game seasons, and you win or go home, and we've made it this far, and I'd hate to drop the last one.

**Q. Dusty, you've spoken a lot about being open and transparent with players. What were those conversations like with Tarris Reed when you got the Michigan job and what do you make of his development?**

DUSTY MAY: I'll start with his development. He's incredibly impressive, and it's another situation where he went to a place that that environment was perfect for him. What he needed at that stage of his career was perfect for him, and I'm sure Juwan and their staff gets a lot of credit for his skill and the steps that it takes for a big guy to grow

and develop, even though I don't think they would want any of the credit.

My conversations when I got the job, I believe he was in the transfer portal already, and I know people around him, I know his coaches. So we started the process like we did with all the guys of let's get to know each other.

He had a lot of connections at Michigan. He had a lot of relationships, and there were some things pulling at him that I think would have been very convenient for him to stay.

He also had heard -- look, college basketball is very -- there's a rumor mill that you can find out just about anything you want to find out if you ask the right person, and he had heard that Vlad was probably going to be coming with us, and Vlad being a true center and him being a true center. So he came in, and I talked to his parents and I talked to everyone around him and he basically said, Coach, I know Vlad is coming with you. Do you think you can make that work? I said, hey, Tarris, you both are really good; it won't be easy. We haven't played like that before. But I'm very confident that because of both of your skill set and talent that we can figure it out.

Now you're going to have to expand your game. You're going to have to become a better triple handoff guy. We're going to have to add some things to your game that you don't currently do if we're going to make it work, but you know what? Let's just stay in the gym, keep working, keep being around getting to know each other, and see if this is right for you and right for us and we'll revisit in a week or two.

And then we ended up getting a commitment from Danny Wolf and I think the writing was on the wall then that this probably can't work with three seven-footers. It would've been fun to try in hindsight, but, yeah at that point it was well known that he was going to look at something different.

We've maintained a relationship with him. The guys on our team, they all speak highly of him. They stay in contact. We've crossed paths. His younger brother was on the circuit so I'd see his parents in gyms and whatnot.

It's a great family. He deserves the success. It's been fun to watch. He's put on a show in this tournament.

**Q. Elliot goes 5 of 17 from the field with six turnovers yesterday but it doesn't matter because he gives you 13 points, 10 assists, 4 steals. What's been the evolution of the trust you've had in him to kind of rock out and play through those mistakes because he is the**

## engine to your team?

DUSTY MAY: Well, with Elliot, we knew based on all the intelligence on him in high school that he had a unique gift, but we also felt like our environment and the players we could put around him would help him be even more successful.

He's been awesome. Obviously his stat line -- we look at stats and we analyze stats, but stats aren't the end all because he had three in the last two minutes when the game was out of hand and he didn't deserve a couple of them, I'll just leave it at that, for whatever reason. Some of his shots weren't misses. He'll take the misses. He doesn't care about his stats either.

We felt like the only way we could get the ball to Aday, Krivas' drop coverage is as good as anyone in college basketball, so we felt like the only way we could get the ball to Aday versus their two-on-two drop coverage was to shoot it over the rim and hit the weak side of the backboard.

The first play of the game was a pass from Elliot. When you look at the stat sheet it says a missed shot and a put-back.

We felt like he controlled the game. He played at an exceptionally high level and he's a wizard with the ball. He gets our guys in closeouts almost every single possession, and there aren't a lot of guys in college basketball that can do that.

**Q. When you reflect on the season, the 35 odd games you've played with one left to go, what stands out as the single most positive experience you've had thus far?**

DUSTY MAY: I can't think of one right now, to be honest. I think of the journey we've been on, the highs and lows. So proud of this group.

And I don't even want to talk about -- we'll reflect on all this later, but the mental toughness that they've shown to go through a Big Ten season in these environments against these teams and not lose a road game is something that I'll remember forever.

The way we went from being a marginal average basketball team to being an elite basketball team in a three-day window, is something that hopefully we can bottle that and try that again in the future.

But we'll think back on all these things later on. Right now we're just trying to be where our feet are, blinders on, and

focus on playing 40 good minutes against UConn.

**Q. It's fair to say that yesterday was probably if not the most impressive win in all of college basketball this season, and has every reason to give your team confidence going into tomorrow. But at the same time you are also playing a team that earned its way to the National Championship. How are you guys not looking too far ahead and thinking that you guys are going to ride the momentum of yesterday knowing that, like you said, it's not a seven-game series; it's 40 minutes; anything can happen?**

DUSTY MAY: Yeah, we never ride momentum. It's what do we need to do to prepare to play well against UConn. They have championship DNA. They're conditioned to win. This run they're on is one of the best -- probably the best since John Wooden. If we think any momentum or wave, riding in on a wave is going to take care of UConn, then we're going to be very disappointed at about 11:00 tomorrow night or whenever the game concludes.

We've got to bring our hardhat. We've got to be prepared to play disciplined basketball for 40 minutes and too get too high or too low and continue to play for each other like we've done.

**Q. Is an old-fashioned sentiment like winning one for the Big Ten, ending the Big Ten's title drought, is that anywhere in the conversation with you, or is that sort of thinking from a bygone era that isn't really compatible with college basketball in 2026? And if I can sneak Bob Knight back in, what would he make of your job now, what goes into it, the way you have to do it, build rosters and such?**

DUSTY MAY: Well, Coach Knight was incredibly bright so he was always going to adapt to -- our job at the end of the day is to help people. We're educators. We're teachers. Hopefully our guys all leave our program significantly better and more prepared than they were when they got there.

As far as winning one for the Big Ten, we want to win one for each other first. Those that have supported us and put us in position to be here, all those that have poured into everyone in our locker room. We want to win one for the University of Michigan who we represent and our fan base.

And then also we're in the Big Ten, so we take pride in representing the Big Ten. And as far as bygone history, all that stuff, I am from an era where whatever team I'm on that's who I'm fighting with. If Michigan is on my jersey, Michigan is on your jersey, then I'm with you, no questions asked.

It's just how -- yeah, we take a lot of pride in representing Michigan, and with that, the Big Ten conference because every year we're competing against each other, we're competing against the SEC, the Big 12, the Big East, all these other leagues.

The better we can do as a group, as a league, and it also helps financially as TV contracts are renegotiated and things like that. So we do, we have to do well for us and the Big Ten if we want to continue to be on the cutting edge and hopefully be in the premier basketball league in the country.

**Q. You said in Chicago I think the first weekend in Chicago about the additional responsibility Trey was taking on with LJ out. Obviously he did some of that there. How has he sort of continued to handle that, and have you sort of internally continued to put more and more on him as he's adjusted through the tournament, because certainly against Tennessee, against Alabama, there were some key moments in those games where it seemed like you had some maybe additional trust in him?**

DUSTY MAY: Yeah, we threw him into the fire, to be honest. This hasn't been gradual. It began the day LJ went out. We handed him the ball in practice and instantly started challenging him with the terminology, with the game management, with the actions that we could help him with, with the pressure releases when he did feel some heat from smaller guards and what to call when Aday had it going or when we needed to manage the clock.

And so it became a crash course, and he made several mistakes, and then the next day he didn't make very many mistakes and then fewer and fewer and fewer.

This game, our team are very important to him. He spends a lot of time -- he comes from a great family. He's well-rounded. He's disciplined. There hasn't been a day this year where his temperature has changed. It's been about the work. Whether he had 20 on the road in a Big Ten game or he had two points and shot 1 for 10 from the field he's been the exact same throughout.

That's probably the hardest thing for freshmen to do is to go through a five-, six-month season with the level of consistency he has.

**Q. One of your strengths over the years has been maximizing your players and getting the best out of it, but roster construction in the first place seems to be right up there. I'm wondering when you are putting a roster together, how intentionally are you looking at the pieces and the way they fit together and not just**

**assembling the stars? Does it feel like one of those infinity puzzles where it doesn't have to be a certainty, there's ways to sort all the pieces together?**

DUSTY MAY: I would say we look more at personality traits. There's a baseline of talent for us to recruit you at Michigan, but we also try to recruit guys that are unselfish that enjoy passing the ball, that either love to compete or love to hoop.

If you love to hoop you're going to enjoy being around us every day, and if you don't love to hoop then the competition piece is going to be enough for us.

Then after that, as far as being big, we felt like that's very safe defensively. If we can be really big then we've got that side of the ball covered because we have confidence in our ability to teach the game on that side.

Then offensively it's always a puzzle because there's so much that goes into it. We just want guys with unique skill sets, that have a skill set. They don't have to be great at everything, but also teaching the self-awareness of what they are great at. They need to live in those strengths, while we're going to work diligently after practice, before practice expanding their game and showing them that their long-term growth and development as individuals is important to us, as well.

We want to win at a high, high level. I want to be at this press conference on Sunday next year.

But we also want our guys to feel like when they leave here that we poured into them and invested in them outside of just winning for us and winning for Michigan. And I say the guys that put the team above themselves -- we don't expect them to put the team -- just put the team on the same plane.

Their individual success, development is important to them, and it has to be important for us if we're going to earn their trust, and they're going to do what our guys have done.

**Q. You talked a lot about Tarris Reed before. There's been some times during this run where he's absolutely carried Connecticut offensively. What specific threats does he pose, and how would you evaluate his matchup with Aday? Obviously Aday has got a few inches on him. Should they cover each other how would you evaluate that?**

DUSTY MAY: Yeah, I'm not sure what the matchups are going to be. Obviously yesterday we had Aday on Koa Peat. We have some guys that you can move them around the chess board.

As far as what challenges he presents, obviously his size, force and tenacity. That's the one thing that they've gotten out of him, man. He's a force. He's relentless. He plays now like their coach coaches and their coach played and their coach's dad coached and his teams played. That's a real testament of him finding the right environment for him.

The rebounding, the defensive rebounding, the offensive rebounding, the deep position in the post obviously is going to be a challenge, because if we let a two feet from the basket we are going to be in foul trouble like we were early last night, and they're going to be scoring at the rim and they're going to be managing the clock and controlling the possessions.

We've got to be more disruptive than we've been at times, but I can't say enough good things about Tarris because I watched about 20 games of him play at Michigan and I see where he is now to where he was, and you don't make that jump without a lot of hard, intentional work.

**Q. Dusty, Mike Boynton said yesterday if he gets another chance to coach as a head coach it will be because of you, because of this, but can you talk about the value he's brought another opportunity and what's really the primary value he's brought to your team?**

DUSTY MAY: Well, I have no idea if he's going to get another opportunity or when or where. He should. He's an elite basketball coach. He did a really good job at Oklahoma State, especially considering the circumstances, and I'm not going to go on that soapbox.

But he's just as good as I am. I'm the head coach at Michigan. He's just as good as I am. He's just as prepared. He's been invaluable for me. He thinks -- the best part about him is he covers my blind spots before they're blind. There's not a day that goes by that he doesn't call me and want to take something off of my plate that I haven't thought of, and that's what he is. He's a forward thinker. He's got a great feel for people.

I don't know if I've ever met anyone that didn't say positive things about him, especially in this climate when we love to say negative things about anyone and everyone.

He's just a professional. I hope he does. But I hope we can keep him for a little bit longer because I know as long as he's here, we'll be better than we would otherwise.

**Q. There has been one thing that's gotten under this team's skin a little bit; it's the possession battle, slow tempo team. You guys like to run. What's the plan for**

**a team that is slow like UConn?**

WILL TSCHETTER: Yeah, I think through the year, we found ways to use our basketball IQ and work through games like that. You talk about games like Iowa where it's super low possession and it's kind of a grind it out sort of game. We're going to take lessons from that game and apply them to this one and make sure we learn from mistakes that we made then and apply it to this game.

NIMARI BURNETT: Yeah, I think we've been challenged with different ways to beat teams over the course of the year, and so our mindset is to dictate the pace still and find different ways to get extra possessions and still kind of fill up the scoreboard. But just playing the right way of basketball that we've been playing throughout the course of the year.

**Q. What is it about Dusty and the staff as teachers of the game that gets you guys ready to perform the way you have in these tournament style games the last two years?**

WILL TSCHETTER: Yeah, I feel like our preparation is second to none. Our coaches have us dialed in on personnel, on tendencies of players, things like that. I feel like our ability to absorb information quickly and apply it on the floor in quick turnarounds like this, like in Vegas, things like that, has been really, really -- done at a really high level.

Obviously it's just going to take one more time, quick transition, absorbing information at a high level in order for us to be successful.

NIMARI BURNETT: Just to piggyback off what Will said, the coaches have done an amazing job of finding ways for us to impact the game offensively, finding their weaknesses and things that they kind of give us offensively and defensively.

Our mindset is to exploit those weaknesses or areas of exploitation, and it will allow us to just continue to play our style of basketball, playing against an opponent that likes to slow down the tempo while also just dictating the pace and dictating the things we need to establish throughout the game.

**Q. Nimari, yesterday you told me that Tarris Reed was one of your favorite teammates ever. What about him makes you say that? For both of you, if you could reflect on the fact that three players from that team will be playing the National Championship tomorrow.**

NIMARI BURNETT: For sure. The reason I said that is

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

because him as a person. He's always been just a happy person, someone who is always joyful of the moment and just a joyful teammate even during that time, that year where things weren't as happy, and it was -- most of the time it was low. He brought joy. He brought enthusiasm. He's just a great person, and we also have similar beliefs and faith. So I have a good connection with him and with that.

Yeah, like I said, he's one of the best people that I've been around in my collegiate career.

WILL TSCHETTER: Yeah, T Reed is the light that you want to see in the world. He's always been a bright spot, whether he's been in this program or at UConn. It's been great to follow his journey and see his development, how he's stayed true to himself. I wish him all the best, except for tomorrow.

**Q. If you could both talk about how Dusty prepares you -- you've talked about how well he prepares you, but prepares you for the big moments and prepares you to be tough. He talks about you come out of practices believing that you're ready for anything in any game.**

NIMARI BURNETT: Yeah, Dusty and the staff does a great job of preparing us for the moment by reminding us that we've put in the work to deserve this moment, that we all deserve this moment, to step on the court in front of our fans and so many fans around the world to impact the game and to play at a high level because we've worked so hard as a team, worked so hard individually to be ready for those moments that we all have dreamed of since we were children.

**Q. Coach May talked about how your practices prepare you for anything in a game --**

WILL TSCHETTER: Yeah, I'm good now. I feel like it just goes back to just the trust that he has in us and the trust that we have in him and how that's a two-way street. I feel like he trusts the game plan for us that he puts in place for us, and we trust whatever he says, too.

**Q. On a similar note, Coach May doesn't only do the basics of coaching, but he also thinks outside of the box. As part of the broadcast last he was already scouting the first game before you even played, and it was also reported on the broadcast that you guys were shooting hoops in the middle of the big house to work on depth perception coming into the tournament. Can you talk about Coach May thinking outside the box and what that is from you guys' perspective as players being able to be prepared for literally every moment**

**potentially that could happen in the tournament?**

NIMARI BURNETT: Yeah, man, that's what makes being a player for Coach Dusty so much fun, because he thinks of the little nuances of the game, the things that you don't really think about. Just one of the other practices I talked about this before. We were just running our normal offense and going over sets, and he had Elliot and Aday just working on off the backboard alleyoops and things like that. It's just so much fun because that is hard to scout that. It's hard to be prepared for that. It's hard to understand little things that you can talk about but the other team may not be ready for, and it just separates us in a positive way.

**Q. Will, this is a team that sets a ton of off-ball screen and a lot of really strong players that broke Cam Boozer's face. How do you prepare for that physicality, especially the off-ball stuff?**

WILL TSCHETTER: Yeah, playing in the Big Ten for four years has definitely prepared myself for that. I feel like the physicality of this season in general for our team has -- we've seen such a wide variety of offensive styles. You see like we refer back to Iowa a lot with this game and their continuity and their patience getting shots is fairly similar to UConn's.

We're just kind of drawing parallels from them and ways that we can learn from that game and apply it to this one and really stay locked in on our defensive game plan and what we can do to mitigate their flow and disrupt their offense the best we can.

**Q. Building on the question from earlier, we've discussed this all year about a couple years ago where things were and where you are now. But now that the moment is here and Tarris is on the other side, could you have imagined in the days when you guys had that lunch, maybe it was last year, as you were debating to come back to the program with a new coach that both of you would be here, Harris would be there, and all three of you would have a chance at a National Championship?**

WILL TSCHETTER: Yeah, I feel like when we were laying our foundation for this year's team the pieces started to click. I felt like we definitely had a good understanding of what our goals railroad going to be as a team. Obviously getting a little bit of a taste of what a championship feels like last year at the Big Ten Tournament, I felt like -- I don't want to speak for Nimari, but I feel like him and I are on the same page in saying that we wanted more of that in the upcoming years.

To kind of be in this situation and then obviously be matched up against T Reed, with the great guy that he is and kind of drawing back to how much he meant to us in that tough year, it's a really, really cool opportunity.

**Q. Did either of you shoot at Michigan stadium?**

NIMARI BURNETT: Yeah, Will started it. He sent it in a group chat. He was like, you guys need to get up in here. We were all like, I don't think we're going to do that. But at the same time, we come to the gym anyway and we get up shots.

I was with Drew at the time and Drew was like, we're going out there. I'm like, I'm ready for it, and Will set that foundation.

WILL TSCHETTER: Yeah, I mean, it was a sunny warm day. I had my shirt off. I was vibing out there, man. Felt like I was back home on the farm shooting hoops.

**Q. We've talked a lot about Dusty and the analytics and all the prep, but we know that he's got a good sense of humor, too. How has he --**

WILL TSCHETTER: Did he tell you that, or -- I'm just kidding.

**Q. How has he kept things light? All the fun stuff, he lets you stick your finger in his ear during postgame press conferences -- how does he make it light for you guys, and do you have a favorite moment of that levity?**

WILL TSCHETTER: I'll speak to my favorite part of his sense of humor. I think his nickname game is ridiculous. He's got nicknames 1 through 16 for the players, and however many managers we have. I think every single one of them have at least one nickname, and they're all ridiculously creative and pretty unique to every person.

I think that just also shows how much he cares about every person in the program and how much they mean to him, and it really just shows that he sees you and he appreciates you.

NIMARI BURNETT: Yeah, his mind is crazy like that. I guess you could call it like cognitive functioning. It functions crazy. His memory is insane. He calls me sometimes Burn It because of my last name. I don't know if you heard his, but Tchett Bomb. Dusty is a fun character, and he does a great job of having a sense of humor and being a great people person, but also when it's time to lock in, he's 100 percent focused.