

# 2026 Phillips 66 Big 12 Men's Basketball Tournament

Thursday, March 12, 2026

Kansas City, Missouri, USA

T-Mobile Center

## BYU Cougars

## Coach Kevin Young

## Robert Wright III

## AJ Dybantsa

### Postgame Press Conference



that's disappointing. And, again, I think to your actual question of the turnovers, yeah, we just drove into a crowd too much.

**Q. AJ had an off night offensively. He still had 26 --**

KEVIN YOUNG: How did he have an off night? He was with 7-of-18 from the field, 9-of-10 from the free-throw line, 3-of-5 from three and had 26 points. Not a bat night.

**Q. Not a bad night -- by his standards, though, maybe not. But just can you summarize in one or two sentences what makes him so special?**

KEVIN YOUNG: He can do everything on the court that you want a basketball player to do. I'm not trying to get snappy. I thought he played a great offensive game. He should have had, like I said, the guy should have had 40 again. And I'm just calling a spade a spade.

His combination of the size, skill, mental capacity, processing speed, and the "it" factor.

**Q. It was announced you broke the Big 12 tourney scoring record held by KD. Obviously personal accolades are not your focus, but how has this conference and this tourney really help you grow as a player and as a person? And what do you hope to gather from that as you are going into the NCAA?**

AJ DYBANTSA: First, I'll speak about the accolades. That's special. Kevin Durant, obviously everybody knows he's my favorite player. That's one the only record I broke this weekend, so it feels good to just break his records.

How did it prepare us for March, like the real run? I mean, we needed some extra games under our belt so we were actually staying in our locker room that we're happy that we played that first two games. Kind of showed our identity. We're about perseverance. We're about resilience.

And then to play Houston, I don't think any other team plays as hard as Houston in the country. So to be able to play them twice, get that type of feedback and get that type

Houston - 73, BYU - 66

THE MODERATOR: We've got Coach Young here along with AJ Dybantsa and Rob Wright.

KEVIN YOUNG: Credit to Houston. They played a good game. They deserved to win. They made the plays that were necessary down the stretch. When you play Houston, you've got to keep the possession game pretty close the best you can.

There were too many offensive rebounds down the stretch. Turned us over too much. We turned them over as well, but that was really the story. And Flemings is a special player that made a big play. So give them credit.

**Q. Kevin, you bring up the turnovers. Triple the amount of turnovers you guys had against Houston in the first go-around. What was Houston doing, was it self-inflicted? Or what was the issue with turnovers?**

KEVIN YOUNG: Some of it we were driving into crowds for sure, but I'll just cut to the chase right out of the gate. AJ took 10 free throws, Rob Wright took four, and I don't ever go there -- and again, Houston beat us. Stone cold. They won the game.

AJ should have shot 20 free throws, minimum in that game. Rob Wright only shoots four free throws. Guy drives every time. And Sharp shoots 10 -- and I'm not saying the officials were, like, oh, we're going to give Houston calls and not BYU. I'm not suggesting that in any form or fashion.

I thought they flat out missed calls, bottom line. And that led to some turnovers, led to some frustration. And so

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of film, I think we're prepared for the tournament.

**Q. AJ, it may have been the missed calls that were suggested, but not getting to the free-throw line in the second half, Coach Sampson talked about sagging off of you and forcing jump shots. How were they able to force you to take jump shots but still try and make you uncomfortable at the same time?**

AJ DYBANTSA: Are you saying how good of a job did they do?

**Q. How were they able to limit you from the getting to the free-throw line while also forcing you to take jump shots?**

AJ DYBANTSA: I mean, they just packed the paint. When you pack the paint it's tough to (indiscernible) in the paint. Obviously I live in the paint, and they're trying to force me to take threes. I made three of them, my shot was feeling good. And I guess they played good defense and showed their hands a lot. So I only shot 10 free throws.

**Q. This is for everybody up there. AJ, you said that Houston, nobody plays harder than Houston. Rob and AJ, you guys played two of the most minutes for your team tonight. How do you manage to go down to the wire while still playing your own game against a team that plays so physical and so aggressive?**

AJ DYBANTSA: You've just got to master physicality, master toughness. That's the only way you'll be in the game with them. If you lose those two battles you'll be down 20 in a heartbeat. Offensively we just have to play our game, try to get downhill, try to facilitate for our teammates -- (lost audio).

KEVIN YOUNG: And I'll add something to that. It's hard to play -- I don't think I've ever as a coach played three games in three days before. It's tough. I think our guys, especially these two, logging the minutes they had in three straight games is extremely impressive.

Rob, the toughness and resiliency that he showed with the injury he suffered in the first game, to be able to just go out there and compete with that type of pain in his mouth and in his face and just still play his game, play defense, get to the basket while sacrificing his own personal health, it says a lot about his toughness.

And, again, to log the amount of minutes that these guys did in three straight games and play at an extremely high level is impressive. I'm extremely proud of both of them for that.

ROBERT WRIGHT III: We fought hard. It was our third game in three days, like everyone said. They just won the boards at the end. I think if Mou hit that 3, it's a different story.

**Q. Coach Young, while facing ranked Houston team, what did you try and focus on throughout the night to slow down their offensive efforts?**

KEVIN YOUNG: I thought our defense for the most part was good. I think when you think "Houston," you immediately think defense, you think them turning you over, you think their rebounding. But they're a good offensive team. They're organized. And they've got guys who can shoot the basketball.

I thought we actually did a really good job defensively for the most part. Flemings, we let get loose a little bit too much there down the stretch. In retrospect would have liked to try to get the ball out of his hands, which is a lot easier said than done when they have the type of shooting they have out there.

So I was proud of our fight. In terms of what we did schematically, to your question, we definitely put two on the ball a lot more than we did when we played them at our place. We found some comfort in doing that of late. I thought our back-side defense was pretty good as well.

But they're a good club, so they make you -- they stress your defense out, and they've got guys who can make plays with the game on the line, which is what you need this time of year.

**Q. I was going to ask you about the fatigue factor, which you already answered, but I'll ask you: What is your team's readiness level now heading into March Madness?**

KEVIN YOUNG: I think we're extremely ready. This has been a season of, like, three different stories. I talked about that. And AJ mentioned it, I mentioned it to the guys in the locker room, you know, I think it's a blessing that we were able to come here and play in the first -- to get three games here. It was important because we were still searching for this group's identity relative because of all the injuries that we've had, and I'm really proud of where our team is at right now.

I thought the win at Texas Tech before this tournament was giant, and we were able to find a little bit of a recipe.

I think these guys have an inner belief in where they are as a team right now. So I think we're extremely ready, and it makes me feel good, because as I told them in the locker

room about two weeks ago, I was honestly not sure. I personally was not sure.

I think these guys have proven that we can make some noise in the tournament because of these two guys right here and because of how much everyone else in that locker room has stepped up.

You know, we're looking forward to -- disappointed in the outcome tonight, but we're looking forward to getting back home and getting some much-needed rest so we can gear up for what I've told these guys is the best time of the year in all of basketball.

**Q. Kind of along the lines that Coach was asked, what gives you guys, since the injuries that you've had, confidence over the course of the last few weeks to go make a run in the tournament?**

ROBERT WRIGHT III: I think it's just we found our identity as a team. We've got role players stepping up, Like Dom, Aleksej hitting big shots for us, playing great the last couple games. Just figuring out who we are as a team.

AJ DYBANTSA: Like what he said.

**Q. How much confidence does it give you guys -- we know the workload that you guys carry every single night. But to now have Dom playing good minutes, Aleksej and Mou, how much confidence do you guys have as a team in that locker room going into the NCAA tournament?**

ROBERT WRIGHT III: We're just coming together at the right time. Like both of them said, we're just figuring out who we are and everyone's just stepping up.

**Q. With AJ and Rob and anyone else, what will you tell them and what did you learn about last year? 10 weeks in a row in Big 12 play. You are about to leave now. You're going to play a really good opponent. You know that. I appreciate your perspective as someone who came from the NBA side. Do you really think there is something to the beneficial side for you, particularly your program, getting out of league play and getting a fresh opponent and how that might be an advantage to you?**

KEVIN YOUNG: Yeah, it's funny. Like we were here, I think we were here, Big 12 Media Day, you were the emcee for that too. So we had it in this building, and it was interesting, at the coaches panel, just the amount of respect that all the coaches in this league have for this league. I think those that follow our league closely understand every single night feels like Game 7 in the NBA

playoff series, the physicality, the talent, the coaching.

It's all at an extremely high level. So I really feel fortunate to be in this league because I do think it prepares you literally for anything in the country relative -- and to your point, you're going to play a good team in any game in the NCAA Tournament. But, yes, I think this league prepares you because there's different styles and so forth.

And you know, I don't know if this necessarily is a Big 12 specific thing, but the tournament's so interesting because you're just not as familiar, right, with the opponent, right?

So getting out of the Big 12 and being able to go, you know, see some fresh faces and things like that will be good.

But I think to your actual question, what prepares you most, is just the gauntlet of the Big 12. And I think when you can get through that and not sink, I think that in and of itself gives teams and coaches a lot of confidence heading into the tournament.

**Q. AJ, you're super competitive. As a result of this loss, you will not get the opportunity to face Darryn again. Is that disappointing? Were you hoping to get another chance, another crack at him? You guys obviously have a good history going back to your high school days?**

AJ DYBANTSA: I mean, if they win tonight -- TCU also has a chance to win; they almost beat them at their place over there -- so I mean I was hoping to come out this game with a win and just be ready to play whoever was playing next. I mean it would have been nice to play Kansas again. We ticked one off at their place, so I mean it would have been nice to go play them again and get a win.

**Q. You've been pretty candid about this being, you know, an up-and-down season. How much, though, has it been rewarding this past couple weeks to see this group in the third iteration come together?**

KEVIN YOUNG: No, it's great. I appreciate that question. Very, very is the answer. Not just for me, you know, I can see it on the guys. Everyone in our locker room is extremely competitive.

And we had some dark times, even recently, but we were able to just push through it and just like there's always a way, just pound the rock.

And I've used every cliché in the coaching book, probably, in that space. It's been rewarding because you know when you go through the adversity, you know, it really does bring

groups together. I think it's brought our group closer together.

I think, you know, I think it's brought our fan base closer together. You know, I think that the moment we had at home in our last home game, I think the fans knew how much we needed that win.

So I think it's really galvanized all all of Cougar Nation. It's galvanized our locker room, our coaching staff, the young households galvanized a little bit more, which is nice.

And this is something I told our guys a couple weeks ago, and I learned this last year -- and, you know, I was fortunate in the NBA to be on some really good teams. We were, you know, two wins away from winning an NBA championship, and what I shared with the guys was, that was cool, but there's absolutely nothing like playing in March Madness, in the tournament. Like even cooler for me than going to the NBA Finals.

And I really just can't wait for AJ to experience. Rob obviously has experience under his belt. So to be able to to have some good energy heading into that unbelievable opportunity that we're getting ready to get into, it's just super exciting.

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