

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

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Hinkle Fieldhouse

Michigan Wolverines

Coach Dusty May

Trey McKenney

Will Tschetter

Semifinals Pregame Media Conference



the dynamics of your team and how you played into that this season and how? That's helped you?

DUSTY MAY: Yeah, first of all, I would say that their natural personality traits, and we always try to channel who they are on game days and on the practice floor, in the film room.

But I think we play with a great deal of intensity and passion, and we want that to be contagious. I think if you watch our team play, the things that we value as a staff and as a program are the things that they really react with great passion and energy, the extra pass, the hustle plays.

If you come to our practice and there's a game-winning three-point shot, there's a good percentage of the managers and players not on the floor are running to the guy that made the invisible play, whether it was a great screen, whether it was the guy that created the advantage that led to the shot, whatever the case.

We always feel like the guy that made the shot is going to feel pretty good about what just happened. We want to make sure everyone else feels great about their role in how it all transpired.

Q. When you came over to Michigan and coming off an eight-win year, what was the single-most transferrable thing you could bring to this program from your FAU experience that you learned there, and what was the benefit of being able to apply that with the funds and backing of a major Big Ten program, obviously a well-funded institution?

DUSTY MAY: Well, the well-funded -- I'll just begin with the end. The well-funded institution, we felt like there was a great upside with Michigan and their passion for athletics. There are a lot of places that if you win then we'll get it for you, and there are other places that say we'll get it for you so you can win.

Michigan was a little bit in between where I think a lot of the academic institutions were late to the NIL game for a number of reasons.

Q. Coach, Morez in his toughness, if you could talk about what that brings to your team and then also how has he expanded his game this year? He was just talking about it, and the freedom that you guys are giving him to explore some things and improve his skill.

DUSTY MAY: Yeah, he's earned the right to do what he does based on his work. He's incredibly consistent and thorough with everything that he does. This summer when he shot threes, they didn't go in very often, and he continued to work on his balance, the rhythm of the shot and his mechanics.

There are certain times this year where I was actually disappointed when he would turn one down because we felt so confident in his shooting ability and in his decision making with the ball. He's getting rep after rep every single day, and live play to make decisions. And for a number of reasons he's a great screener.

We feel like if we can get the other bigs away from the basket and obviously playing with the size that we do, everyone can't be in the paint with the way that we play. Him and Aday have both given us real lineup versatility because of their ability to dribble, pass, and now adding a jump shot to that.

Q. When you compare your team's personality with Arizona, there's a very interesting contrast at least when you watch it on screen. Their group doesn't show a ton of expression, very calculated. Your group is a lot more expression, more passionate, maybe a bit of goofiness. Can you give us some more insight into



I think when you look across the board, across the country with the private and state schools that are academic minded first and foremost, they were late to the game when it comes to NIL, and Michigan I don't think was any different, for whatever reason. There's a lot going on behind the scenes.

As far as what our staff could bring, I think we were -- it's a nice segue because we were in the middle of this changing landscape, and we were on the other end of it. We were the school that we had really good players and a really good team, and we had all these other outside influences coming to grab our guys, and so we saw it from the other spectrum. We've just always tried to separate how we feel and what it does to us, any of these equations, for example.

You hear the low major coach complain about losing the low major players to high majors and then the first opportunity they can go to high major they do. We've just always kind of felt like let's just take a step back and look at this from a human being standpoint.

So we just felt like we knew the fall landscape of what this was and we had a broader perspective because that year we went from being basically a low major to a mid major to a high major in two calendar years. I hope that answers your question.

Q. Like Tommy Lloyd, you've been linked to the North Carolina vacancy. Unlike Tommy you have not spoken about it as much. I'm curious how you respond to the speculation.

DUSTY MAY: After last year I decided I'll never respond to any job speculation. I had already agreed to terms with Michigan, was 100 percent done, and I made the comment that I was flattered about a certain job opening because of my background, and that was misconstrued, so I just decided I'm never going to comment on any job that I don't have. I think it's well documented how happy I am at Michigan.

Obviously my private life, my personal life, my family, their happiness is very important. Yeah, I love it at Michigan, but you'll never hear me comment on any other job unless Michigan lets me go and then I'll comment on every job.

Q. Yesterday we asked you about the trio of freshmen that Arizona has. We want to take it back a couple years to when you faced Arizona and Tommy Lloyd when you were in Vegas with FAU. What do you remember about a Tommy Lloyd coached team facing Arizona and how have you seen his program evolve

from then to now?

DUSTY MAY: Well, they were really good then and they're really good now. The margins are really small. I don't know how far they advanced that year compared to now.

But there's not much different. They were really good then. That game was a double overtime game. A lot of people thought it was the best college basketball game of the year as far as entertainment and the timing of it. Everyone was watching it because it was during the holidays and it was a nationally televised game.

Looking back, I remember at the time how good I thought Mo Krivas was, and it's crazy to think he's just a junior now because I felt like he was a budding superstar then. And they had Ballo and they had some other guys, and then they had Larson and Keshad Johnson who are now with the Heat, and then Boswell who's with Illinois was on that team.

I think they're built very similar. Those guys -- and then Jaden Bradley played a reserve role for that group and he's continued to improve.

They're built very similarly. KJ is -- the big body physical guards, the size in the paint and the style of play is -- it's almost exactly the same. It's much like Gonzaga; they know what they're looking for. The simplicity allows them to be creative together.

Yeah, we continue to try to find nuggets or an edge, and all we've found is incredible consistency.

Q. You've gotten this question at various points probably over the last few years, but you've always wanted to play with size. From your perspective as a coach, sort of what are the keys to being able to do that without sacrificing court spacing? I know it's more than just being able to shoot the ball, but how do you play with the size that your teams tend to without losing that ability to spread defenses out, without sacrificing efficiency offensively?

DUSTY MAY: Well, before the season started, actually when Yaxel told us he was coming back, we immediately start brainstorming and trying to figure out the best way for us to play from a spacing standpoint and can we switch 1 through 4. How much of our system can we keep with these guys.

A lot of it we don't know until they get there and we can evaluate them and their game. From an offensive standpoint we went into this year planning on playing very much the Gonzaga system, the Arizona system. There's

been several schools adopt this similar spacing concept, and that's how we're intending on playing this year, and once our guys got to campus we felt like there were some different things we could unlock with this group.

So we ended up pivoting from that, and credit to our guys, they've continued to find solutions to problems that aren't easily solved. I've given a lot of credit of our success to our team intelligence and basketball IQ.

Q. Dusty, what was it about Aday other than his obvious size that intrigued you and said this is the big guy I want from the portal?

DUSTY MAY: We love passing. I think passing is a great barometer of basketball IQ. And guys that also enjoy passing, that it's fun to share, and I think Aday -- of course I don't know who wrote -- one of our beat writers wrote a story that Aday recalled one of his youth coaches saying that an assist makes two people happy, a basket usually makes one person happy.

That, and then the obvious rim protection. We like the system that we have, so if the pieces fit, then we would like to continue doing the things we do because we understand the nuance and we understand all the different ways that they can attack you.

We thought him in our drop coverage would be a defensive anchor for us, and that's proved correct.

But yeah, he just seemed to have a great spirit about him. He had a joy and a happiness. We try to recruit guys that seem like they're fun to be around. To quote a good friend of mine that's a coach, doing life together. I mean, we're doing life with these guys. We're with our players more than we're with our families, more than we're with anyone on this planet.

If you can be really good and they're talented and they can also be fun to be around and you guys can develop real authentic relationships, then it's that much better.

Q. Every team in the Final Four has contributed freshmen. You guys have Trey, obviously Arizona has a multitude of them and same with Illinois with Wagler and even UConn with Mullins. Do you think that's something you continuously see making an impact and how have you seen these freshmen be able to make a big impact on these superstar teams with so many great players?

DUSTY MAY: Yeah, I think so. We've signed some freshmen, and we anticipate some of them will have an immediate impact; some will have to probably be more

patient and wait their turn and develop.

Each year it's a little bit different. It seemed like during the COVID era with the glut of older players, there weren't any freshmen contributing unless they played for Duke, the year with Cooper Flagg and those guys. This year has been a complete 180 from that, where it seems like every time you turn on the television one of the freshmen are contributing.

I think it's a testament to them finding the right system but also these guys are mature beyond their years now. As I said yesterday, the Team USA basketball is a real thing. Playing for some of these basketball superpower prep schools, it's a change.

So you go from being the man out of high school and then you go to one of these places and you have to function with eight other extremely talented players, and I think that's a microcosm of how they have to play for us when they get here, for the most part.

But Trey has been awesome. He's been a very, very valuable contributor. He's a starter for us. He's evolved into a primary play maker since LJ Cason went out. But like those other guys, like Burries and like Koa Peat, his maturity, his physical and mental maturity, and I'm speaking from a bird's eye view on those guys. I think Trey is very similar to the Arizona freshmen, that it's their physical and mental maturity that's allowed them to do that on this stage.

Q. Yesterday you talked about some of the benefits of the portal and recruiting and it saves time. What are some of the difficulties of using the portal as far as the high rate of turnover and also getting guys to come in, getting them to blend with the veterans, making that all work together?

DUSTY MAY: You know, anytime you talk about this, you're just going to get your mentions on social media filled up. First of all, as far as the transfer portal, when you look, I think everyone in here appreciates upward mobility, or at least to have the option of upward mobility.

I have friends that they're excellent at their jobs and they decided to stay in green county and raise their family and live their life and that's great. Then I have other friends that are incredibly talented in their field and they chased their dream to Chicago, on to New York City, on to Wall Street, whatever they decide to do.

Each person, especially now, has their own ambition, personal ambition, group ambition, and we just feel like when we bring people to Michigan, then we're here to help



and serve them and help them be the absolute best they can be because they're in our environment.

If someone doesn't want that, we're not angry with them. Maybe they want more playing time. Maybe the academic schedule is too rigorous. Whatever the case, it's not a lifetime sentence when you choose -- hopefully we have guys that want to stay here, but there's just times whenever our style of play doesn't fit with what they want. If you're a ball-dominant person who want a 70 percent usage rate you probably shouldn't come here because history says we're going to have a very balanced and unselfish lineup.

I think we make all these broad, I guess, accusations towards this or towards that. Whoever we bring in, we're going to try to play a great brand of basketball and we're going to help them become better citizens and better basketball players and hopefully future professionals with whatever they want to do.

But time is our most valuable -- people talk about money. Time is our most valuable asset. When I say we're saving time, we don't waste time with all the other things. We still have to do our research. We still have the intel. We still have to spend an inordinate amount of time. We just don't have to spend it the way we used to.

Q. As far as getting that all to work together with the team, as far as -- I don't know if you'll find a happier locker room anywhere in the tournament right now with Big Goof and Yax and all these guys, and then Will Tschetter and Nimari talked about some of the veteran leadership that had to calm things down when things got too competitive in practices. Making that all work together, I think there's a lot of perception that you just bring in some top-rated stars and go and you guys win and that's it. But you've got to make young people learn how to work together. What was the challenge and what was your approach to making that work?

DUSTY MAY: Each year is completely different, and it's a community. It's our staff. It's the returning players. It's everyone around our guys. It's their families.

We try to make sure everyone feels important and valued in our program, and then we just stress the importance of doing it together, and you can get there -- you can chase your dream doing it this way. It's proven.

Now we have proof of concept with we have guys getting drafted, we won a Big Ten Tournament championship last year, we finished second in the regular season and made the Sweet 16.

We just feel like if you come here, you can achieve your individual goals while doing it this way, and you probably have a better chance of doing it this way.

But I think that the way we recruit them and then the way we spend a crazy amount of time when they get here and then we also just want them to be who they are -- obviously if they're acting like idiots. We don't want them to be an idiot and say, well, I'm just being me. We want them to be the absolute best they can possibly be, and when they mess up then it's an educational process to fix it.

But look, these guys are all in their locker room, that's their true personalities, rich kids, poor kids, international kids, domestic kids, whatever the case. That's the beautiful thing about college. You learn more from the people you're around than you do in my opinion -- I learned more from the people I was exposed to than I did in any of my history classes.

Q. When it comes to Tommy Lloyd, particularly on the Xs and Os and schematics, what stands out to you when you watch them on tape?

DUSTY MAY: A real solid plan that fits their personnel, their pace, their execution, their physicality. They play to their strengths. I think those are all signs of a well-coached group. They change a little bit each year, but they stay to who they are. Their identity stays the same, and they change just based on their personnel.

Q. My question is being from Indiana, what does it mean that you get to compete for a National Championship in Indianapolis in a state where basketball is so synonymous with sports in general?

DUSTY MAY: It's really cool just to be back here in a full-circle moment. But I've been gone for so long. Yesterday probably the coolest part was looking up and seeing all the Colt players that I grew up idolizing and watching every Sunday.

Other than that, just happy to be here with our guys.

Q. Coming to the Final Four, it's so full of emotions and so full of energy and just so full of life. What would you say is kind of the emotions that are going through your head today, and how do you think that's going to affect you on the court?

WILL TSCHETTER: Yeah, I would say that the biggest thing is being able to kind of balance those emotions. Obviously you have the emotions of making it -- winning the Elite Eight game and then being able to flip your focus from that to Arizona and making sure that you're not getting

too high, too low, and you're staying focused in the midst of the kind of circus of things that are happening here.

TREY MCKENNEY: Yeah, I would say just like Will, you don't want to put too much emotion in the game. You want to be kind of level headed throughout this tournament because there's so much thrown at you and there's so many different distractions outside of basketball.

I think the most important thing for our team is just keeping it mostly about basketball and why we came to this stage here.

DUSTY MAY: I'll speak for Trey and I. I think he and I have great emotional regulation. Will on the other hand struggles with impulse control at times (laughing).

Q. I mentioned this to Coach Underwood, as well, but strength of schedule goes a long way with building character of programs like Michigan, like Illinois. You guys matched up with Duke, Gonzaga in the non-conference but then the Big Ten as a whole just overperformed their expectations. I want to look at the Nebraska game. You guys trailed basically the entirety of the game. How were you able to bear down and not falter in that moment? And how do these close games with these top-notch opponents help you guys set up for success?

WILL TSCHETTER: Yeah, I think when you look at the Big Ten in general, that conference schedule that we had and some of those games that we had to play, yeah, you can look at that Nebraska game at home or at Purdue or at Illinois, at Michigan State. I think that that really just prepares you for going back to emotions, you've got to stay level headed. There's going to be runs, so just kind of sustaining those and staying true to your team and staying unselfish is big and prepares you for moments like this.

TREY MCKENNEY: Yeah, I think the Big Ten was -- it was really amazing this year. We played so many different talented teams and so many teams that just had so many different schemes.

I think those close games, like Will said, like Michigan State and Nebraska really helped us for when we're in these tight games in the NCAA Tournament because you don't want to fold under pressure. You want to stay as level headed as you can even though it's hard to in the moment when the crowd gets into it and stuff like that.

I think our fans have done a really good job of being here for us and supporting us throughout this tournament.

DUSTY MAY: Yeah, when we do our schedule, you

always look at it and think it's going to be daunting. This year we scheduled with the mindset that we're going to get better based on the competition and who we're playing and we're not going to worry about win loss record, we're not going to worry about anything other than just playing against the best and seeing where we're in November, December, and January. And actually I looked last night and we finished with the No. 2 strength of schedule in the country behind Alabama.

For those guys to go through one of the greatest years in Big Ten history without losing a road game, and then to go through the No. 2 schedule in the country with our record is a testament to their consistency, their togetherness, their ability to elevate their play.

You mentioned the Nebraska game, and this has carried over from last year. The last five minutes of close games, when the stakes are the highest and the senses are elevated the most, these guys perform at such a high level when it comes to rebounding, loose basketballs, all the winning plays.

These guys have the ability to elevate their play, and they've done it night in, night out. It gives us a lot of confidence down the stretch of a close game that we know we have another gear that we can kick it into when it's winning time.

Q. Specifically for Will and Trey, your team has been winning games, especially in the tournament very convincingly, especially with Tennessee's win. How do you stay from getting complacent, especially defensively, when you're up by such a large margin?

WILL TSCHETTER: Yeah, I think we talked about complacency a lot throughout the year, staying sharp, making sure that we're continuing to acknowledge what got us to this point, what playing style got us to this point, our unselfishness, things like that.

After that Purdue loss in the Big Ten Tournament, I think we had a good look in the mirror, we realized we needed to get tougher, needed to go back to some of those characteristics that led us to win big games, and I felt like we came out and our team acknowledged that great in the first round, second round, and then kind of led into the Sweet 16 and Elite Eight.

TREY MCKENNEY: I would agree with Will. I think those losses, every one of those three losses we had really stung. We felt that, and we just never really wanted to feel that again. I think that really helped us with our consistency throughout games and being able in the second half to look at teammates and say, like, we have to

really lock in and give our best defensively because we know anything can really happen on this stage when the stakes are highest in March and April.

Q. Coach May, as you head into your second Final Four of your career, how do you feel the expectations or the pressure has changed since your time at Florida Atlantic?

DUSTY MAY: Personally, I don't really feel pressure. The expectations have certainly changed. I think if we would have gotten by San Diego State, then we would have been the underdog. Here we're probably a favorite. I'm not sure, with expectations to compete for a National Championship.

So I think that part has changed. But as far as the pressure, we just feel like we've done our work. These guys have put in the work from June until now for us to be in the position that we're in, and we're so oriented that we're going to be more focused on staying in character and doing our absolute best and trusting that that's going to be enough.

Q. Coach, your four years at Indiana University as a team manager, being under Coach Knight, I'm sure you've answered this in other spots, but what did you take from that, and especially in moments like this on such a big stage, what were some of the lessons and just skills that you've gained from that experience?

DUSTY MAY: Each experience is so different. I've referred back to almost countless examples of what I've learned from Coach Knight. As an assistant I don't feel like I really used them daily or weekly, and then you become a head coach and it's almost like your parents, where you instantly start referring back to all the lessons you've learned.

I've spoken with some of his old assistants about what his process was for the Final Four, what he was looking at from a scouting advantage.

Just now we have access to any -- obviously coaches that are at the top of our profession, so just taking on the lessons we learned from him, the lessons you learned from other coaches and trying to do the best you can for your group and make them your own.

Q. Will and Trey, you guys have made it so far in this season. How has the team culture developed throughout the trials of the season?

WILL TSCHETTER: Yeah, I think our team has done an amazing job at kind of staying together and really relying

on that chemistry that we built early on in the summer. That's when a lot of the trust is built.

When we do hit bumps in the road, I feel like we really fell back on that, whether it's going to a team dinner or getting together and making sure that everyone is locked in for practice the next day. I feel like we've done a really good job of making sure that adversity isn't a roadblock for us, just a minor hiccup that we're able to push through.

TREY MCKENNEY: I would say we have the right people around this program, and we have the right players. We have players that are really selfless, and you can tell that even when we're under one roof in the summer, so I think it just really carried over from the summer and the fall when we were putting in all that work together and all that sweat that we had.

I think we have a really selfless team and it starts to show in every one of these games.

Q. Coach, as a coach, I'm sure you'd agree that every game is just as important as the last or even the next. How do you keep yourself motivated to come back and coach these guys?

DUSTY MAY: We talk about all year that the biggest game of the season is the next game. It's always the biggest game of the season.

As far as motivation, I think I'm a lot like these guys. I'm not really sure what motivates Will or Trey to come in the gym each day. We're all motivated by something different, but because of the habits we've developed over time, it's all we know. When these guys walk in the gym, it's time to work. We try to put together a very well thought out plan.

But as far as motivation, I don't know what motivates our guys, but I know they just get to work.

We talk about inspiration more than motivation. When these guys make a hustle play or pick up full court or have a big time defensive stop, we talk about that's inspiring versus motivating.

Q. What do you guys see in the matchup against Arizona? What are some of the things you're focusing on in terms of going into the matchup, what do you expect, and what are you looking to truly execute?

WILL TSCHETTER: Yeah, I think the one thing that stands out to me about them is just the relentlessness for 40 minutes. We've had times this year where we've had a few mental lapses for two or three minutes where we're not playing our best basketball, especially when we may get a

lead, our focus can sometimes falter a bit.

So I think the big thing for us is just to put together 40 minutes of high-quality unselfish basketball. We're going to like where we are at the end of the day.

TREY MCKENNEY: I think their physicality stands out and the way that they play and they sustain physicality for 40 minutes.

But I think we really got a good sense of that throughout the Big Ten conference, the season. I think it's something that we've seen throughout every game in the Big Ten, and it's really helped us be able to adjust and get better throughout the season.

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