

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Four

Tuesday, March 17, 2026

Dayton, Ohio, USA

UD Arena

Miami (Ohio) Redhawks

Coach Travis Steele

Peter Suder

Luke Skaljac

Eian Elmer

Brant Byers

Media Conference



A lot of people have been following us nationally and locally, and it's been a super exciting year. I'm just super excited to see what the outcome and the environment is going to be like tomorrow.

Q. Getting to the NCAA Tournament was one of the goals you guys set at the beginning of the year. What does it feel like now that you're in this arena offensive end see where you're going to play tomorrow night?

PETER SUDER: Yeah, it's obviously super cool to be in here and watch some of the other teams in shootaround. We're excited to get out there and see what it really feels like to step on that court.

But I'm just going to keep reiterate what we're saying, we're not done yet and we're excited to play here tomorrow.

BRANT BYERS: Similar to what he said, the experience is like no other, seeing the March Madness logo all around.

Yeah, like he said, we didn't get the result we wanted in Cleveland so we feel like we have a lot to play for.

EIAN ELMER: Yeah, it's a great feeling. This is something that we started back last spring, and we always say, we want to be at our best in March, and now we have the opportunity to show that.

LUKE SKALJAC: Yeah, it was pretty surreal walking in the hotel and everybody welcoming us to March Madness. But it'll be super cool to be able to play tomorrow.

Q. Eian, you won a state title in this building. Your memories of that and just getting to play here again?

EIAN ELMER: Yeah, as soon as I walked in, just got hit with a whole bunch of nostalgia I would say. We're even in the same locker room when he won State. Small things like that.

It's a great feeling to be back here. I have great memories of this place and I want to continue to make some more.

Q. It's been quick turnaround from Selection Sunday to your game tomorrow. How has it been like prepping for SMU in the first couple of days?

Q. For anyone who wants to take it, you guys haven't lost a home game in forever. This isn't technically a home game, but you're 40 miles from campus and the crowd may sound like it. How valuable could that be tomorrow night?

PETER SUDER: It's definitely an advantage, like you said. It's valuable for us and being only 50 minutes, an hour away from campus. We're excited to see what the environment is going to be like and we're super fortunate to play here in Dayton for sure.

BRANT BYERS: Yeah, like he said, it's definitely no Millett Hall, but the fan atmosphere should be pretty similar, so yeah, we're very excited for that.

EIAN ELMER: Yeah, piggybacking off what both of them said, being able to play in front of our fans is something we take pride in. It's definitely going to help.

LUKE SKALJAC: Yeah, to piggyback what all three of them said, it'll be super cool just having a ton of Miami fans here.

Q. Peter, you guys are an hour drive from know wet hall. I wonder what message you might have for your fan base ahead of this game tomorrow?

PETER SUDER: Yeah, just be loud. That's the main thing. We're super excited for the support they've been showing us all season at Millett and on the road.



EIAN ELMER: I would say it's been a very -- let me just kick this one off.

PETER SUDER: It's been a lot of fun preparing. It doesn't matter who we play. It's going to be fun preparing for an NCAA March Madness game. We're super excited to go through this whole process.

I've personally never been a part of an NCAA Tournament team, so like I said, I'm going to soak it all in, especially being a senior, and I'm super excited for tomorrow.

Q. I was just wondering, maybe you don't pay attention to it, but what was it like being in the national headlines there for a few weeks and being part of the debate fodder not just on social media, but I think some of the ESPN shows and things like that?

PETER SUDER: Yeah, it's obviously a surreal moment. Didn't expect all that, to be honest. But it's obviously super cool and you've got to soak it in and celebrate the wins and all that kind of stuff.

You can't get too high or too low you can't get the media get to your head we do a great job of that staying consistent through the process.

BRANT BYERS: Yeah, it's been a pretty unreal experience just opening your phone and seeing a Miami logo or a picture of someone. I can't say it's something that any of us expected, but it's something that we're trying to take advantage of and enjoy the moment.

EIAN ELMER: Yeah, like Brant said, it was something that wasn't expected, but it was good and bad out there, so I think we did a great job of just not paying too much attention to it.

LUKE SKALJAC: Yeah, like Eian said, I think we did a good job blocking out the noise and just taking it one day at a time, one practice at a time, keep getting better.

Q. Just talking specifically about Luke and the way that he's stepped up since Evan went down, maybe to Brandt or Peter, what about his play has helped you get to where you are today?

PETER SUDER: Yeah, to have Evan go down is obviously horrible. Sometimes that can even break a team. But obviously Luke has been a great player for us. He's stepped up in a huge in a way even being a sophomore, still being an underclassman. But his game, the way he's translated to our offense and the way he uplifted our whole team definitely propelled us into the future.

Q. There are a bunch of guys on this team who won state championships in high school. There's a lot of difference on the college level, but just knowing how to win and having gone through that experience, how important a part has it been to Miami to have that many guys who understand what it's like to win big?

PETER SUDER: Yeah, I mean, it's a key, definitely, in success. You have to have winners from different programs, whether it's, like you said, high school, AAU, previous colleges. You've got to know how to win in special situations and we've been in a lot of those this year, I think eight out of our last nine games. Like I said before, we've got a lot of winners that will succeed in those special situations, yeah.

BRANT BYERS: Yeah, I know that Coach Steele put a big emphasis out there in recruiting that he wanted to recruit winners, which then shows up on the court but also shows up in daily habits and things like that. Just players that know how to handle themselves on and off the court.

EIAN ELMER: Another thing with getting winners from high school is I think it allows people to know how to get a role on a team and give their all to what they can bring for that team or what that team needs.

LUKE SKALJAC: Yeah, I never won a state championship, but I've always been a part of winning teams. Coach Steele does a great job of recruiting winners, like they said, and it definitely contributes to our success.

Q. Luke, what's your favorite March Madness moment?

LUKE SKALJAC: Ooh. I was actually at the Sweet 16, Elite Eight of the Loyola Chicago run, so those two games definitely were pretty cool, just seeing a mid major kind of pave the way.

EIAN ELMER: I would say watching Duke versus UCF when they had Zion and Tacko Fall. Getting to see that battle was pretty cool.

BRANT BYERS: I'm from Pennsylvania, so probably one of the earliest memories I have of it is the CJ McCollum and Lehigh game versus Duke upset.

Q. Is it exciting knowing that Lehigh is the game before you?

BRANT BYERS: It is, yes, I'll definitely be watching.

PETER SUDER: Yeah, I'm just going to say one of the

classics. I'm going to say the Villanova buzzer beater to beat North Carolina in the National Championship.

Q. What's the biggest concern with SMU?

PETER SUDER: Yeah, I mean, they're athletic. They're definitely bigger than us. I think they've got a 7'2" guy that they start. Height and physicality is definitely the main thing, athleticism.

But learning from UMass in our previous loss, that was the same thing. They kicked our butt on the glass, not going to lie, so we've got to learn from that, take away film from that and get better in the future.

BRANT BYERS: Yeah, very similar to what he said. Their physicality overall is just going to make us ramp it up a whole lot more as well. But that would definitely be one thing probably that would be a concern.

EIAN ELMER: Basically what they said. Just can we out-tough them, do the small things, win the 50/50 balls, dive on a loose ball, things like that.

LUKE SKALJAC: Yeah, we've got to do a good job stopping them in transition. They've got a really good point guard, a few other really good guards, as well, so they're going to play fast.

Q. What's your favorite win on the season?

LUKE SKALJAC: I would say it was the Buffalo win, but the OU away game definitely became the best one, just being able to complete the perfect regular season. That was pretty cool.

EIAN ELMER: I would agree with Luke, Ohio. It's a high emotional game, and we still pulled out the win.

BRANT BYERS: I would probably say the Akron game at home. It was a real test. I know a lot of people had us losing that game, so it kind of proved to us that we are who we strive to be.

PETER SUDER: I would also say the Toledo at home, as well, to clinch the regular season championship. That was a super cool moment for us individually and as a program.

Q. Luke, playing an ACC team, you guys haven't played anybody like that this year. What's the thought of, yeah, we get our chance now to play somebody like this? Do you think that? What are your thoughts?

LUKE SKALJAC: Kinda. At the end of the day, it's March Madness, anything can happen. We're not really thinking

about it like that. We're just thinking about it like it's two good teams playing against each other, and we're trying to win.

EIAN ELMER: I definitely see it as a game where we can quiet some noise that's been around our team the entire year. But like Luke said, honestly, we're just trying to win, survive and advance at this point.

BRANT BYERS: What they said, yeah. Trying to win.

Q. Been on a little bit of an emotional roller coaster over the last few games of the season, the high in the OU game and then taking a hard loss against UMass. How have you responded to those emotional moments and how are you trying to stay level as you face SMU?

PETER SUDER: I mean, it's definitely weird getting our first loss, not going to lie. 31 straight is unheard of. But we've got guys that go through the process every single day and went through the process last year and just get better whether it's a win or a loss. We go through film with our coaches and stay consistent with our process and keep getting better.

BRANT BYERS: Kind of what he said, as well, just staying true to who we are. It would be easy to splinter a little bit and go our separate ways, but I think it's just another opportunity for us to stay together and to keep pushing forward.

EIAN ELMER: Like they said, it was up to us to own it after the loss. I think we're a team that does a good job of staying calm and collected, and we took some points from that loss and we're ready to be us again.

LUKE SKALJAC: Yeah, I think obviously we didn't want to lose, we wanted to win the MAC tournament, but I think in a way it kind of helped us, kind of humbled us a little bit, kind of prepared us for these type of moments for sure.

Q. Peter, there's so much history in Miami basketball. You as a senior, being able to see Millett Hall sold out and then to have national attention on the RedHawks again, how much pride do you take in that and sort of this unit restoring Miami basketball?

PETER SUDER: Yeah, obviously, like you said, the sold-out crowds is a plus to what we've done of just winning basketball games. They're not going to come unless you win. That's the main thing. You have to be a successful program. You have to have successful coaches, players, et cetera. It's been a lot of fun this year to see Millett sold out, and we hope that continues in the future.

Q. Brant, how much pressure is it approaching every game to where it's kind of win or lose?

BRANT BYERS: I mean, there's definitely that underlying pressure there for sure. But kind of like we've been saying, we just tried to do our thing really and trust that the result would take care of itself. It seemed to happen more times than not this year.

Q. Eian, have there been any moments this year that have surprised you with this group?

EIAN ELMER: I don't know if I would say surprised, but it's definitely been moments where it's just like, I look around and I'm like, wow, I'm playing with really great players. I like to say it a lot, but you get to see what these guys do sometimes, and I think it really is special.

Q. The three days in between the loss and Selection Sunday, I know you start rebuilding for the next game, but was there some anxiety? Did you consciously kind of get away from the noise and the conversation? Did you watch any of the MAC tournament or avoid it? Sunday when you're sitting there, as confident as you were, was there any anxiety when you saw the name or was it more joy or relief at that point?

LUKE SKALJAC: Yeah, I did watch the rest of the MAC tournament. Had to see the rest of how that went. But honestly, we've kind of just let it handle itself out. We weren't really worried or I wasn't anxious at all. I can't really speak for them on that.

EIAN ELMER: I definitely got away from it a little bit I would say. The only other game I watched was Toledo versus Akron in the championship. I wasn't really too anxious. I was very confident that we would get another shot. So yeah.

BRANT BYERS: Yeah, similar to them, I also did watch the rest of the MAC tournament. But I also thought it was important to get away a little bit for me personally. I went and played a round of golf, which the weather was nice, so it was a good time.

But yeah, like they said, there was definitely a little bit of -- you just never know, but at the same time, we felt like we did do enough to get in, as well.

PETER SUDER: I'm just going to completely agree with what all they said. We're still basketball players. We enjoy watching basketball. I definitely was tuned into the MAC tournament, as well. On Selection Sunday it was an anxious feeling for sure, but like Brant said, we were fully

confident that we deserved a spot in here.

Q. This is you guys' first time playing in March Madness. What are you most excited for tomorrow when that ball tips off?

PETER SUDER: Yeah, just to get the opportunity. That's the main thing. We want to keep the season going as long as we can. Then also, you've just got to soak in the March Madness effect. Like Luke said, even the nametags and all that stuff, you've got to completely soak that in and just go have fun out there.

BRANT BYERS: Yeah, the atmosphere I also would say is something that is very rare. I have attended a play-in game before so I know a little bit what it's like, but it's never the same when you're actually playing in it. So that'll be special.

EIAN ELMER: Similar to what they said, the atmosphere. The vibe of the game. It's survive and advance now. You've got to be a warrior out there tomorrow, and I think we're fully prepared for it.

LUKE SKALJAC: Yeah, I agree with all three of them but I would also add just being able to compete with the best teams in the country, I think that's really cool.

Q. Coach Steele, somebody has got to bring this together, orchestrate this. What has impressed you most about how he has handled this season for you guys?

LUKE SKALJAC: Yeah, I would say Coach Steele is fantastic. He's such a good player coach and you have a relationship with him outside of basketball, as well. Can't say enough good things about him.

EIAN ELMER: He's definitely the heartbeat of our team. I think he does a great job of keeping us just level-headed, never too high or too low. He truly cares about us, our development, all of that.

LUKE SKALJAC: Kind of what Eian said, he's done a great job after our wins this year of keeping us focused on -- he always says keep the main thing the main thing, so he's kind of made sure that we have the same habits every day, no matter if we won by 30 or if we won by two in overtime. He treats practice and lifts and film all the same way.

PETER SUDER: Yeah, I would say the same thing. I would just piggyback off what Luke said. He's an ultimate player's coach. He just instills confidence in us on a daily basis, and that's the main thing outside of the X's and O's.



You've got to have guys that go out there and believe in themselves, and when the coach believes in you, special things can happen.

Q. Do you guys have any pregame superstitions either as players or as a team? Is there something that you have to do every time before you step on the court?

LUKE SKALJAC: Peter wears the same socks every single game. The same ones. It's disgusting.

PETER SUDER: They are washed, though. Every single game they're washed. There's clean socks. There's some holes and loose threads in them now. But Brant's, I think, is a little crazier. He eats candy, almost a bag of candy before every game, which I don't know how he does that.

BRANT BYERS: Yeah, it's something I just started and we didn't lose. I'm like, I'm not going to stop now.

Q. What kind of candy?

BRANT BYERS: Anything. Any type of gummy, Jolly Rancher, LifeSaver, anything.

EIAN ELMER: I'll just take a nap. Big nap guy. That's all I need is a 30-minute nap before a game.

Q. Coach, just a statement on bringing Miami back to the NCAA Tournament.

TRAVIS STEELE: Yeah, obviously very excited to be a part of the NCAA Tournament. When I took over the job three and a half years ago, obviously this was the goal, and the goal is to advance into the NCAA tournament. Miami has a really, really proud, rich tradition, some great players, been to the NCAA Tournament, advanced in the NCAA Tournament before, great coaches. Just honored to be a part of the program and to help get us back to where we belong.

Q. I know you've experienced a First Four before with some of your time at Xavier when you were on Chris Mack's staff, kind of similar difference between the campuses, about an hour. Given that and you've got a ton of Miami graduates here in the Miami Valley, I wonder what you expect for tomorrow and what your message might be to the fan base given you're so close to home tomorrow?

TRAVIS STEELE: Yeah, what a unique opportunity, right, for our fans. It's a drivable distance, whether it's here or you're from Dayton or Cincinnati, Columbus. To be able to watch Miami play in the NCAA Tournament, man, doesn't get much better.

So I expect this to be a home game for us in a lot of ways. When I saw the draw, obviously that's what immediately popped into my mind, like man, this is pretty cool. Hopefully our fan base will take advantage of that and show up and show out tomorrow night.

Q. Travis, you were so close to the NCAA Tournament several times at Xavier and it didn't work out. Things just didn't break your way. Now they do break your way here at Miami and you were sitting on that stage coaching in the NCAA tournament. Can you reflect on as a head coach what it means to now be in the NCAA Tournament?

TRAVIS STEELE: Yeah, it's a dream come true. When you're a little kid and you fill out the brackets every year, I mentioned this -- some of your teachers would hopefully let you watch the NCAA Tournament games going on.

Again, it's a blessing and an honor to be a part of the NCAA Tournament. That's the goal; you put all this effort, the sacrifices, whether it's from our staff, from our players. You put a lot into this. This is a huge reward for us. But again, we're not satisfied, obviously, just to be here. We want to advance. That's the goal. But it is an honor to be a part of it.

Q. In the last week or two, there are few teams in any in the country that have been discussed more than Miami. Not that you spend a lot of time in front of the TV, but what has that been like to watch -- mostly at this time of year, most years, no one would be talking about Miami, but now everyone has been talking about it, good or bad. What has that been like from your perspective?

TRAVIS STEELE: Yeah, I haven't really watched a lot of TV and I'm not really on a ton of social media and stuff, but again, it's good to be talked about, right, for our university, for our men's basketball program. I think hopefully it continues to gain exposure.

Miami, I've used this before, but it's like Disney World on campus. There's not a bad day. The campus is just incredible. It's where I would love ^ kristin stop for our three kids -- we've got three little ones. I'd love for my kids to go to school at Miami. It's a quintessential college campus and it's what you think of when you think of college. It's good to be talked about.

You want to be playing meaningful games in March. We've been going at this since last summer, all the way in June, so it's been a long road, and to be talked about, whether it's good or bad, everybody is going to have an opinion,

right, I could care less really what their opinion is, but it is good to be talked about.

Q. Coach, you mentioned the tradition, the Szczerbiaks, Harpers, Embrys, those kind of guys. Have you been in touch with any of those guys this year, and what can you tell us about that?

TRAVIS STEELE: Yeah, quite a bit, whether it's one of the assistants here at Dayton, Jermaine Henderson, who does a great job and who's been awesome, but Wayne Embry has been great for game Rob Harper been back for a couple games this year. Wally Szczerbiak, Ira Newble, Damon Frierson, Devin Davis. There's a really, really proud tradition at Miami.

You think of the coaches, I think Charlie Cole is probably smiling down on us right now looking at Miami back in the NCAA Tournament, whether it's Darrel Hedrick, who's still around our office. He's at Millett Hall every day. He's amazing, and he's given me a ton of wisdom during my time at Miami.

I get a lot of text messages, as well, after every game. So just the pride that those that came before us take in the program and us maybe creating more excitement and connect the past to the present, it's been really cool to see.

Q. Regardless of what happens this weekend you become part of that tradition, don't you think?

TRAVIS STEELE: Yeah, I think every team does, though. Even my first couple years, maybe we weren't quite as good. I texted each of those guys, each of those players on my first two teams at Miami, they were a big part of the reason why we are where we are today. Maybe we didn't get that result then, but they're a part of the tradition, as well.

But again, we'll be able to hang up a banner, obviously, in Millett Hall.

Q. I know you mentioned that you tried to keep a lot of the outside noise out of the locker room, but it's almost impossible these days to keep players from not seeing that stuff. How did you keep your team focused throughout this run?

TRAVIS STEELE: Yeah, I think number one, having fun. I think when you come watch us practice, we compete really hard. We work really hard. One of the best things I've ever done is I coached my oldest son's fourth grade AAU team when I got let go at Xavier and I think the kids thought they were going to learn a lot from me and I learned a lot from them just how to have fun again. Where

he all work hard but you want to have fun.

I think we've created that environment at Miami year one when we weren't as good, year two, year three and year four. And then also doing it for each other, not doing it for yourself. I think when you start to do things for yourself, that pressure really, really starts to build. When you do it for others, that pressure isn't as great.

Our guys know that. Listen, we embrace the process. That's what we always say. We create separation through our preparation and just focusing on the things that we can control.

Again, I don't ask a lot of the -- some of the people that had opinions on our team for advice, so why should we listen to them now? That's what I kept telling our guys.

Q. Coach, you talked on Selection Sunday about what you want to do with your team, now you've had 48 hours almost to prepare for SMU. What's your read on the Mustangs?

TRAVIS STEELE: Number one, Andy Enfield, tremendous coach. You look at the success he had at FGCU, UFC, and now SMU rebuilding that program back up in the ACC. Not an easy task. He's done a great job.

They've got really good guards. It starts with those guys with Boopie Miller, with Jaron Pierre. Those guys can really score. We can't let it be a game of one-on-one whether it's in transition, that's where they're elite at is pushing the pace and then in the half court they've got to see bodies.

We've got to make them pass the ball. And then obviously they've got Samet inside. He's 7'2"; tremendous offensive rebounder keep him off the offensive glass. He's just always around the rim. He just sits there. He's 7'2". It's genetic, so he's going to get a lot.

Then on the other end they're going to funnel a lot of things into him. He's a shot blocker. He's a rim protector. They're athletic. They've got the long wings. They present a lot of different challenges, but we've got to rebound the ball, we've got to keep them out of transition, and we've got to make sure they see a tight floor and a lot of bodies every time they touch the ball.

Q. Piggybacking off the question about keeping your team focused throughout the season, you've talked about fourth, fifth grade watching March Madness. Your players have talked about it today and on Sunday, as well. What's the message to them today and tomorrow to stay focused and block out all the

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

craziness of playing in March and all this excitement?

TRAVIS STEELE: It's a great question. It's not easy to do. But the great thing for us is this has been going on for three months for us, two months. Our guys are used to all the media attention. They're used to all the noise. We're used to close games. So we've been in every situation possible, which I think will serve us really well here in March.

Listen, we are super, super grateful to be here. But now we've got to take advantage of this opportunity. Life is a lot about timing, and listen, we've got a very formidable opponent in SMU. But we have to attack. Now is the time to let it play. We've worked really hard for this moment.

Q. Coach, Evan Ipsaro goes down early in the season. How have you seen him become a leader even though he's not playing and how has the team responded after that injury?

TRAVIS STEELE: Yeah, Evan -- love Evan. I've known Evan for a long time. He was my first offer when I got to Miami and I knew I needed a point guard. I needed a PG that I could trust that was an extension of me on the floor, a coach on the floor.

Just his progression he's made at Miami has just been awesome to watch just from his body, how he's changed his body, he's changed his game. He's the ultimate winner. When he went down it was really difficult. It was at Ball State during our first conference game, and you could argue that he was maybe our best player in non-conference.

It's like, you lose that guy -- it didn't feel like we won the game at Ball State. There was a lot of emotion in the locker room.

But to see him and the guys continue to rally around him during that moment, the couple weeks thereafter, was really cool to see. It was awesome. Just how deep those relationships are, being there for each other.

But he's done a great job of leading. I hear his voice in every huddle. He's always chirping in, which is a good thing. All great point guards talk. He talks a lot. He does a great job of calming everybody down, staying positive, whether it's in practice, whether it's on the road, his messaging. He says the exact same things that I say.

So we're totally on the same page. But it's been a tough year for him. I told him we were cutting down the nets after we won the MAC Championship versus Toledo.

I said, you are just as important as anybody else on this team for us to be able to have the season we've had. Maybe it hasn't gone the way you maybe envisioned it, but the impact has just been immense. Super proud of him. Obviously we're very glad that he's a part of our program.

Q. How did it go with the fourth grade team? Were you ever in charge of bringing the orange slices or something? You said they taught you to have fun again. How exactly did that happen?

TRAVIS STEELE: Yeah, when you're the fourth grade AAU coach, you've got to do everything. There's no trainer. There's nothing. You've got to get meals. You've got to get guys to practice. It was a lot of fun. It was a lot of fun. We had a really good group. Super appreciative of those young kids because like I said, I learned a lot from them.

It brings you back to, like, why do you love basketball. Why did you start playing basketball. It's because it was fun. You want to make it a fun environment.

I think that that experience is very important in today's college landscape with NIL, with portal. But you'd better have the right environment.

So it kind of brought me back to that. I was like, you know what, you're so intense in every drill and every rep, which listen, we go really hard at Miami. But just kind of being more myself and finding kind of the love and the joy for basketball again. Man, that helped me find it.

Q. Travis, what do you hope this run from Miami does for mid-major basketball as a whole?

TRAVIS STEELE: Yeah, I'm hoping that, again -- we feel like we're carrying a lot of the mid-major on our back right now a little bit just with, hey, we got an at-large bid, right, so we need to capitalize not just for Miami but for all the other mid major basketball because there's a lot of good teams, 1 seeds that got knocked out in the conference tournaments.

You look across the board, whether it's Belmont, whether it was UNC Wilmington, you can go on and on. There's several. There's a lot of very good teams that I think are deserving to have an opportunity at an at-large bid, but all the numbers are going to be slanted more towards the P5, P6. A lot of the mid-major basketball aren't going to have opportunities to have Quad 1 games ever at home.

That's never happening. Let's make that very clear.

But maybe you can get a neutral, maybe if you're lucky,



and maybe you can get a road game, a Quad 1 opportunity there. So again, hopefully our guys can take advantage of the opportunity that we have and showcase that listen, mid-major basketball is great hoops and we can compete with anybody. We know there's a lot at stake with that.

Q. It wasn't just a successful season for you guys. Your women's program is also back in the tournament and will face West Virginia on Saturday. Wondering what the relationship is like between your program and the women's program.

TRAVIS STEELE: Great question. Number one, Glenn Box is our head coach for our women's basketball program and he has done a marvelous job of turning it around. He's a great coach. He's a better person. We're very close. We actually share an office suite, so to speak, so we see a lot of each other, our staffs do.

We support each other. We were at Eastern Michigan, we played Eastern Michigan about a month ago. They played the next day at EMU so they were at our game the night before and then we were at their game the next time supporting each other.

Our guys go to a lot of their games, their girls go to a lot of our games. It's been fun to watch him rebuild that program. I got them advancing against West Virginia.

But I'm super proud of them and what they've been able to accomplish so far.

Q. You mentioned a minute ago about mid majors. You're also could do a lot for the MAC. Can you talk about the irony of two brothers carrying the standard of the league into the tournament and do you feel a kinship, you and Akron, that you can show people now that you're a two-bid league just what MAC basketball is about?

TRAVIS STEELE: Yeah, first off, I'm super proud of my brother. John is a tremendous coach, better person. It couldn't happen to a better guy. He's done a great job. They've got a super consistent program up at Akron.

But there's a lot of really good teams in our league. I just don't know if people nationally understand how good of a coach Ty Kowalczyk is or Rob Senderoff or Todd Simon Jeff Bowles, George Halcovage. You can go on and on. There's a lot of parity in our league. Every game is hard. A lot of games are close. The championship game, you watch that the other night, Toledo versus Akron, it could have gone either way and obviously Shammah Scott hit a huge three for Akron to close out the game, but Toledo had control of the game for a good portion of it.

There's great players, there's great coaches in our league. Hopefully, again, we can both do well. I'm pulling for Akron to do well and hopefully they can advance and we can advance and continue to show the nation just how good our league is.

Q. You were just talking about your brother. Have you spoken with him this week and has he given you any messages ahead of this tournament run for you guys?

TRAVIS STEELE: We've texted. We've tried to call each other. He's busy, really busy right now, and I'm really busy, as well. But we've been able to text each other back and forth just telling him how proud I am of him and he's done the same with me and wishing each other good luck, and we're pulling for each other.

Again, he's playing a team that I'm not as familiar with, too, Texas Tech, and we're playing SMU, he's not as familiar with them. But we'll definitely be pulling for each other.

Q. Heard about Peter's socks in the press conference right before you. Have you decided what shirt you're going to wear and are there any other pregame rituals that you'll have before the game?

TRAVIS STEELE: Yeah, I have not decided on the shirt. My daughter will decide on that shirt. She's the boss in our household. Three-year-olds, if anybody has any daughters, you guys will figure out that real quick.

But she'll pick it out. I have a feeling she's going to pick out a different one, which is good. We might have to burn that other one. We lost a game; the world is ending in our household.

Hopefully it'll be a new shirt. I'm hoping that's what she picks.

Q. Any other rituals?

TRAVIS STEELE: Man, not really. I try not to be too -- to have too many because it can take over your whole life.

But I do my normal deal. I work out every day. I usually try to cold plunge three times a week, try to keep my mind. But other than that, no.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports.