

# NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Four

Tuesday, March 17, 2026

Dayton, Ohio, USA

UD Arena

**UMBC Retriever**

**Jim Ferry**

**Josh Odunowo**

**DJ Armstrong**

Media Conference

Howard 86, UMBC 83

JIM FERRY: First of all, I want to really congratulate Kenny and Howard. Those kids played fantastic today. They're such a well-coached program. I heard a lot of things they said, and he's a class act, and he runs his program the right way with great kids and he develops young men. So I wanted to tip my hat to them. That was a fantastic game for those guys.

It was the first half. I thought we didn't play like ourselves. We were stuck in mud. I'm not going to blame anything. But obviously the day we had yesterday and not being able to really practice and eat and -- I thought it hurt us. We couldn't move.

We're No. 3 in the country in not fouling, and we gave up 16 free throws in the first half. We're a fantastic defensive team. We couldn't guard them. Couldn't catch up to them. So it was very uncharacteristic.

Then in the second half, I think you got to see what UMBC does all the time where we didn't foul and we really guarded, played good offense, and we made it a game. It was a very exciting game to watch, but I'm so proud of my guys because I saw it in warmups and I don't really want to say it, I thought those guys were flying around on Howard and we were kind of -- but then we fought through it and fought through it which is what we've done all year and made it into a fantastic basketball game.

But credit goes out to Howard. That was a hard fought win for them, and I wish them the best of luck going forward.

**Q. DJ, what you've been able to do this year and your stop at UMBC, what do you take from this and being**



**able to play in the NCAA Tournament from the road that you've traveled?**

DJ ARMSTRONG: I would just say the perseverance that you have to have. I'd say the trust that I have to have in not only myself but everybody who's around me.

In this journey, I've always gotten better with leading, just my leadership and stuff, and just being more out there, being positive energy, having it really start with me.

And I feel like taking away from this journey is just -- man, it's just a blessing. Not to take anything for granted. That's all I'll say.

**Q. Josh, in this unbelievable run you guys have had where it was 12 in a row and not just a regular season title but a tournament championship, what do you smile back most on in this fantastic run for the Retrievers?**

JOSH ODUNOWO: I think for me personally, I'll look back on just the memories we was able to make, the times we was able to have together because I feel like there's no better feeling than winning.

So just being able to do that with a great group of guys in a system where everybody cares about each other. It's all love over here. Just creating those memories and just being able to be a part of it is the best thing I could look back at.

**Q. In the anticipation of the game, the excitement, I know it really hurts right now, but Josh, what was the thrill like in stepping out on that floor when the ball went up tonight?**

JOSH ODUNOWO: I mean, it felt great. We were here earlier this season. We were the guy that came in, had a crowd against us, so just being here in a crowd that was kind of neutral just felt good. I felt like being in an environment like this with your friends, your family, there's no better feeling.

It's a once-in-a-lifetime experience, and I was definitely just glad to be a part of it.



**Q. DJ, I'll ask you the same question.**

DJ ARMSTRONG: It was fun. It was fun. I think the first couple possessions when we really was trying to get set on to the game, I could tell we were very anxious, ready to get it going.

I think, just like Josh said, the memories and stuff, like just being able to go through this battle, every game is a battle, every day is a battle, so just being able to go through this and March Madness with each other and just to lean on each other and not -- like today we didn't give up.

Just to handle adversity together because this is one of the biggest stages.

**Q. Coach, you guys fell behind double digits there early on and you guys were able to come back and cut it to two late. What do you have to say about you guys' fight and the heart you weren't able to --**

JIM FERRY: Yeah, great character. That's all I talked about with these guys all year. You've got to understand, it hasn't been like this all year. Like I said, we're No. 3 in the country in not fouling; we shoot 80 percent from the foul line. We're the best defensive team in our league, and in the first half it was -- we had nothing. We had nothing. We gave up, what, 16 free throws. We shot 54 percent from the foul line. We couldn't keep guys in front. We just looked so slow. We were just trying to figure out a way to get ourselves going.

Then once we did, I think we really played UMBC basketball, and the character of these guys to keep fighting, giving us a chance to win, that was tremendous.

**Q. What was the message in the locker room at halftime and sort of what you were just talking about?**

JIM FERRY: I said, guys, this is the worst we've played all year, for whatever the reason. Getting stuck on the plane for four hours and not having a normal routine, practice. We got here -- I said, all we've got to do is play 20 minutes. It's just stick together and let's do what we do.

Then when you look at it, it's what we did. In the second half we didn't foul. We got to the foul line more than them. We shot almost 80 percent from the free-throw line. We defended it.

In that second half maybe we just ran out a couple more minutes, maybe it would have given up a chance. The guys showed great heart. To be quite honest, when DJ let that shot go, I thought it was in, because all year the kid has been hitting these buzzer beaters for us, so I thought it

was in.

But for our guys to show the heart and character and the stick-together which is what we talk about in the locker room, as well, it's just continued to stay connected and just go out and love each other on the basketball court.

**Q. I don't know if you were able to hear it, but from Coach Blakeney and then his players that were up here in Bryce and Ose, they really complimented your group and the fight that you guys had and thinking that they had a moment in that game where they were going to win, and they just continued to be hit punch after punch. With that three that drops for DJ, what's going through your head and sort of grabbing all the momentum in that building?**

JIM FERRY: It's what he does. I thought we just kept saying, just hang true to ourselves; we'll give ourselves a chance to win the game, and we did that. We kept playing and we played off each other, and DJ hit that big three. We executed.

We executed, because if Bryce Harris does not hit that shot, which give that kid credit, man, he's an undersized forward. He is a beast. Fantastic motor. Great player. He hits a shot with three people draped all over him. We guarded the hell out of him.

If he misses that shot, you know what, the outcome could have been totally different. That's because our guys hung tough.

You've got to give Howard credit because just like we didn't flinch and go away, when it got tight for them they didn't flinch either. That's a good team and a really, really well-coached team.

**Q. Coach, each group, each season is different. What are the characteristics you're kind of going to remember from this team specifically?**

JIM FERRY: Oh, man, a lot. A lot. We brought in 10 new guys. I jokingly called us the misfits, including myself, because we had a bunch of Division II guys, some Division I guys that transferred in from places that they didn't play a lot.

These kids really just bonded together so quickly as a group from the minute they got back. As you see, I just lost a game and I'm smiling because I'm actually talking about these guys. Especially for nowadays, right, with all the craziness going on in the NCAA and the transfers and all that crap.

These guys, they stuck together. They were just fantastic to coach every day and be around each other every day.

The pride and the love that's in the locker room every day, it's going to be emotional when we get back home, it was a little emotional locker room, but it'll be emotional. Like I said, I get we're crying but let's not cry because it's over, let's cry because, man, how lucky are we that we had a season with each other like this.

These guys touched my life so much more than I touched theirs. It was magical. It really was.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports