

# NCAA Men's Basketball Championship Final Four: Baylor vs Gonzaga

Monday, April 5, 2021

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Lucas Oil Stadium - Unity Court (South)

## Baylor Bears

## Coach Scott Drew

### Championship Game Postgame Media Conference

Baylor - 86, Gonzaga - 70

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Coach Scott Drew.

COACH DREW: First and foremost, I want to thank God for blessing us with this opportunity tonight. I know the guys have worked really hard. And I'm so happy they get a chance to celebrate now. At the same time I feel for Coach Few and his team because they're such class acts. And Coach Few is a hall of fame coach and an unbelievable guy. A better person than he is coach. And you hate when friends aren't feeling good.

But a plan was, on December 5th, when the game got canceled, we said, hey, if we could make it April 5th, as I told them before the game, if we're going to lose, losing to you is who I want to lose to. So much respect for them and what they've accomplished.

Our team has been special. Last two years winningest team in the Power Five. We've been really, really good. And they're even better people. Four weeks in the bubble, trust me, I'd tell you if they're not.

So that's what I'm going to take away the most from this is thankful that the NCAA gave us an opportunity to have an NCAA Tournament. And then thankful that we were able to spend this time and develop deeper relationships with unbelievable guys.

**Q. 18 years after taking over a really down-and-out program, you had visions of this. But what's it like?**

COACH DREW: I mean, coaching is like being a parent. And Christmastime you see the kids opening up presents. You see them excited. You're excited. And to see the Baylor fans be able to celebrate and cheer, to see the city



of Waco be able to celebrate and cheer -- to see the state of Texas.

Look at how much great basketball we have from high school, AAU, junior college, college. And we haven't won a national championship since '66. It's long overdue for the state and so pleased for all of them. We have an unbelievable administration, Mack Rhoades and President Livingstone, that have given us every resource to be successful.

And the guys that have sacrificed for 18 years leading up to this, and these guys that were able to take it home.

And it was great to see Freddie and Devonte and Tristan in the stands. We knew last year they really wanted to have a chance to do this. And we weren't going to have any regrets with this tournament. We wanted to leave it all on the court. And really blessed with the effort everyone gave us tonight.

**Q. I wanted to ask you, with Gonzaga being one of the best efficiency teams and advanced-metrics teams of all time, how was your team able to respond so well when Gonzaga cut it to ten at halftime?**

COACH DREW: Prior to the pause we were top three in defense and most of the time number one in defense in the country, and we were a solid three offense the whole time. I know there was some let-off when we came back. I thought we were getting it back.

We're really good defensively. I thought we made things tough tonight. Gonzaga missed some shots that they probably normally make. But credit our guys for making everything difficult. Coach Jakus was on their staff there and obviously familiar with the program. He had a great scouting report. Credit the players then for executing it.

**Q. Any way to explain the quick start, not only against Gonzaga, but against Houston in the Final Four? Why did you guys seem to be able to rise to the occasion on the big stage?**

COACH DREW: Simple: Player-led team. And those



guys didn't want to lose for each other. They wanted to play for each other. And they're winners. They're experienced. They're tough. They love one another.

You can't always know if you're going to make shots but that's why the offensive boards are so critical. We finished 16-5 on the offensive glass and 16-5 in second-chance points. I thought Mark Vital, with eight offensive rebounds, was tremendous. But total team effort. We had a starting rotation all year, eight guys and I think that wore on some teams, too, kept us fresher.

**Q. I want you to go back to holding walk-on tryouts. What was that like and compare that to where you're at right now?**

COACH DREW: Well, obviously going into every game being 30- or 40-point underdogs and half your team walk-ons, and you know as a coach, if we can just keep it close, keep it within 20 by the first half or 10.

But really credit those guys who won three games that year. And they laid the foundation. Those guys have stayed with the program and helped support these guys. And that's what you love, over 18 years, there's so many people that put in hard work and sweat. All our past players that constantly come back in the summertime, constantly help our young guys, send them messages, encourage them. I mean, it's their championship as much as ours. And that's why it's a "we" thing. And it's a great thing for Baylor University.

**Q. You guys talked about embracing a culture of joy this season. And I know joy runs deep, whereas happiness is fleeting. Is it tough to say that you guys have never been happier than you are tonight? And could you all talk about how you reflect that issue?**

COACH DREW: A lot of joy in the locker room for sure. But our joy is Jesus; others, yourself. It's so tough to put other people in front of you. And teams that do that are obviously more successful. And our guys, I think, their love for each other, because they spend so much time working on their craft together and they put in the time -- and credit our assistant coaches for doing an unbelievable job bringing in the high-character kids that want to be great teammates and want to work hard and want to improve. They deserve all that they're getting.

**Q. I'm in the stadium here in Waco. Packed with students going nuts. Why do you feel like this -- you can't have as many people in Indiana as you want to -- but what is it about the fans to allow them to celebrate and enjoy this with you even though they're not physically with you?**

COACH DREW: I look forward to seeing the highlights because, again, when Baylor's happy, when our students are happy, our fans, that's what makes our players and our coaching staff so proud. And, again, they've stuck with us, have been there through the lean years and they deserve this. Our school deserves this.

So, so happy that able to celebrate. We're excited to get home and I'm excited to get in my own bed again, get that warm Texas weather. But I can tell you that we had a great turnout here. I thought the fans were outstanding up here. Appreciate them sacrificing, coming up here and being here to support us.

**Q. When you look at the defensive performance of your team tonight, I was wondering if you could maybe reflect on what went into your decision a few years ago to move away from the zone you used to play and now with that man-to-man and the ball pressure. How much of a factor do you think that decision was in where you are right now?**

COACH DREW: Great question. Personnel-wise, if you looked at our teams in the past we were so long with 6'9", 6'11", 7-foot across the frontline. We looked like Syracuse. And now we have more guards.

My dad's a hall of fame coach for a reason. He taught me the good coach adjusts your style to the personnel you have. And we had some unbelievable defenders this year on the Naismith. We had Jared Butler, Davion Mitchell and Mark Vital. And Davion won defensive player of the year. And those guys can flat out defend and guard. And we wanted to let them get after it. And we thought that would better suit our team. And credit to Coach Tang, Coach Brooks, Coach Jakus for doing a great job implementing it. And because of that we've been successful.

**Q. Going off that, what kind of statement did your guards make tonight against another set of pretty good guards?**

COACH DREW: Gonzaga has got obviously some unbelievably talented guards. And one thing I can tell you about our guards, though, when the best is needed, the best is usually provided. As RG3 would say: No pressure; no diamonds. And our guys, the better the opponent, the better they play. And they love being the first -- first to win conference since 1950, first to win a national championship. I mean, that really motivates them.

And when you've got a competitor like that and a competitive group like that, really makes it easy to coach.

**Q. At the 11:45 mark of the second half, you guys were up 16 and you wrote a pretty detailed note it looked like to yourself on the bench. I was wondering what you were writing down.**

COACH DREW: Actually I was going over plays we hadn't run yet. So I had to make sure I was doing a good job coaching.

And then, I don't know if we won every media in the second half, but I thought, if we didn't it was close. I thought that was really critical. Because Gonzaga is such an explosive team. You had the lead but they trimmed it down to 10 at half. And we just wanted to make sure we maintained the momentum. And really credit the guys for doing that.

**Q. Given the COVID challenges, has this been the toughest year that you've ever faced as a head coach?**

COACH DREW: I tell you what, it does really make you appreciative for the universities, the money they spent and medical teams they provided, the players, what they sacrificed. I mean, I was talking to Coach Few, and, shoot, the beginning of the year some guys were breaking up with girlfriends even because they wanted to make sure they didn't get COVID and stayed in a bubble-like atmosphere.

Guys not going to see family, not going to see friends. Basically apartment or wherever they're housed in the gym. And, I mean, they really sacrificed a lot. And I feel real blessed that they had an opportunity to play in the NCAA Tournament.

But I think all year long, when games would get canceled, we really took it as a blessing when games were played. And it was really easy to motivate because when you had three or four or five or six games canceled, you really want, for your players, you want to find games.

I want to give credit where credit is due to all the coaches out there. Coaches sacrificed and did things, scheduling-wise, they normally wouldn't do. But they wanted to help their players have this opportunity. They're only in college a few years.

Some will go play professionally but most of them this is the end of their basketball career. To be able to have opportunities when you work 10, 12 years to get to that position, to play college games, as a coach you want to -- that's why we coach; to see our players have a chance to be successful.

And so I know that's a really long answer. I'm just saying how pleased and blessed we all are that we played games, had this championship. And I'm speaking for the players

and the coaches.

**Q. The last time you guys played Gonzaga, you weren't quite close to this form. Then you go on that 23-game win streak last year. You win it all this year. What changed since you played Gonzaga two years ago in Salt Lake City?**

COACH DREW: When they were in Salt Lake City, they had several pros that aren't on the team now. And we had some young guys that were able to improve, get better. And we had some guys that were able to come in or were sitting out and redshirting, were able to see, man, this is how hard we have to play and how much we have to improve to get to their level.

And iron sharpens iron. Playing great teams, it hurts when you lose, but it gives you direction as far as where you have to get better and how much you have to improve on.

Coach Few has always scheduled really tough. We've had a lot of games with them. That's made us better over the years. We've scrimmaged them and that always makes us better.

**Q. Drew Timme had a great run in the NCAA Tournament, a bunch of games over 20. He still was 5-of-7, what did you do maybe keep it away from him and really defend him?**

COACH DREW: First, he was coming in the game I think 19 assists, five turnovers for the NCAA Tournament or close to that. And tonight we forced him into five turnovers and limited him to 12 points. He's a heck of a player. And we knew we just couldn't let him get the ball because if he got the ball it was a problem for us. Credit our guys for really having great ball pressure on the perimeter and really trying to limit his touches because if he caught it we knew we were going to be in trouble.

He's been great to watch. We recruited him. Love his parents. And Coach Few has done just a great job with him and happy for his success.

**Q. What does this mean for you personally with everything you've kind of gone through in the industry? You'd outwork guys for players. They'd say you were cheating and then they said you couldn't coach when you got top players. What does this mean -- I know you're putting it on the players, but what does it mean for you personally?**

COACH DREW: Personally, Jerry Colangelo talked to my brother's team and it was such a great message we wanted to give it to our team. It was a great message. He



had been there with the Suns, a young franchise. And he thought they would be back, and it was 17 years later when they got back. You don't get these opportunities often. When you do you, you have to make the most of them.

I thought we were on the mission to make the most of it. If we had lost we wanted to have no regrets; we wanted to leave it all on the table.

I can tell you in the coaching fraternity getting to a Final Four, very similar to winning a national championship. There's usually some luck that goes into that. And we didn't even have to be lucky because our guys were so dominant this entire tournament. I don't know what the lowest margin was, but nothing was one or two possessions. And that just speaks volumes to them.

But as a coach you never know when you're going to be able to get to a Final Four, national championship, so you want to take advantage of those opportunities. To me it never defines a great coach just like there's so many players, NBA players never won an NBA Championship and great college players that never went to a Final Four.

I value coaches. Do they make their players better spiritually, academically, character wise? Are you preparing them for life; we call it champions for life at Baylor. So, really blessed that we were able to get to a Final Four and win a national championship because they're hard to do.

I know it's a long answer, but that's really my thoughts on it because there's so much coaches that are great coaches that just haven't had that opportunity yet and doesn't mean that they're not successful at all.

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