

# NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Round - Northwestern vs FAU

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Barclays Center

## Northwestern Wildcats Coach Chris Collins Boo Buie Brooks Barnhizer

Media Conference

**Q. Boo, obviously this being your fifth year, you're aware of no more eligibility left. This is the end. But when the tournament here, win-or-go-home, is there an added layer of knowing an acknowledgment that this really is the end and you've got to do something to put it off?**

BOO BUIE: Yeah, I mean, you know, I think it's both. A lot of excitement and just -- I think we just got to be ourselves, coming out here and playing. But once you get to the tournament, it is win-or-go-home, like you said.

I like to just think of it like a new season, a complete new season, and I try not to really think about the fact that I won't be able to play next year, or else I'll get too sad. I just try to stay focused on the present each day and give my team the best every single day, and that's what I'm going to do in this next game.

**Q. How much did the experience last year in the tournament, playing these two games, helped you coming into this, especially going against a team that has so much tournament experience from a year ago?**

BOO BUIE: I mean, you know, just being here last year, and you know, throughout the past two seasons, we've been fortunate enough to win a lot of games, and close, tough games, and just figuring out how to win, win those close games. I think that we have a lot of older guys and some guys that have tournament experience. I think it's going to be our job to lead the younger guys of what to expect and how things are going to go.

But the biggest thing is just playing as hard as you possibly



can and being really locked into the scout and the preparation.

BROOKS BARNHIZER: Yeah, I definitely think it helps, especially just because we saw like what was a recipe for success last year, especially in the last round, coming off a loss in the Big Ten tournament, we know what we have to do. And we know where our recipe is made and where our bread is buttered, and we just have to stick to our principles. And that's what we did last year and what we hope to do this year.

**Q. I know you've had a couple days, three or four days to get ready for FAU. When you're facing a team deep with talent like this, what will it take to make sure you're able to move on to the next round?**

BROOKS BARNHIZER: Yeah, like you said, Final Four team from last year, greatly coached team, has a lot of talent. It's really kind of what I hit on earlier. Just trying to stick to our principles because we don't want to change based on our opponent just because they are so talented. And if you kind of get off your game plan a little bit, trying to adjust too much, it might mess up your identity a little bit.

So it's really just trying to take away what they want to do, and that's what these four days of scouting is super important for. And you kind of get some rest, but you really have to dive into scouting and tendencies and stuff like that. So all those little things that Boo talked about is going to be super important. Hopefully we get enough right to go out there on Friday and compete and come out on top.

BOO BUIE: Brooks said it very well. Only thing I would add is when you get to this time of the year, records, seeds, what you did last year, none of that really matters. Only thing that matters is whoever comes out and is ready to play when the ball is tipped. So that's going to be our job as leaders to have our team ready to go when that ball is tipped.

**Q. There's been a lot of headlines out of Dartmouth over last few weeks. Have you followed the case and have you considered forming a union yourself?**



BOO BUIE: Could you repeat that?

**Q. Over the last few weeks, there's been a lot of headlines out of Dartmouth as they form a union. Have you been following that saga and have you considered forming a union yourself?**

BROOKS BARNHIZER: No. I honestly don't know too much about it, I would say. But, yeah, I don't think I've given it any thought. So maybe I'd have to look at it a little more, but I'm not so sure about that.

**Q. This year you're playing a different role on the team, more of a leadership position. Do you feel added responsibility on your shoulders this year versus last year and do you feel differently coming into the tournament this year versus last year as well?**

BROOKS BARNHIZER: I definitely feel a little added, but in a good way. I don't think it's really too much pressure, because if you dream of playing at the college level, you hope to be a leader at some point. It's definitely added, but it's a good added. It's almost a blessing just to come out and be a leader.

And, yeah, I definitely feel a little more confident coming into the tournament. Last year was really kind of like my freshman year, so just coming back with that experience from last year's tournament and just kind of, you know, our journey that we've been on this year. I definitely have a little added confidence, but it's been a blessing to be a leader for this team.

**Q. Could you explain a little bit about the relationship your family has with Coach May from FAU and what wrinkles that may add to this matchup?**

BROOKS BARNHIZER: Yeah, so you know, our family is super close with Coach Dusty May. He was really kind of like my dad's first son. He played for my dad in high school at Eastern Greene, earlier in my dad's coaching career.

The one story that I kind of have just to sum it all up is my dad would pick up Coach May every morning and they would go to the gym at like 6 am and that was just kind of where their bond was kind of formed. And, you know, it's a bond that's lasted a lifetime.

It's definitely going to be kind of a full circle experience for my family. But at the end of the day, you know, we've still got to come out and it's all like -- it's a great experience, but as soon as the ball tipped, our loyalties are to our teams. We've got to go out and win the game.

But it's definitely a really cool moment for both families.

**Q. Just curious, the load that Boo has carried all these years; is there any messaging going on between rest of you that you guys want to get this done for this guy in his last year?**

BROOKS BARNHIZER: Yeah, a hundred percent. A lot of times, the weight that Boo carries is unmatched, not only like on court, but as a leader off the court. Just keeping confidence in guys that haven't been playing a lot this year. Just for that, you know, we always come together and just trying to say like we got to go out there and let him go out with a bang because we feel like he's the best point guard in the country.

A lot of other people may have their own opinions and I might be a little biased, but our team, there's no other way that we want to honor him than going out and making a run right now.

**Q. You guys have Bryant McIntosh, the coach. Obviously he made the tournament in 2016, 2017, couldn't get it done in 2017, 2018. What has he taught you this season, to make it twice in Northwestern history?**

BOO BUIE: I would say that B Mac does a really good job of making sure that we are always ready to play. You know, he does a great job, whenever he sees something or feels that he can help, he's going to stop it. He's going to stop practice, and let me know, like, hey, do this or do that.

I'm not sure exactly how his tournament run or what he reflects from his run compared to, you know, the last two seasons. I mean, I know that he's super excited and happy for us. But I should ask him that question because I don't know how he compares them. But I know he's been super proud of us and he's been a great mentor and a great leader for our program these last couple years.

BROOKS BARNHIZER: Yeah, I think Coach B Mac, he's also from Indiana, kind of like me, so we definitely have a lot of -- he was someone I could kind of like relate to or just go to, you know, at times, being a young player. And I've learned so much from him. And even this year, just like him kind of helping me now that I've kind of stepped into a role where, you know, I'm asked to do a little more.

And he's been super helpful just over these last few years, just kind of relaying that knowledge from being the tournament guy, being an all-league guy to me and Boo. So it's been great.

**Q. Obviously the tournament is a really big deal, especially for the stakeholders involved. The**

**conversations of revenue sharing keeps escalating. Do you believe you and your teammates should be paid to be on the television broadcast?**

THE MODERATOR: You guys don't want to answer that question?

BOO BUIE: I won't be here for that, so for me personally, I don't really mind. I mean, I hope that these guys, eventually they figure a system out where, you know, the athletes are getting everything they deserve. But NIL is a good start.

BROOKS BARNHIZER: I feel like just for me personally, I just love the game. And just to play in the NCAA Tournament is enough pay for me because this is like a dream come true for me. I don't really know anything about the revenue or anything. I just love ball, so this is enough for me.

**Q. Piggybacking off the same question, there's been talk about the NIL and the portal and it going crazy, from coaches. But as players, what do you think about it? Do you think it needs to be tamed? Reeled in? What do you think?**

BOO BUIE: I mean, personally, I think that it's right. I'm not saying every situation is right. I'm not sure what's going on. I feel like coaches have a better knowledge of that. Us players, we are kind of are a little bit more behind the scenes with stuff like that.

NIL is definitely a great opportunity for student athletes, especially at big-time places doing big-time things for that program, generating a lot of wealth and recognition.

Definitely if there's mishaps or things not going for the good, you don't want that. But I think NIL has been a good thing for my teammates and I. We've been able to give back to the community. It's been a really fun process for us, just seeing the kids we get to work with, the opportunities we get to go out in the community and just spread our name has been really fun, just having that.

It's bigger than money. It's more so just seeing those kids's reactions because it's all about the future. That's who is going to be here after us, anyway.

**Q. Johnell Davis and ^ Alijah Martin like to move very quickly in transition, and you two are usually the two best defenders on the floor at any time for the Cats. What are the keys for controlling the pace in that transition and trying to force some turnovers along the way?**

BROOKS BARNHIZER: Like you said, they are a really good transition team. They average 82 points a game. So they score a lot. It's trying to get back and get our defense set. And some keys to that is not having live ball turnovers, taking good shots, valuing our possession. I feel like if we do those three things, it will definitely help a little bit. I think those are three really big keys to really help us in terms of taming their transition.

BOO BUIE: Brooks answered that perfectly, the same way I would.

CHRIS COLLINS: Obviously it's a tremendous honor for us to be here. It's exciting to be in New York. Such a great city for basketball. And getting here yesterday, you could feel it once we got to the City. Our guys are excited. We're ready to go. We know we have a very tough challenge in front of us against a really experienced, talented team that's well-coached that has great NCAA Tournament experience coming off a Final Four run last year.

So we know we've had a good week of practice. We're excited to be here. Looking forward to the opportunity to playing FAU tomorrow and see what we can do.

**Q. You mentioned the experience FAU has. Your guys got some tournament experience, but you're down a couple experienced players. How much do you lean on Boo and Brooks and Langborg to carry you through against an experienced team?**

CHRIS COLLINS: Yeah, I think having guys that have played in the NCAA Tournament, certainly for us being there last year, winning our first round game, Boo Buie, Brooks Barnhizer, Nick Martinelli, all guys that got significant time during that run, and then adding Ryan Langborg, who goes to a Sweet 16 last year with Princeton. You have guys who have kind of been on this stage.

Last year, I could tell a lot of our guys, they were wide-eyed, their physicality time going to the tournament, dealing with the added media exposure, the open practice, all the things that come along with the NCAA tournament, it was all new to them. And this year, you could even sense this week, the guys, they understood what's coming and they understand what's front of us, and certainly we got to lean on that experience.

And then some of our young guy who maybe have not had a chance to play on this stage, it gives them an opportunity to follow the lead of those older players into tomorrow.

**Q. What's the key to keeping the ball out of Goldin's**

## hands and deep position?

CHRIS COLLINS: Yeah, Goldin is a terrific big man. Watching film, he would certainly be one of the better bigs that we've played against. We had to go against Edey a couple times. Maybe not the best but he would be up there.

His skill level at seven feet tall, his ability to run the floor, get deep position, we're down one of our bigs, so it's going to be important that we do a good job of being physical and playing hard without fouling, and not allowing him to get easy scores.

I think the thing about this FAU team that really makes him dangerous is he's so good as an interior presence, but then you can't lose sight of how good their guards are, you know. And they really spread the floor and they space you and they can shoot and they can drive you. I think that's what makes them such a prolific offensive team is their ability to have balance.

But it starts with Goldin's ability to post and get dunks and rim runs off the pick-and-roll, and we have to do a good job hopefully limiting that.

**Q. Speaking of injuries, your team has had to deal with so many and so much adversity. How would you describe how the style of play on the offensive end through your team has changed over the course of the season from the beginning to now, and speaking of FAU's offense, how are you going to keep up with them?**

CHRIS COLLINS: Yeah, well, first, when it comes to our team, we really have had to reinvent our offensive system a little bit, and I've been proud of our guys about that. We were built early on in the year to be -- we were very prolific offensively with the floor spacing. Ty Berry, Ryan Langborg, Boo Buie kind of spacing the floor could really shoot the ball. Brooks Barnhizer then had a lot of space to operate kind of as our Jack-of-All-Trades player.

And then Matt Nicholson was always a great lob threat for us coming off the pick-and-roll. And you lose Ty in that and we also lost Langborg for a couple weeks. It changed how we had to play to be successful. Nick Martinelli has stepped in, but he has a different type of game. He plays more from the two-point range in the paint. Now our other big guys have been front and center, Luke Hunger and Blake Preston, and we have had to really focus -- we lost 30-something points a game with those guys out.

So we've had to really clamp down better defensively -- a little bit smarter with our tempo and not get into these

up-and-down games, and I think that lends itself to the game tomorrow. You know, they want to play in the 80s, 90s. They want to get out and run. They want to space the floor. They want to play a high-scoring game, and that's not really going to be a great formula for us with our depth and how we are wired.

We have got to do a great job trying to keep the game more to our tempo and make it more of an execution type of game and not turn the ball over. We have to take good shots, and I think that's the first key to doing a good job against them. If you take rushed bad shots or turn it over, ^ you can't set your defense, and that's where they get in the open floor and they become really hard to stop.

And like we talked about, they present a lot of problems with their ability to play inside and out. They have a terrific big man, but they also have a ton of perimeter guys that can really score and break you down off the dribble and make threes. And that's going to make it a really tough challenge for our defense.

**Q. A ton of talk this year about tournament expansion, what to do in the future beyond this year. What are your general thoughts about that conversations and whether the tournament should be expanded?**

CHRIS COLLINS: I've always been an old-school guy. For me, it was always about 64 and then 68. I just don't -- we have such a good thing going with this event. I mean, there's no event in our country, really, from a sports perspective that I think captures the whole country like March Madness does, and the Tournament does. You know, we are evolving in so many different areas with transfer portal and NIL and all that, so I mean, everything has to always be looked at, I think, is my stance.

But you know, for me, being an old -school kind of historian of the game, I love where this event is at. I love the format of it, the three weeks, the six games.

I just think we have to be careful messing around with it too much because it's such a great event for our sport.

**Q. There's been a lot of news coming out of Dartmouth recently about the men's basketball team unionizing. Have you talked about it to your team?**

CHRIS COLLINS: We went through it at our school with our football team. A couple years back there was an exploratory, same type of deal and it ended up at that point not really going any further.

I think you're just seeing, there's so much movement over the past year, like what's happening with college sports.



And you know, I think we all have to stay ahead of it. We have talked to our guys a little bit. Nothing too much in-depth, but I think no one really knows where this is all going to head over the next year, two years. You know, what are the rules going to be in place, where is this going to go? Is it going to come through the schools, is NIL still going to be prevalent? Like where are all these things?

I mean, the changes that have been made over the past year, I mean, have been at a speed I don't think anybody could have imagined. And so I think we just have to be open. We've got to be ready to evolve. And, you know, we just have to put ourselves in a position at Northwestern to not lose sight of who we are, but also in order to be competitive, make sure that we stay in tune with where college sports is.

And we all want what's best for the student athletes. I don't think anyone would disagree with that. I was a student athlete at one point. I'm jealous. You know, I wish some of the things that were afforded to these guys now were afforded to me.

But we all want our guys to be able to maximize their ability to market themselves and make money as student athletes. Let's just figure out the best way to do that for our game and for everybody involved.

**Q. Obviously FAU has the Final Four experience. Question went to your players and they said, well, all that matters is strapping it up tomorrow and see where we are.**

CHRIS COLLINS: Yeah.

**Q. As a coach, what's your feeling about it? How does that change how you approach the game knowing that Final Four experience that you're going up against?**

CHRIS COLLINS: I don't think it changes it too much. I mean, every year is a new year. We have great respect; our players have amazing respect for their team. We have really dug in the last -- ever since Selection Sunday, these last four days. We've watched a lot of film. Our guys understand who they are. They know they are a really good team and they are really well-coached. Our players know they have had success in the NCAA Tournament.

But really when you go out tomorrow and play, none of that really matters. I mean, we were in the NCAA Tournament last year, we won a game, and played really well against UCLA. It's a new year, every team is different. Our team is different, their team, even though they have the same guys, they are a little bit different than they were last year.

So you go out there and compete. It's about the 40 minutes. It's not about what happened last week, last year, whatever. You're playing a really good team and you know you've got to come out and you've got to execute and you've got to be really smart and you've got to be ready to take what the game gives you. Is there foul trouble, are you not shooting well, are there runs within the game.

And I think that's what is the beauty of the NCAA Tournament. It's a one-game deal. If it was a series, then it's going to be different. 90 percent of the time, the better, more talented team is going to win. But in one game, you've got to go out there and perform and play and execute and try to see if you can get the job done.

**Q. You had the breakthrough season in 2017 and then it took you a while to get back to this point last year. How important from a program stability standpoint is it to follow it up with another berth this year?**

CHRIS COLLINS: Yeah, I think it was really important for us this year. You know, there was a lot of talk -- going in 2017 was historical, first time ever in the history of the school, and it was an amazing experience, but we were not able to follow that up and sustain it. Over the next couple years, we kind of took a step back to the bottom of our league, which was painful to go through.

We kind of dusted ourselves off. We had to have a reset. We brought in a bunch of young guys, Boo Buie being one of them, as part of that core, and we worked through some growing pains. And then these last two years to get back to the other side of it has been incredibly rewarding. It's been a lot of work from a lot of people: Coaches, players, administration, everybody banding together kind of to get us back to where we want to be.

And it was important to sustain this -- after last year, we were picked last in our league and no one really expected us to be there. We had an awesome year. Finished it, won a game in the tournament. Lost some players but returned kind of a core, and it was a real motivating piece for our players and for our coaches to say, hey, let's stack another one. Let's show that we can sustain this thing. You know, that was always my goal for our program was to be a team that could every year be in the mix.

It's very hard to go to the NCAA Tournament, especially in the Big Ten. We got six bids out of 14 teams. There's a lot of really good teams in our league that are not playing this week. But we want to be a program that year-in and year-out feels like we can compete for this opportunity.

And I think we're on the right track, and hopefully these two years, the perception of our program, the respect level of

our program has gotten back to a good point, and we can keep it going as we move into the future.

**Q. The big, decisive factor in those games is free throw rates. I know that's come up in your film. But you talked about balance and FAU's balance on the offensive end, how do you stop the free throw from getting out of hand without overcommitting to the post allowing a bunch of threes?**

CHRIS COLLINS: Yeah, all of those things are of concern. For us, we don't have a lot of depth, having a couple guys out, so fouls can become a real factor. You know, the free throw line are opportunities to give up free points that you don't want to give up, but also it puts us in a little bit of bind if we have guys managing foul trouble because we were down a couple bodies.

So we have to do a good job of being aggressive and physical but yet play without fouling, and that will be an important point. Again, eliminating their easy baskets. That's the thing. They are going to score some points. They are a very prolific team. You're not going to completely shut a team like this down.

But can we slow them down a little bit. You know, can our guys keep their guys out of the paint, can we do a really good job against Goldin down low? He's shooting almost 70 percent from the field. If he gets it down there, he usually makes it.

So we have to do our work early, try to deny his touches the best we can and understand, though, that you can't just sell out completely on him because Johnell Davis, Alijah Martin, the supporting cast is a terrific team, and all of those guys have thrown up 25, 30 in a game.

So we'll have our hands full with that. Everyone in the NCAA Tournament is really good. Anybody you play, there's going to be those kind of challenges, and it's going to be important for us to come out and stay true to our principles and hopefully do a good job against them.

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