

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

Friday, March 22, 2024

Brooklyn, New York, USA

Barclays Center

**Northwestern Wildcats**  
**Coach Chris Collins**  
**Brooks Barnhizer**  
**Ryan Langborg**

**Boo Buie**

Media Conference

Northwestern 77, FAU 65

CHRIS COLLINS: I'm just so fortunate to be sitting up here with these guys. Our team, the toughness level and the heart of this team is like nothing I've ever been a part of. I mean, for us to have the first half we did, we shoot 7 for 33 and it was all -- we were excited. We're excited to be here. We're excited to compete, and we couldn't throw it in the ocean. Our defense, though, was just so on point in the first half.

So even though we really struggled offensively, being at halftime at 20-19, I actually felt really good, because I knew we would settle in. I knew we would get to -- you know, I'm always -- the people who cover me always know I'm a gun slinger, so I'm one of these guys, if we miss ten in a row and you're a 50 percent shooter, you're going to take ten in a row at some point just because water is going to find its level.

In the second half, we saw the ball go in, and really was proud of how our guys -- you know, the flagrant foul occurs, we are up four there, under four. We think we have the ball but now they get two and the ball. The momentum shifted there for those couple minutes. They got the lead, 58-56. Fortunately we got a missed one-and-one, and I was just proud of the poise on these guys on the last -- I'm not a big call a time-out guy and I like to trust these guys to let them -- we know what we want to go to late, so why let them set their defense.

We came down and showed tremendous poise. They



were over-playing Boo. He set a great screen for Brooks. Brooks got to the basket and was able to get a layup and we got a stop. We just got together at the end. We played so many overtime games in our league, guys that follow us know. And we just said when we got to overtime, we are going to find a way because that's what we've done all year.

And it's a real credit to these guys for their heart and toughness and will to just dig down and win the game.

**Q. You set the program record for points in an NCAA Tournament. How does that feel, and any trash talk to Boo who was in second place?**

RYAN LANGBORG: I guess some words will come later to B Mac. But no, I mean, I don't think any of us on the team think about that stuff. It's cool but at the end of the day -- we are focused on the next game, celebrate this one, and we've got a long way to go hopefully.

**Q. Last year you really made a name for yourself in the tournament as someone who comes up in the clutch. And overtime, did you not miss. You and Boo, this was your possible last chance to be on the floor in your college career. How did you feel in those moments. I'm sure you just knew those shots were going in, but going through that overtime, what were you guys thinking and how did that go?**

RYAN LANGBORG: I feel like for all three of us up here, we are just having fun. I usually don't celebrate a lot when I make shots, but I know I had my tongue out and things like that.

I mean, that fadeaway that Boo hit at the end of the shot clock, we were just feeling good and just having fun out there.

**Q. On those last possessions what was going through your head?**

BROOKS BARNHIZER: I was trying not to settle. I think the original play was for Boo, but they were denying Boo. So Boo was trying to set a screen on me, we were able to



get separation. And I kind of came, gave their big dude a shot, he jumped a little bit so I knew I was able to get by him. And I knew he wouldn't be at the rim to contest it so I was able to get a layup.

All it was was playing off my teammates. The biggest part is that Boo came down and got a stop on the other end. When Davis came down and shot the long shot, we contested it and didn't start celebrating. It was a testament to like the whole team on that play. I was able to tie it and then get a stop, force overtime, and we kind of played really well in overtime and ended up getting the win.

**Q. Given your relationship with Coach May, what did you think about the fact that you were the guy who hit the shot that forced the overtime and was a dagger for him, and what kind of conversation did you have with Coach May after the game?**

BROOKS BARNHIZER: It's cool, when March comes around, there's a lot of really cool stories. I have the utmost respect for Coach May and, really, after I was in the back of the line, we just told each other that we love each other. We are super close. But I'm really glad that we got the win and super, super proud of him. That's all I can really say because it gets a little emotional in March. But I'm super proud of him.

**Q. You guys have played in multiple overtime games, and you took Purdue to overtime twice and took Illinois to overtime. How much does that help you to prepare to play these slog-out games and grind out wins when it matters the most?**

BOO BUIE: Coach said it best. Usually in those games, us three are the ones that's playing the majority of high minutes in those type of game. It's our job as leaders to make sure that going into that overtime period, you know, we're telling each other, like, this is our game, we are built -- we are just telling each other we are built for these moments.

We put our bodies through stuff so that we are prepared for this situation. We just had the utmost confidence. Once Brooks laid the ball in at the end of regulation and we went into overtime, everyone in the huddle was saying, like we're winning. Like there's no other option but winning. And we just had so much confidence coming out into the OT period, and I'm just proud of everybody who was here today and played a role.

**Q. Ryan, what did you learn from the run last year that you were on with Princeton?**

RYAN LANGBORG: I mean, in every situation, I feel like

you just got to stay calm. And I know we were down and, like, look at that, we're down two, could have been four. And Brooks hit a great shot that sent us to overtime. We win that game and -- there was a possibility that that wasn't going to happen. Just staying composed.

And these guys leading the way with the ball, we just stayed composed the whole time and made it easy.

**Q. For any of the student athletes, what was Coach communicating to you guys before the game or what were you seeing from FAU's defense that led you to lead the team in scoring?**

BOO BUIE: So for me, they actually kind of threw like some different defense at me a little bit. In the first half they were kind of in a drop, and as I got downhill they would come up. I was just trying to figure out what they were doing in the first half.

But, you know, my teammates did a good job of just picking me up and making sure -- but like Coach said, we weren't really making shots in the first half. So a little bit of it was maybe their scheme and just not us -- us just not making shots.

But I thought that once we got to the second half and the overtime period, we were pretty much able to run what we wanted to and get to some good shots, and we were able to make more shots.

RYAN LANGBORG: Echoing Boo, I feel like our team meshed together in the right time in the game. We were just balling. When you get in that moment, you're not thinking too much. We talk every day in practice, just make reads. I think that's what we were doing.

BROOKS BARNHIZER: Yeah, when you play with a guy like Boo, a lot of times teams are going to try to take the ball out of his hands. And it's kind of been a thing that we have echoed all season, just having confidence when they try to throw different defenses at him, kind of gets guys like me and Ryan to just be aggressive and be ourselves.

We have open shots because people take the ball out of Boo's hands. So it's really just being confident once you get the ball in different situations.

**Q. There's chants of Ryan Langborg in Brooklyn as this game is laying down the final seconds. Can you describe what he has meant coming into this program this year and what kind of zone he was in to start overtime?**

BROOKS BARNHIZER: He's meant a lot. The cool thing



about college sports is when Ryan came on his visit earlier this spring, as soon as he touched down and we got to spend some time together and we hosted him, I knew he was going to come here. We had this connection where I don't even know how to really describe it. But as soon as -- we actually were roommates, we lived together.

But he's meant so much to our team, being a leader and being an everyday guy. I can't describe the friendship and leadership he's had for not just me and Boo, but the other guys on our team. So he's meant the world to our squad for sure.

BOO BUIE: Piggybacking off that, he pretty much explained it really well. Ryan, he's been a huge, huge help for us. Obviously the basketball is great, but just as another mentor and leader for our program. He's just a super, super nice person and he'll do anything for anybody. He's just a really good teammate to have. And man, he was balling today, man, he was balling.

BROOKS BARNHIZER: For sure.

**Q. Some of those replay reviews went against you guys at the end of regulation, inadvertent whistle obviously. You protested them and argued. What did you see from your team in those chaotic moments that told you they were going to be okay in that situation to pull into overtime?**

CHRIS COLLINS: I think it's been 11 years since you've asked me a question, so it's good to see your face, back from my North Carolina days.

Our guys stayed poised. There was definitely some chaos with some reviews, out-of-bounds, flagrant fouls. It's part of the game. And the officials, they are great officials. They are here for a reason and they are looking at that. So you have to go with what was called. Obviously we are trying to state our case of how we feel about things.

We have such a tough-minded group and a veteran team. Boo is a fifth-year senior, Ryan Langborg in a fifth-year guy, Brooks is in his third year. We got older guys that have been in these situations, playing in the Big Ten, being on the road, being in chaotic environments. We've seen it all throughout the years.

So I think our guys are comfortable, whatever gets thrown at us. I mean, we had two starters that got hurt in the last month that we've had to deal with, and they just keep their focus. They keep their poise. They get on to the next play. And I thought after all that happened, you know, our ability to just get on to the next play and finish regulation and find a way to get to overtime was huge.

**Q. Obviously Ryan Langborg, out of his mind in OT. At what point, do you say, this guy has the hot hand and we are just going to beat him and get out of the way or did it come in the context of the offense?**

CHRIS COLLINS: We have a package of stuff that we run for Ryan. You know, as a shooter, when a guy gets going, you can see it in his eyes. He was really hot. I kind of emptied my Langborg package with the playbook. We run a lot of stuff for him to get shots, and we found that we were having success coming off screens with their five man.

They do a really good job. They switch a lot like we do. So their switching was bothering a lot of the stuff we were doing, but we were able to find some stuff when -- using their big as our big screen. And off the ball, we got some pin downs. We got some of our specials. We got some hand-off actions. He was able to get to his mid-range.

Like that's how I roll as a coach is if somebody has got it going, I'm going to ride that player. That's what I wanted when I was a player and how people coached me. And you see a guy get it going, you know you're going to ride that hot hand, especially when you've got to win when your season is on the line.

Don't know what it is about the NCAA Tournament with Ryan Langborg, but I'm glad he's on my team this go-around.

**Q. Second year in a row you're in the second round. What challenges does UCONN present in the next round?**

CHRIS COLLINS: I want to enjoy this game before I start talking about that juggernaut. It means a lot for our program. When I came to Northwestern 11 years ago, we were one of the only Power Six schools that had never been in the NCAA Tournament. You know, for us, that was what everybody wanted. Can we get there once. You know, it's never happened in the history. And that was awesome and to be a part of that history was great.

But grew up 15 minutes from Northwestern's campus. I viewed it as an opportunity to go in there and try to build a program. It's not easy in the Big Ten, the programs you have to compete against. We've had some great times. We've had some lean years. The administration has stuck by me when we had some tough times the last few years, a bunch of players hung in there with us.

To now, to get to this point, where, you know, I feel like we've earned respect, and you only do that by winning and

your play. You can't talk about it. You've got to go out there and you've got to produce results. So for us, two years in a row, last year we come in second place in the Big Ten, and this year we tied for third.

We now come into the NCAA Tournament and we advance two years; so you've got to do it. You've got to produce. That's what we are trying to build. We are trying to build something that's sustainable, something that can last. And the more you can win and the more you can get on this stage -- perception is everything, guys, you know that.

You get a player like a Boo Buie, you get a player like Ryan and Brooks, and now you can talk to high school players and talk to other guys and say, hey, Northwestern ain't all bad. We play a fun style. We win. Our atmospheres and our arena were sold out this year, and all those things mean so much to me because it's been so much work by so many people over 11 years to get to this point.

**Q. Wondering if you can rehash when Ryan is coming out of the tournament run last year, he's in the portal, why you wanted him, what you noticed from what he did in this stage last year, and kind of the beginning of all that.**

CHRIS COLLINS: Well, fortunately we were both out in Sacramento. Princeton was in Sacramento. We were in Sacramento. We both advanced. We had a chance. You're focused on what you're doing, but you have an eye. We are all hoops junkies. So you're watching games and seeing what's going on.

We knew he was playing so well, and we knew a lot of those Ivy League kids, because of the COVID, they have to leave, right. If they have another year and they are done, there's no more -- they couldn't stay.

So we were hoping and praying as we saw that he -- because as we watched him, we knew we were going to have a good nucleus coming back. But we lost Chase Audige who was a huge piece to us who was a wing player who scored and defended and did a lot. And we were going to have to replace a lot of that production.

We just felt Ryan was a seamless fit, who he was, his character, who he was as a player, his skillset. We really thought it would complement the guys that we had. I don't know if anybody beat us to the punch, but we were one of the first ones on the horn to call him and got him to campus right away. Like Brooks said, it was just seamless when he got on campus, it just was a fit.

There was a need. He fit our guys. He fit our culture, and

what a great experience for him to come. The grad stuff is not easy. It's hard. You play somewhere else four years and now you come in and you try to step into a new program, and it's a testament to our guys for welcoming him in, and it's a real testament for him coming in and being a part of what we're doing and still coming out and performing on the big stage like he did today. It's been an awesome fit. I think it's worked well for both of us.

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