

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: Second Round - Creighton vs Auburn

Friday, March 21, 2025

Lexington, Kentucky, USA

Rupp Arena

Creighton Bluejays

Jasen Green

Jamiya Neal

Ryan Kalkbrenner

Media Conference

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Creighton student-athletes, Jamiya Neal, Ryan Kalkbrenner and Jasen Green. At this time we will take questions for our student athletes.

Q. Ryan, what have you seen from Johni Broome and the challenges that he portends in the post? How much have you embraced that challenge of playing a potential Player of the Year candidate?

RYAN KALKBRENNER: Obviously he's a super talented player, he's got good touch around the rim, and a really good passer, which makes it really hard to guard him because if you double him, he will pass out of it. But as a competitor and basketball player, you want to go up against the best guys in the game, and I get an opportunity to play against him.

So I'm excited and I'm looking forward to it. As a competitor, that's what you want.

Q. Ryan, you mentioned some of the Johni Broome's passing skills. For him specifically how does that affect the way that you guard him, knowing he's a big that can spread the ball out and his versatile moves?

RYAN KALKBRENNER: I think it's just when a player is as versatile as that and can do as many things as he can, you gotta be smart above anything else. You gotta know when you can go do double without giving up a wide-open shot, what moves he likes in certain spots. When you are playing players as good as that, you can't just be physically ready. You've got to be mentally ready and sharp for everything that he does.



Q. Ryan and Jasen, we all kinda know what was going through our minds when we were watching Jamiya yesterday. What was going through yours as you continued to watch him rise to the occasion and make those plays to kinda hush the crowd when it felt like it was teetering?

JASEN GREEN: For me in particular, it was a really good feeling to see him step into that role. There were a lot of times especially late in the shot clock where we weren't getting too much movement, our offense was getting stagnant. But Jamiya was going to step up and take those big shots and thankfully for us they were going in yesterday.

It was just a really good feeling for all of us when he would make them because the crowd would quiet down and it would give us a moment to gather ourselves again.

RYAN KALKBRENNER: Jamiya did a great job at creating space for himself and getting shots up. There were definitely some shots that as soon as he took them, I knew they were going in. Some shots he took and I was like there is no way that ball is going in, and it would bounce around and go in.

So Jamiya has been doing that all year, and it was definitely big for us considering the crowd was against us yesterday.

Q. Ryan, you talk about the crowd against you. 1 versus 9 tomorrow. Do you look at it as an underdog role tomorrow? How is your team approaching against Auburn?

RYAN KALKBRENNER: I think this time of year the seeding and numbers don't matter too much to me. I've been around this long enough to know once you get to this point, every team is really good and you can't get too caught up in who's the underdog, who is favored all that stuff. It's not important.

What's important is coming up with a game plan and executing that and being ready to go. That's been my approach, and I know my teammates have a similar approach to that.



Q. Jamiya, yesterday was one of those games where I guess there was such a focus on limiting Ryan that it opened up things for the backcourt. Once that did, then you started getting your looks and you had 29 points. In terms of defending you all, when you look at yourselves on film, what's the thing about this offense that makes it hard to focus on one aspect, like yourself or the backcourt?

JAMIYA NEAL: I would say just the structure of the team and the complexity of our offense. Coach Mac do a great job of scouting and putting us in the best positions to score. And Kalk demands a lot of attention down in the post. We have a lot of shooters around and we have guys who can make plays off the ball like me. J. Green is a matchup problem because he can also shoot but he can also put smaller guys in the post.

So I feel like game by game, it's picking your poison. Yesterday they didn't want to leave off Kalk and they didn't want to leave off the shooters, which left a lot of space to one-on-one to iso. I'm going to take advantage of it, that's what I like to do. When those moments happen, I have to take advantage of it.

Q. Jasen, you guys commit the fewest fouls of my defense in the country and y'all still have a good efficient defense. What's the key to that?

JASEN GREEN: The key to that is just our -- it's just our discipline. We work on that stuff every day during practice. Coach Mac brings it up all the time. He says those drills are going to get boring, but we're still going to do them every day because that's the type of team we are. We have to be locked in at every possession because they've done -- they've worked with the statistics and teams that foul less do better. So that's what we do.

And we have big Kalk back behind us, so we know that we don't have to foul if they're driving because we have our save guy back there.

Q. Ryan, you've played in so many tournament games at this point, made multiple deep runs. How comfortable are you in this setting at this point in your career?

RYAN KALKBRENNER: Yeah, I would say definitely less nerves than early on in my career. The excitement of it never goes away, but you can kind of get amped up to the point where you get nervous or get thrown off your game. But like you said, I've played in plenty of these that I still get excited, but I'm not nervous. I play with the same focus and intensity that I do every game.

That's big for me. And a lot of the other guys have the same mentality. They have all been to tournament games, so we go into these games not feeling nervous or out of sorts. We go into it like it's any other game and we're dialed in and focused for it.

Q. Ryan, you've been a part of this stretch of success at Creighton. What does it mean to you to have an opportunity to play for a fourth Sweet 16 in five years tomorrow?

RYAN KALKBRENNER: Yeah, I mean it's really cool. I've been really lucky to be a part of so many good teams at Creighton, and I've been lucky to be here at the time I've been here. It's not just me that's done it. It's been Mac, all my teammates. It's been an awesome ride, and I don't want it to end yet so we're going to try to extend it one more weekend.

Q. Ryan, what do you feel like you're doing differently or better this time of year that be you have in previous seasons?

RYAN KALKBRENNER: I don't know. I try to -- well, something Mac talks about is being process oriented. So no matter what time of year or no matter what's going good or going bad, you try to approach every day the same way. That's what I try to do. I don't know what's going better or worse for me. When you consistently put together good days, things start to work out for you eventually.

Q. Jamiya, yesterday you said that you are determined to stay -- play as many games with this team as you possibly can because of what they mean to you. When you got here, did you think you would have that connection or build that type of connection in just one year with this group?

JAMIYA NEAL: No, not really. I wasn't sure what type of connection I was going to have. I was sure that we were going to be somewhat successful on the basketball court and we have been. But I think what we've been through this season has brought us together. Like I've been saying all year, when you go through stuff with people, then that kinda makes you closer.

We've been through a lot and we just connected very well off the court. We're all the same type of guys, we don't get in trouble, and we don't do crazy stuff, all good dudes. I couldn't have called it, and I never would have told you in the summer these guys would have been the closest team I ever played with, I would have never said that. But here we are and I'm happy it ended up that way.



Q. Jasen or Kalk, you have been around for the number 1 UConn game and the Kansas game. How do these match-ups in those big intensity moments help prepare you for this match-up?

JASEN GREEN: I think having the experience playing against those number 1 teams will help us because it's just a lot of eyes on you. There is going to be a big crowd watching us, a lot of people watching on TV, and there is not much that can prepare you for that except for experience.

I feel like the fact that we have played against those two number 1 teams has helped us out a lot, and I'm sure it will help us tomorrow when we have a lot of guys on us.

Q. Jamiya, what stands out about Auburn's guards offensively and defensively and the match-up you will have with them tomorrow?

JAMIYA NEAL: I would say offensively, shooting. I have not watched Auburn a lot this year. I did not know those guys can shoot like that. They shot some really tough shots. I thought I shot tough shots, but they can all shoot tough shots. Even the guys off the bench are shooting it deep.

And defensively they're just pests. They're relentless, they switch. So we definitely have to be on our P's and Q's tomorrow for sure.

Q. Guys, tip-off 9:40 Eastern Time tomorrow night. Obviously you're going to be waiting a while before you play. I'm sorry, 7:10 for you guys. So the protocol for you guys going through today and then tomorrow, you guys just going to be watching a lot of NCAA Tournament games outside of meetings? How do you get through a regular game day?

JAMIYA NEAL: Personally, on the road games, Jasen is my roommate, and we pretty much sleep throughout the whole day. And then he wakes me up and tells me it's time to go downstairs, and we go downstairs, and it's time to play. That's how we're going to spend it. That's what me and Jasen are going to do, I don't know what Kalk is going to do, he has a wife and everything.

RYAN KALKBRENNER: I pretty much do the same thing except my wife wakes me up, and we go for a walk, and then I go back to sleep, and then she wakes me up again, and we go to pregame meal.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks for your time, guys. Good luck tomorrow.

