

# NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: Second Round - Arkansas vs St. John's

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Providence, Rhode Island, USA

Amica Mutual Pavilion

## Arkansas Razorbacks Coach John Calipari

## Trevon Brazile

## Karter Knox

Media Conference



THE MODERATOR: We can open up for some questions here.

**Q. Just for both of you guys, what have you seen just in the short amount of time you have been able to scout St. John's? What are their strengths and how have you approached that?**

TREVON BRAZILE: We know they're Big East champions. They got the Big East Player of the Year on their team, well-coached so we expect a dogfight going in.

KARTER KNOX: Yeah, they're the number two team for a reason. Physical. Like TB said, Big East champs and they got a Big East player so pretty good.

**Q. TB, getting that first NCAA Tournament win, Karter same for you, how much time do you have to focus on that and flush and move on to the next game? How much time do you give yourself to celebrate and transition to getting ready for this game tomorrow?**

TREVON BRAZILE: Last night we did most of the celebrating we're going to game for right now because we're still trying to play more games and win more games so to us this isn't over yet. So we're just getting ready for St. John's today. Not as much celebrating.

**Q. Trevon, you were on that Sweet 16 team a couple seasons ago but you were out injured. Do you still take things you saw from that run and try to implement them and put that on the rest of the team or how do you look back on that to help?**

TREVON BRAZILE: To be honest, that was a really long time ago. I don't remember much about it. I just remember how fast and how hard everybody played. I don't remember much besides that.

**Q. Jonas has really come into his own in the last few games. You dealt with his injuries in the early season. How have you seen him improve his output in these recent games?**

KARTER KNOX: I'm proud of him. Dealt with some injuries, but he stayed in the gym and got better. He finally broke through. He's been working late nights, so work is really paying off.

**Q. For either of you guys, has the mentality in the locker room changed to where you guys are now from earlier in the season when you were struggling a little bit?**

KARTER KNOX: No, not at all. We're still hungry. We started 0-5 in the SEC. We're still trying to eat, kill, all that. Trying to win a National Championship. That's the goal.

**Q. Along those lines, Karter, what has allowed this group to keep that drive, that hunger, that dream of winning it all in place even when you were 0-5?**

And was there ever a moment, you don't have to get into the full details of it, but where you guys sort of banded together as players and said we're not going to let this start to SEC play define who we are?

KARTER KNOX: Oh, yeah, most definitely. We stuck together. 0-5, we stuck together. We didn't let go of the rope and it got us here. Job's not finished. We still have more games to go. St. John's tomorrow and we got to get this dub.

THE MODERATOR: Anything else? Appreciate your time. Good luck tomorrow.

We will open up the floor to questions for Coach.

**Q. Did Adou Thiero practice today and if so --**

JOHN CALIPARI: He was out there, let me just say that.



**Q. Do you expect him to go tomorrow?**

JOHN CALIPARI: If you ask me, I mean, the kid will try to convince me. You gotta be able to go in there and help and Boogie was able to do it, but I have seen crazier things.

**Q. One more from me. With Jonas dealing with the injuries he had through the season, was there anything you or the staff did to help him along or help him get to the point to have the impact he's having now?**

JOHN CALIPARI: He and Z both, and TB, really worked their way out of the positions they were in and, you know, Kenny Payne, driving him, mainly to get him in better shape. Jonas was out four months, maybe almost five months with the injury. So he's only been playing the last 12 games. TB has been playing behind Adou so he's played some good games, but it's only been what? Ten games? Nelly and Karter and Billy with Boogie going down, he's been out 15 games. They have had more opportunities. You have a team that's been together and played 30 games? We're not it.

What's happened to us in the zone, Adou Thiero, those who watch us, is our zone offense. We throw it to him and he goes, creates for his teammates. No one has played a zone since he's been out, and then they went zone and we're trying to figure out who to put in the middle and by the end, we figured out here's the best guy for this group, which is a different team without Adou. Adou is our leading scorer, so, but it's... you know, I come back to the resiliency of this group to be on this stage, to be up, to take two ridiculous threes. Like, what are you thinking? And all of a sudden they get back in the game. And now we have to get it out and win the game and we did. Made the free throws, made the plays, made a stop. Boogie made a steal, and all of a sudden it's our game when we were down three, so...

**Q. Coach, you said throughout the year that you've had confidence in your team being able to turn it around, just need to get healthy and stuff. Was there ever a point where your patience was wearing thin? Were you able to stay patient throughout the entire season and have that belief even after the 0-5 start and everything?**

JOHN CALIPARI: Well, I don't think it was patience. I just had to keep believing and letting them know I believed. I believed in this, and that I've been through stuff like this. You guys never have. Maybe not that bad, but, you know, it starts with our staff never splintered, never wavered. Let's just keep getting work in. We're going to bust through

at some point, and when they do, it'll be really rewarding for everybody and that's kind of what happened. And then as coaches, all of us, you know, you got to battle that demon, too.

Like for me, the biggest thing was I had to take all the stuff I had done in the past in my career and set it aside. It has nothing to do with this. If I'm frustrated because what I have done in the past isn't happening right now, I'm going to be taking it out on the kids. I had to just say forget about it. I'm going to make this something special. I don't care what I've done in the past. It doesn't matter. It has no bearing on this. And the staff, I told them the same thing, so we just kept believing.

**Q. Just talking to your players, a lot of them were too young to really remember John Calipari and Rick Pitino battles. If you can tell them one thing to think about from what you remember going up against Rick, what would it be?**

JOHN CALIPARI: They're a team that's going to be prepared. They're going to play hard. They're going to play rough. It's going to be bump and grind. You're not getting a free layup without getting bumped. That's his teams. He's not pressing as much where he would go 2-2-1, 1-2-2, 1-2-1-1. It's mostly man. Sometimes they'll trap. What you find out, the second-half numbers are ridiculous. They're wearing you down like you're in combat, and if you're not used to it... hopefully we understand that. We talked to the kids about it, but they're good. He's done a great job with his team. That's why they're a two seed. That's why we were a ten seed. That's why we're underdog this game. Their guard play... and people say they don't shoot it. You ready? Last five games, their percentage is better than ours from the three. So you have to say you really don't shoot it then. Those are numbers that are real. They offensive rebound like crazy. If they get 18 offensive rebounds and make ten threes, they beat anybody in the country. Would you guys who follow them say that? That's who they are.

**Q. What did you think of Rick's video before he went back to Kentucky where he told the Kentucky fans they shouldn't boo you?**

JOHN CALIPARI: I didn't see it. I heard about it.

**Q. What did you think of the fact that he did it?**

JOHN CALIPARI: It was nice of him. I would rather have a Christmas card, but that was nice of him. (Laughter).

**Q. To go off Jaxon's question, I know a lot has been made about you and Coach Pitino and he joked you**



**aren't playing one on one. What is your relationship like with Coach Pitino?**

JOHN CALIPARI: It's fine. We both started in Five-Star, the basketball camp with Howie Garfinkel and Will Klein. He's much older than me, but we started in that camp and I have always looked up to him because when I was a camper he was a counsellor. When I became a counsellor he was a speaker. He was there with Chuck Daly and Hubie Brown and I could go on and on, and Rick Pitino. You know, knowing what he did at BU and then Providence, then goes to the Knicks and then goes back to Kentucky and goes to the Celtics and goes to Louisville, and I can go on and on. Greece, Iona and now St. John's, and everywhere he's been he's made a difference.

I will study what he's doing. I always do. Watch what he's doing, how's he doing it? But there's the formula, whether it's me or him or another coach, the relationship with the kids to get them to play hard and play with a winning attitude, that's something he's always done. Again, understand I don't know how long he was at Louisville when I was at Kentucky, but you're not going to be friends when you got those two jobs. You're not going to be enemies, but if he's real good, you're like, sheesh, and if we were real good, he's probably saying, ugh. But that's, you know, I respect coaches. I respect coaches that can really do this well and if you can do it over a long, long period of time, I really respect you.

This is, you know. All that goes on with what we do to sustain excellence that means you're really, really good at what you do. You're great at what you do. Maybe you're the best to ever do it.

**Q. Coach, you touched on it a minute ago, but St. John's has the number one defense in the country. What makes them so tough?**

JOHN CALIPARI: They switch a lot. They're really physical, they collapse, they make layups hard. They will -- their three-point defense is, like, ridiculously low but the way we shoot it, they don't have to be ridiculously low. We'll do that to ourselves sometimes. And the second thing is my guess is 50/50 balls. They get 70% of them or more. That's why defensively you think about it. And then their defense leads to their offense. Probably my guess is they score 17, 18 points a game off turnovers, so you better not have a whole lot of live ball turnovers or you have no chance of winning the game.

**Q. Big game for Johnell last night. How have you seen his game develop throughout the season and has he taken a bigger leadership role being in March Madness two years in a row?**

JOHN CALIPARI: He has, but you have to understand he fell off a golf cart going to a football game and almost broke his wrist and it was, naturally, his right wrist. Was out three weeks, four weeks, they had to go to New York for them to do stuff. It took time to get it back to where it was, but what I'm happy about is he never stopped and he just kept going. So now, like that shot in front of me, as soon as I saw the ball in the air, shoot it, you better shoot because sometimes he ball fakes. You just want him to shoot it and be confident. DJ does the same sometimes. Just let it go.

**Q. Just to follow up on the conversation about Rick, how do you think you're most alike and how do you think you're most different?**

JOHN CALIPARI: We both have big noses so that's one. He has Gucci shoes and I have itchy shoes so we're different there. I don't know. We're all going to be judged 50 years from now what we did and how we did it, but I hope years from now people will say they both get their teams to play hard at a competitive level. Do we do it different? Yeah, I guess. I am who I am. Like it or not, this is who I am and how I deal with kids. We're all different with that.

**Q. When you talk about the fragility of coaching relationships, how do you feel about that? You're in this profession where there might be people that you want to maintain relationships with?**

JOHN CALIPARI: You know who called me last night? My wife loves it. Tom Izzo and I have been friends for a long time. My wife, any time he calls I have to put it on speaker because we're laughing and doing whatever, but we're not in the same league. Mark Few and I, he hits me last night after the game and we go back and forth. That's, in this profession it happens. It's just hard.

Rick Barnes and I, we were friends since, again, he's a little older than me, when we were 18. We were doing camps and doing stuff together and we stayed close for that period of time. That's unique. He knows I love him. Right away will say to me, love you brother. But it's hard unless you have something longstanding because the old coaches used to go to breakfast the day of the game or dinner the night before the game. I remember. I was with Ted Owens. He would go the night before and have dinner or breakfast with the coach the morning before. Never is that happening now. It's just different.

**Q. John, you said it earlier, your team, your players embracing the underdog mentality. These have been two different seasons for the respective programs meeting tomorrow, but we're in Providence. You're on**



**Federal Hill, heavy Italian community here.**

JOHN CALIPARI: I have gone under The Pineapple about six times already. Gone under it, let's go. Let's go, Italians. Let's do this.

**Q. All those things, the rich basketball traditions in this town in a world where you could have easily never met again, how much do you feel the basketball gods have led these two programs to meeting tomorrow?**

JOHN CALIPARI: You know, he's on chapter two of his new book and we're on chapter one. As a matter of fact, we're probably on the first few pages of the chapter. It's both of us writing another story and being able to come back here. Now, Father Jay is in Florida so I wanted to give him confession, but he's not here. Kenny Ford, Jersey Red. All you in Providence know who I'm talking about. He's passed away, but his son and daughter went to dinner with us and Paxon, her godfather. But there are friends I have here. We were talking about Billy Reynolds passing away.

I was at UMass not far from here for eight years and so, yeah, I love Providence. I love Federal Hill. I love the city. To be able to come back here? I was happy. One of my players asked me, as you probably know, Where's Providence? And I said in the United States (Laughter). I love running around and seeing the old houses on the street. The history here reminds me of the areas of Boston. The same kind of deal.

**Q. John, what was it like, you touched earlier on Five-Star. What was it like being a coach with some ambitions, a young coach, going there the first couple of times?**

JOHN CALIPARI: You just hope Garf, at the introduction, gave you a nice introduction and it meant something when you're 19. But you also look around the room and you're like, again, Hubie Brown, Chuck Daly, Rick Pitino, Mike Fratello. I can go on and on. I'm leaving guys out, but you're kind of overwhelmed because they start talking and you know none of it. They're doing stations and literally you're learning how to coach, learning what it means to coach. I was in that laboratory and able to do it.

Garf and I stayed friends until he passed away. Will Klein is still a friend, but they gave all of us, Rick included, an opportunity in this profession. I'm forever grateful. To learn from those guys, learn from Rick, I mean, he was doing stuff, individual stuff and workout stuff and ball fakes and all this stuff. Ball up, knees down. That's your ball fake. Ball up, knees down. You just learned all kinds of stuff that you were like, wow, that's pretty good. So that

was the laboratory.

And, again, the games there? I coached one team that they were sophomores and I was coaching at UMass, they were better than my players at UMass and they were sophomores back then. Grant Hill was on my team. Danny Ferry was on my team. They were sophomores. What? John Wall. It's crazy. At that time, that's where you went. You went to Five-Star and I got to coach there and learn to coach.

THE MODERATOR: We have time for one or two more.

**Q. Rick has said a couple times that he doesn't necessarily consider you a rival and that he doesn't have that disdain. I'm curious, do you consider Rick a rival and if not, do you have any head coaching rivals?**

JOHN CALIPARI: Whoever I'm coaching against, that's the rival for that day. I'm not, you know -- when you're doing what we do... the one thing I know, if I dislike a coach, I don't do a good job. So I try to ignore all that. The problem is sometimes you're playing coaches you really respect and you don't like doing that either. You would rather play somebody you don't know. Let's just go play a game. But, yeah, I have never seen him as a rival. Louisville was a rival. He happened to coach there, but I coached against other coaches too. It's... Bill Self and I, he won his National Championship against me and we won ours against him, but what? So what? I was at Kansas and left to go to Pitt as an assistant and he was the guy who took my place, so we've known each other for 30... 25 years. When you're in this a long time, you see a lot, you meet a lot of people and there are people that you're really, like, wow.

When I was at UMass, I would be in there not knowing whether we were going to win or lose before every game, like not knowing whether we're going to win or lose, and I'm in there sweating, like, oh, my gosh. And I'm like, how did Coach Smith, Dean Smith, do this for 30 years? I'm going to die at age 40. How in the world did he do this? He started figuring out he knew he was winning 20, but the question was is he going to win 30? If you get good enough and you're a good team, I guess you can last in this, but I didn't know when I first got started.

We lost to Lowell. Stan Van Gundy was the coach. How about that? We lost to Lowell and the officials tried to give us the game. I went on the bus and I said, you deserved to beat us. They were Division II at the time.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks, Coach. Good luck tomorrow.

