

# NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: Second Round - Colorado vs Marquette

Saturday, March 23, 2024

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Gainbridge Fieldhouse

## Colorado Buffaloes

## Tad Boyle

## KJ Simpson

## Tristan da Silva

## J'Vonne Hadley

### Media Conference

THE MODERATOR: We'll take questions for the student-athletes.

**Q. The last two games have obviously been pretty different, scoring a hundred-plus points last night, 60-53 game a couple nights before. Do you guys feel like you've gotten to a point where you feel like you can kind of win any type of game whether it's a high-scoring up-and-down game or a low-scoring maybe defensive battle.**

KJ SIMPSON: Yeah, it just goes to show this team just finds a way to win. Obviously, Boise State and Florida are different teams, but they're similar in the sense on their toughness and grit. So we knew it wasn't going to be the easy game. It was going to be a dog fight. So either us scoring 60 or us scoring a hundred it was still a close game. But the thing about this team is we just find a way to win, like I said. We would like to not have the other team score as close to us, got to get better defensively. But that's just how March is. It's madness and that's what's going to happen and what comes with it and this team just finds a way to win at the right moment.

TRISTAN DA SILVA: Yeah, I would say good teams kind of have to do that. They got to figure out different ways to win. I feel like we're in a pretty good spot right now. That's the type of team we want to be. And, yeah, super proud of our guys in both games figuring out how to battle the right way, how to adjust game plans, how to adjust to our opponents, and kind of figure out different ways to win.



**Q. KJ, I saw a fan online call you Mr. Big shot 2.0 referencing Chauncey. What's that mean to hear, and if you guys go farther than where Chauncey had gone for CU, what would that mean to you?**

KJ SIMPSON: Yeah, that would mean everything. I mean, obviously Chauncey Billups was a legend. I grew up understanding his background and watching him as a kid and following in the footsteps of trying to emulate those role models ahead of me and filling their shoes.

I can't take the credit for his nickname. That's all Chauncey. He worked for that, he earned that, and that's all him, and anytime you talk about Colorado that will always be him.

But I'm thankful to be even mentioned in the same sentence with him or people on Twitter, you know, saying that those things. I'm just thankful that the recognition is there and just happy to be here with my teammates.

**Q. You guys have won now 10 of 11 games and Tad has pointed back to that UCLA game as kind of a turning point. Was there any moment that you guys kind of got together and talked about the way you're playing, getting tougher, whatever it might be, or was it just something that happened organically.**

J'VONNE HADLEY: Yeah, I mean, sometimes you end up with the short end of the stick. That happened to us a lot of games this year. We've lost a couple single-digit games and it just happened to -- sort of that USC game, where we kind of ended up winning that one and it kind of just gave us that sense of faith and just, like, a realization that we can do it.

Then from there on, when we get in those type of situations, we can always have something to look back at and just realize that no matter what we're facing, whether we're down 10 with a couple minutes left, no matter what the case may be, that we can always pull through.

TRISTAN DA SILVA: Yeah, I would say it happened kind of organically just because we've been in so many close games that we've lost that we kind of learned so much from



these games that kind of carried us through the last weeks, the last 11 games, where we've been in close situations and kind of applied what we learned from close games that we've lost.

I feel like it's kind of obvious to every single one of the players what we've changed, how we've started playing on offense and on defense, how we go about our business. So there hasn't been a specific meeting where we talked about it directly, but I feel like everybody's pretty aware.

**Q. Tristan, Sunday will be the third game in five games -- five days that you guys have played. How do you push through that fatigue that comes with playing on a stage like this?**

TRISTAN DA SILVA: Yeah, this is the biggest stage. This is what you want to play. I feel like there's still a little bit of jitters, a little bit of excitement, kind of nervousness that kind of pushes you through. You don't really feel that tired. All the soreness, once you warm-up kind of goes away, fades away, and you just live in the moment, you just play the game that you love. I feel like that's probably applicable to all of our guys.

**Q. KJ, wondering what the quantity of messages were like for you after that shot yesterday? Were there any that stood out or maybe meant a lot to you?**

KJ SIMPSON: Yeah, there was definitely a lot. My phone was blowing up. I had to set it down for a moment. It was kind of surreal before it even hit me like to understand what had really happened. But I got a lot of love around, especially CU fan base. I mean, obviously McKinley, Evan, those guys, Jabari hit me up, some CU football players.

But it was just overall love from childhood friends, from family back home tuning in watching the game. It was just love all around. But it was kind of surreal and kind of crazy to have all that happen. That's something you dream about, though. That's something that you cherish and I'm just thankful that it happened.

**Q. KJ, what kind of challenges does Tyler Kolek present for you?**

KJ SIMPSON: He's a great guard. He's excellent in every category. There's a reason he was an All-American. I have nothing but respect for him and the rest of the team. They have great players. Obviously they have shown that all year. They have a great coaching staff. Understanding that it's not going to be a dog fight, you know, it's kind of similar around this time going up against other teams like Florida had. Florida has great guard play and in Zyon

Pullin and Walter Clayton Jr. So I just look forward to those matchups. You look forward to those guys that you hear about. You want to play against the best and he's definitely one of the best in the nation at his position and I'm just blessed to be here and definitely just going to go out there and make the most of my opportunity.

**Q. You guys are just one win away from sending the Colorado Buffaloes to the Sweet 16 for the first time in 55 years. Do you guys feel a certain amount of pressure to be that team that finally breaks through and sends the team into its second week of the tournament?**

J'VONNE HADLEY: I'm not sure that it's a sense of pressure. I think it's just that we're grateful for the opportunity. It's special. Like you said, it would be the first time in 55 years, so it would mean a lot to the community in general, especially us, the coaching staff, and just everybody in general. But we're grateful for the opportunity and it's going to be a good game. I think everybody knows that. We don't necessarily have to do anything out of the ordinary like we've been doing the whole year. We got to go out and play our game. They're a good team, great team, credit to them, but we are too.

**Q. When you're watching Marquette play, what kind of matchup challenges do they present and what makes them a challenging team?**

TRISTAN DA SILVA: It definitely starts with their guard play, with Kolek leading country in assists, I think. Just a great playmaker. They're probably going to force us into rotations, so we need extra efforts, we need multiple efforts to guard them on defense. Got to try to stop 'em in transition. That's where they thrive. They turn their opponents over a lot. Try to get easy baskets in transition. Yeah, we got to be on our A game.

J'VONNE HADLEY: Yeah, just taking care of the ball, for us personally, and, yeah, they share the ball really well. One of the best teams in the country. It starts with Tyler Kolek. He's great player, a great point guard, so yeah, he's the head of the snake and we got to limit them in transition. We can't have any wasted possessions. We got to go out and execute, win the glass, win the rebounding effort, 50/50 balls, do all the little things that it takes to win in March.

**Q. KJ, you run an offense with so many tools. Want to talk a little bit about Cody coming and going and maybe growth you saw when he was out. I mean, he's a star, he's injured, he's back as a star injured, comes back clearly not a hundred percent for a few games, but did other players step up and him being willing to**

**come off the bench, if you can comment.**

KJ SIMPSON: Yeah, definitely. I'm glad you asked that question. I had pulled him to the side yesterday and had a conversation with him and told him, you know, out of all the guys who played great last night, I mean, yeah, I might have scored as many points, Tristan and J'Vonne might have scored as many points as they did, AD as well. But he had the highest plus minus on the team and that just shows that when he's out there, he's doing great things for this team.

I told him, you know, I know it's frustrating having to deal with injury after injury and having to sit out and then come back and try to get back into season form. He's been out there trying for us. At the end of the day, no matter what is on his shoulders, he's just someone that wants to get better, he's just someone that wants to learn and be a part of the team and do whatever it takes to win. When you have a guy like that on that team, you know he's really special and just wanted to credit him for his play yesterday because he did great things and I think he just got back to playing the game that he loves. Not just him, like you said, also the contributions off the bench that we had. Injuries has hit us this year, and so we've needed guys to step up and I know everybody up here on this panel and within this program has every -- as much confidence and trust as anybody on the team that has Colorado across their chest.

**Q. This is an off-court question, and I'll start with KJ and if any of you want to jump in, great. With everything, with the demands on your time as a student-athlete, particularly the athletic part, what do you do to wind down? How do you kind of step away and what kind of things do you do to really kind of keep some balance and then kind of get back into the athletic aspect?**

KJ SIMPSON: Yeah, that's an important question. The biggest thing that I've learned in my time playing basketball is -- and just in life in general, is you need time management, you need to understand time management. Communication is really, really big. I mean, that's kind of my major. But, no, I'm really big on communicating and understanding that when you have assignments and stuff like that, you're on the road around this time, you have to communicate with your teachers, you have to communicate and understand time management.

So I think we all do a good job of understanding that off the court, we have things that we got to take care of while also balancing and understanding that we have an important game coming up in tomorrow. So, obviously we have to worry about scouting reports, we have to worry about maybe school assignments need to be done, if anybody

needs the recovery and treatment, but within this program we have a bunch of different tools and a bunch of different people to help us navigate that and credit to them, they're on this trip helping us. But I think time management and communication is the biggest key.

J'VONNE HADLEY: Yeah, for me personally, I like that question because I'm super big on rest and recovery. Besides the big games and school work and all the stuff that you have to accomplish being a student-athlete, rest and recovery is super big. To perform at your best, you have to eat right, sleep the right amount, stretch, make sure you're feeling good, both mentally and physically, and just sometimes it's stepping away from the game, maybe watching your favorite show or doing homework, just stepping away from the basketball game as a whole because it is a lot. Whether it's scouting reports, games, maybe you had a bad game, maybe there's a lot on your mind, maybe -- you just have to find that comfort, whether it's yoga -- I do a lot of yoga and just stuff to balance out my mind, for sure.

**Q. KJ, you and your mom had a nice moment after the game. What did that mean to you and what's it like for her to be here and what has she meant to you?**

KJ SIMPSON: Man, that's my mom. That's my rock, that's my everything. Obviously my parents together, they obviously have done so much, traveling and so much support. You know, it's kind of hard sometimes to always be at every game and I know they were trying really, really hard to come out here and watch us play, and just always would tell me, we're there, we're there with you. Just because we're not there, we're there.

But my mom, she stayed up late and kept looking for flights to come out here and just have someone be here for me. So she was able to find a flight like 3:00 in the morning, got here, it landed at 5 a.m. and was at the game. Just to see her in the -- I was looking for her in the warmups immediately. Just to see her, it was really like -- it was really special. It was just amazing. It just took away all the nerves or all the -- anything that I was thinking about basketball-wise, it all went away and I was just like, my mom is here, you know. And especially to hit that shot and have that game go the way it did and hit that shot and then have her be there and watch it and then run to her after, it means everything.

Like I said, I keep saying it, but it's like everything you dream about, and I'm just blessed and thankful that that was able to happen to me.

**Q. Tristan, I know you want this season to go on as long as it possibly can, you got a lot of basketball**



**ahead of you, but awhile back you and I were talking and you said something about your recruitment to Colorado and it was during the COVID deal, and so Tad kind of took a chance on you, if you will, and you did the same in return. I wonder as you sit here after four years now, what do you reflect upon making that choice and when you weren't sure at that point in time? What do you reflect upon at this point in time?**

TRISTAN DA SILVA: Best decision of my life. I can't really put it any other way. I didn't know the campus, I didn't -- I mean, I knew the coaches kind of from Zoom meetings, I guess, but never met them in person, they never saw me play live, they never really saw my game, except from tape and highlights and stuff like that. They took a chance on me, kept recruiting me, even though the main guy that recruited me left. You know, I came over my freshman year late. Everybody was already there in the summer working out, getting stronger, working on their game, and I was still in Munich. I came over like late August, and then everybody just kind of welcomed me with open arms, made my transition easy to a different culture, a different country, a whole different continent, an 11-hour flight away from home. So couldn't see my family, didn't really know anybody in the U.S.

And to think that after all these years now we sit here with people that I consider family by now, it's unbelievable. I never would have thought that that happens out of a Zoom recruiting from University of Colorado.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, guys.

(Pause.)

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Coach Boyle and we'll ask you to make an opening statement and then we'll take questions.

TAD BOYLE: Well, it's good to be back. Excited about tomorrow and the opportunity to play against Marquette, a heck of a program and a heck of a coach and really good players. So we'll open it up for you. Short and sweet.

**Q. Wondering, after a game like that, it was still relatively early in the day, how long do you celebrate and then how quickly do you start looking at Marquette after a game like that?**

TAD BOYLE: Yeah, there's not a lot of celebration. Try to spend a little bit of time with your family that's here and let the guys rest, let them kind of decompress a little bit. You don't want to hit 'em right away with information. So let them get a nice meal, get to bed, get off their feet, spend some time with their families that are here.

Then today is when you really turn the page and get up and get after it. I watched, obviously, some film last night and read some reports last night and took a lot of information in, but today's the day of prep. We'll get ready to get on the practice floor. Not that we'll do a lot, but we'll talk a lot about what we're going to need to do against Marquette, both offensively and defensively. We'll go back to the hotel, do the actual scouting report.

Then tomorrow morning, you know, before breakfast, it's an early game, right before or after our pre-game meal we'll show 'em a little bit more film and prep a little bit more and then let the guys go out and do their thing.

We're used to these quick turnarounds. We've been doing it now for quite some time. In the PAC-12, we play a lot of Thursday, Saturdays, sometimes a Friday, Sunday-type thing, so you're used to those two games back-to-back against a different opponent with one day of prep. So this is no different than what we've been doing since January.

**Q. You talked about how proud you were of Eddie yesterday after the game when he goes 5-5 from the free-throw line, but I was talking to him and he was saying how he's never really been in a position where a coach has trusted him to give him the ball this much. What about him and what you saw on film and just him as a person trusted you guys as a coaching staff to think he could be someone that you guys could play through offensively. You've been at your best when Eddie's getting the ball kind of as much as possible.**

TAD BOYLE: Look, the first time I saw Eddie, it was funny, I was coaching for USA basketball. We were doing our training camp with the U-18 team two summers ago in Houston, and they got a bunch of college players -- and Eddie's from Houston -- and they got a bunch of college players to come scrimmage us one day and Eddie was one of those players. He was at TCU at the time. I didn't know that. And we're doing our scrimmage and he is just an absolute beast. Now, he's going against 18-year-olds, but his physical presence, his energy that he played with, I'm like -- and I thought he was like a European pro that was like back for the summer. Like, his body, he looked like he was 26 years old, 27 years old. And one of the guys on our staff said, No, that's Eddie Lampkin, who's going to be, like, a sophomore at TCU. And I'm like -- all I thought to myself was, don't schedule TCU because this dude's a problem.

So that was my first time seeing Eddie. Then fast forward a year, he plays at TCU, and that deal happens. He goes in the portal and it's like, Let's call this guy. But in terms of playing through him, you don't know until you get a guy. All



these guys go through the recruiting process a different way, sometimes as a freshmen or junior college players or now transfers. So until they get on your campus, you got to have some practices. You don't really know how you're going to use 'em or how you can use them.

But with Eddie pretty early we found out he is a very willing and good passer as a big. So it's nice for guards and perimeter players to know that if they throw it in to him, they're not throwing it into a black hole. And there's some post guys who when they get it, they're shooting it and it's a black hole. Eddie's is not that. He is a willing passer. So he creates double teams because he's so big and strong and when he creates double teams and he passes out of 'em, we're playing advantage basketball. That's going to be a big part of the game tomorrow. It was a big part of the game against Boise, a big part of the game against Florida. It will be a big part of the game tomorrow.

**Q. Not sure if you seen this, but yesterday -- this is from off the stats, you guys became the first Division I team in the last 25 years where all five starters had 10, 4, and 4. What do you make of that and what does that say about the versatility, the kind of do-it-all identity of this rotation?**

TAD BOYLE: Well, I think it says a lot about our versatility, it says a lot about our depth, and it says a lot about the fact that our guys all share the ball and they all rebound the ball. I think there's a lot of teams in the country that you can get five guys in double figures scoring the ball, but to get guys that can assist the ball like that and to rebound the ball like that says a lot about those five guys.

And then, look, Cody Williams is right behind 'em. I thought he played really, really well yesterday in the minutes he was out there. So this team relies on different guys on different nights and it's not just the five starters. It's our bench as well. Julian Hammond was like a starter for us this year, even though he came off the bench, Cody started for the majority of the year, and Luke was like a starter coming off the bench. So I've looked at this team like we've had seven starters and now I look at it like we got six. So our rotations off the bench are critical and those guys that are on the floor producing, more power to 'em.

**Q. I saw a fan online yesterday after KJ's shot say he's Mr. Big Shot 2.0. Can you compare him and Chauncey, what they meant in the program a little bit maybe?**

TAD BOYLE: Yeah, look, I think somebody asked after the game, you know, talking about McKinley Wright and Derrick White and Spencer Dinwiddie, and I'm sitting up here and I'm like, Well, what about Chauncey? Because

Chauncey is -- he is Mr. Big Shot and he is the guy that kind of in the modern era put Colorado basketball on the map back in the mid '90s.

So KJ and Chauncey are totally different players. Chauncey was a big guard, 6'-4", 6'-5", but in terms of their impact on the game, in terms of their leadership abilities and just the fact that everybody in that locker room kind of knows KJ, how good he is -- just like when Chauncey played, they knew how good Chauncey was. I'm just, you know, I think it comes down to leadership, and to me leadership is influence. KJ has influence on this team. You can always use that influence in a positive way or in a negative way. The thing I respect about KJ is he is a positive leader. It happened against Boise the other night in the First Four game, where they went up four, we called a timeout, and he was as positive in that huddle as -- probably more positive than I was. He's like, You know, guys, just keep believing. We're fine. Let's get some stops and get this train back on the track. And we did. A lot of that had to do with KJ and his attitude in that huddle. I truly believe that. So he's got influence on this team in a very positive way, much like Chauncey did.

**Q. You guys have been on a heck of a run facing some high-level point guards here as late. When I sat down courtside my eyes very quickly went to number 11 for Marquette. Give us a little idea about what you see from him and what kind of challenge he possess?**

TAD BOYLE: He is an elite level passer. There's a reason he leads the country in assists. He delivers that ball on time, on target, time and time again. But he can also score the ball, so he creates problems for other teams. I think we've got to do the best we can of not letting him get down hill and get in the lane, but when he does, really being disciplined on having one guy on him. Now, whether that's a big off of a switch or whether that's the guard getting through the screen, but if you get two guys on him, he's going to find the open man, now you're in rotations, and if that happens we better be really, really good in rotations. But he creates problems, because he's a point guard who can score the ball and pass the ball at an elite level. We've played against some point guards who can score the ball at an elite level, but not pass it quite as well as he does. So it will be a challenge. Big part of the game tomorrow.

**Q. You mentioned Cody and the seven starters, wanted to ask you about coaching that. Here's a guy's been a star twice this year, been out injured twice, come back not a hundred percent. Meanwhile you got a draft service saying he's the No. 1 NBA prospect, and we have seen those guys lose it in tournaments and not focus. What's it like coaching a guy with that much talent who seems to be happy to play his role?**

TAD BOYLE: I couldn't be more proud of Cody Williams. This has been a difficult year for him. From an injury standpoint it's been a start/stop, start/stop, start/stop year. And in that last injury with the ankle, he's, I wouldn't say he's a hundred percent, but he's not favoring it at all. That's one of the things with ankles, they're kind of like knee injuries, in the sense that you when you come back from 'em it takes a while to trust it again, cutting. It took Cody some time to do that. But now that he's back the season is kind of at the crescendo, right, it's at the, everybody's playing their hardest and at their best. So he's trying to get back in the flow of it. That takes some time. I thought yesterday was a great step in the right direction. He played in the conference tournament, but Cody Williams is, I mean, his future is undeniable. His talent is undeniable. There's a reason why he's projected where he is and it's rightfully so because, I say this all the time, he's as close to a can't-miss prospect as I've seen in a long, long time. And it's not just because of his physical talent, it's because of the kind of young man he is, the kind of teammate he is, and he's just going to get better and better and better and we're just seeing, he's just scratching the surface right now. He's gotten better this year. I just wish he would have been healthy all season and you would see probably a different Cody Williams than you're seeing right now, but the Cody Williams you're seeing, you see it in flashes, you saw it yesterday, like, he's legit. So I'm proud of him. It's hard for a young guy to come in and have all that attention, and he's done a really good job of focusing on getting better every day, and that's all we are concentrating on doing and helping him.

**Q. Sticking with the freshmen, with Bangot Dak, you guys bring him on late in the process in the off-season, last year, just to see how far he's come and in less than 12 months, how much has he impressed you to become a guy you can trust off the bench in the NCAA tournament and how much far can he still get over the next couple years with you guys?**

TAD BOYLE: Oh, man, Bangot Dak, it's funny, the other day I got Bangot Dak, Assane Diop, and our two freshmen guards that -- one's a redshirt and one is out with injury, RJ and Kourtney, and I got 'em together and I said, Listen, guys, here we are in Indianapolis, I want to take you back three years when Tristan da Silva was a freshman and Luke O'Brien was a freshman, and we were in Indianapolis, we were in the NCAA tournament, it was a COVID year, playing in Hinkle Fieldhouse. Those guys, Luke wasn't playing, Tristan was playing a very bit role off the bench, kind of like what Bangot is for us right now. I said, Look at where they are three years later. They're seniors, they're major, major minute guys, and the four of you need to understand that that is where it started for them. They

seem them, they're young freshmen, they see them as seniors now, but they don't, they weren't around when they were freshmen. And I wanted to give them perspective so that Bangot Dak and Assane and R.J. and Kourtney and all those young guys know what it's going to look like two or three years down the road, what it can look like. And there's no doubt in my mind we've got good, young, talented guys on this team. We just need to keep developing 'em, keep working at it and keep getting better. So I've got a hundred percent confidence in all those kids. Bangot being one of 'em.

**Q. We talked so much about Marquette and their backcourt and how potent they are there. What kind of challenge do the Eagles post inside for you guys?**

TAD BOYLE: The big kid, Ighodaro, I think is how you pronounce it, and I apologize if I butchered that. But he is a very talented, active big. He's not your typical play through the low post big. He's a really good facilitator. We run a little bit of a five out system. Sometimes Eddie's that guy for us on the perimeter because he is such a good passer. But he's a good passer. He can put the ball on the floor. He reminds me a little bit of the Ballo kid at Arizona, not because of the low post presence, but he's got kind of a floater, push shot that is very, very effective. They run some, in the pick-and-roll, Tyler, he's really good at finding him with pocket passes and then he is a good facilitator from that high post area facing the basket making passes finishing at the rim. So they post some problems inside. The Mitchell kid is an energy guy, man. He's the guy that nobody talks about. Kind of like J'Vonne Hadley is for us. Nobody talks about him, but he is, he's a big, big part of their success because of his toughness and making hustle plays and rebounding and defending and they have got good players up-and-down their lineup. I don't know, like us, probably goes seven, eight deep, and then the big kid they bring off the bench is a good shooter. So Marquette's got good players, it's not just their two guards. Jones is terrific, Kolek's terrific, but they got other good players, too, that we got to be aware of. So that's why the scouting report is going to be critical that our guys digest that and understand how good these guys are. They're a No. 2 seed for a reason.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks, Coach.

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