

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Round - Colorado State vs Memphis

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Seattle, Washington, USA

Climate Pledge Arena

Memphis Tigers

Penny Hardaway

Media Conference



you a better coach and/or a different coach?

PENNY HARDAWAY: Yeah, that's a great question. PJ Haggerty has made me a great coach because a lot of his God-given ability comes in to play a lot out there on the court. When he takes over a game, that's not on me. That's this his God-given ability.

Putting him in position is all I have to do and he takes it from there. That's how he's made me a better coach because no matter what any coach says, and a lot of coaches do say this, that you're only as good as your players. You have good players, you're going to look great and he's made me look great because of that reason.

Q. (No Microphone.)

PENNY HARDAWAY: Yes. I am looking forward to that again because it won't be in such a somber spirit, like after we lost at Temple I was kind of down and she really lifted my spirits. Now meeting her for the second time understanding what's happened is pretty cool and it's a feel-good story.

Q. (No Microphone.)

PENNY HARDAWAY: Yeah, it was always tough because Coach Karl's teams that's when they were in their prime with Gary and Shawn and those guys Nate McMillan and it was always tough to come to Seattle and play the Sonics, and the fan base was really the sixth man. It was like not only were they tough but it always got so loud, and it's unfortunate that there's not a franchise here because this city was so good for our league.

Q. (No Microphone.)

PENNY HARDAWAY: I've had multiple conversations with him about what he likes in the game because it's all about his comfort. His comfort state, not making him shoot tough shots when he doesn't have to shoot tough shots. And I have to do the job again by making it easier for him to get catches where there aren't two people already in the area, that we can have some misdirection work and do that and he'll take it from there.

Q. You talked about having such a short time to

THE MODERATOR: All right, we'll start with an opening statement from Coach and then take questions.

PENNY HARDAWAY: My opening statement stays the same, I thank God for the opportunity to be back here. This is a true blessing when you get to the NCAA Tournament. I don't take anything for granted. Thankful.

THE MODERATOR: All right, questions, please.

Q. (No Microphone.)

PENNY HARDAWAY: Yeah, I think the first time we came with Jalen Duran and that team we were just off winning the conference tournament and we were like, okay, we got Boise and we were familiar with Boise because of the NIT. Like okay, it's going to be a tough game because I respect that conference and those teams.

And we got here and it was just a blur. We beat Boise, we lost to Gonzaga, who was the No. 1 overall seed and then we went home.

Second time going to Columbus I didn't watch FAU all year. I just saw them playing really well in Conference USA. I might not have been as prepared as I should have been because it's a quick turnaround and you have to be prepared for those guys, even though we prepared in a couple days, but at the end of the day both of those times I felt like it was just a blur.

I'm taking it all in now, understanding how this works. You still have to play the game and have some luck without having the injuries, but it's much more calmer this time around.

Q. You've been around a lot of great players and you coached other great players, curious how PJ has made



prepare. How do you deal with that when you have injuries and stuff up in the air?

PENNY HARDAWAY: I think because we took care of business in the conference tournament that we prepared ourselves much more to be ready to adapt to anything because we had a week off before we played. So now the short turnaround, even though we knew we were playing Colorado State, we really had a lot of time to put in a lot of stuff because we had already worked on ourselves. Usually it's working on us and then the other team, we worked on a ton of things that we knew we were going to need for the Tournament, not knowing who we were going to play.

So we did get a lot of work on Colorado State, which helps because you have to understand who they are.

Q. When you say you have to understand who they are, can you expand on that? What does that mean? And second question, obviously you guys had so much to overcome with guys going down, that was where the edge was and winning the conference tournament and things like that. Now that you're here obviously the goal is to win but where does the edge go from now?

PENNY HARDAWAY: Yeah, I think when I say you have to know who Colorado State is, they're a well-oiled machine, and they have so many options on these different motions that they run. We ran the offense before, so we're familiar but they do some really nice things in their offense and it's not an everyday team that you play that has all these different actions and motions. So you need the time.

We put the time in. Again, we're familiar enough with the offense, but they have such dynamic players that you have to get that ingrained into your guys' head that this is a totally different game than we played all year, and me and my staff have been doing a good job of that even though we still have to play the game, we should be prepared for what they're going to do.

And the edge is just wanting to be the best. We have seen this happen so many times over the years the NCAA Tournament, even the rankings of teams, we want Memphis to be mentioned in the same breath as all the top teams around the country, and that's the edge that we play. Then these guys also wants to leave a legacy. They want to do things that other teams in the past haven't done.

Q. (No Microphone.)

PENNY HARDAWAY: Did Ed tell to you ask that question? No, Ed has been phenomenal, he and his staff

came in and made it a 50/50 thing. I'll do what I'm supposed to do if you do what you're supposed to do. It's been more of a friendship while working.

We respect one another, but it's been easy for us to work together because we both want the same thing. With this being his first year, with me coming off a really bad year coming into this year and being successful, it's worked even better because we were winning, but at the same time he's been there as a rock for me and assured me of having my back and making sure that he was going to do his part, and he's done everything he said that he was going to do.

Q. (No Microphone.)

PENNY HARDAWAY: I think that you can only say just don't let the moment overwhelm you. That's easy for me to say because in the NCAA Tournament you have this nervous energy that attacks guys, right. Sometimes you might think that you need to do more but less is more, if that makes sense. You just have to go out and play the game the way that we have it lined up, stick to the game plan and everything else will be fine.

Q. (No Microphone.)

PENNY HARDAWAY: I don't have one on Tyrese, but Dante is starting to run. Don't know if he's going to play, but he started running yesterday. No, two days ago.

Q. (No Microphone.)

PENNY HARDAWAY: No, I'm way past my years on that. I just try to be a mentor. I wish I could play them one-on-one in my prime. I'll joke with him about that, but the thing that I try to do is just continue to breathe that confidence in him and let him know what's coming, because he can't foresee the things that I've already seen and know that's coming, and that's pretty much what we do. Shooting, yes, but not one-on-one (laughing).

Q. (No Microphone.)

PENNY HARDAWAY: Oh, yeah, easy, easy. He knows that.

Q. When you have, as you've been looking at the matchup with Colorado State, what do you see as far as the front court matchup, specifically the front court matchup? How do you see that playing out, do you feel like you guys might have an advantage there?

PENNY HARDAWAY: Well, obviously we have Moussa and Dain, who are really good bigs and they have really



good bigs because their system, they're smaller, but they're tough. They play the game the right way. They're going to make everything very difficult on you.

So we're going to go into the game tomorrow and do what we do, whether it's throwing it inside or whether it's our guards doing what they do. Then we're not going to adapt or adjust to them from our point of view, Dane and Moussa will get the ball inside and then we'll see what they do.

You would like to say Dane being larger and Moussa being larger that we have a height advantage and we can try to take advantage of some things, but you have to see how the flow of the game is working and that's how we're approaching it.

Q. You mentioned Boise and having played them in the NIT. You played this team in the NIT I think Cisse is the only player that was on the floor for both teams. But Medved was the coach, how much does that help in this situation?

PENNY HARDAWAY: It's helped, but he's changed a lot of things since then. Every great coach is going to evolve and he's evolved with his offense and he's gotten better talent. Even though he had some great guards and he's put this team together very well, they all mirror one another in what they do, they bring different things, but they're all great at what they do and they mesh that together.

So I do understand his mindset. He's a brilliant basketball mind, and I admire what he does, because if you're a basketball guy you see what he does and go, wow, this is pretty cool how he added that wrinkle or how he took this option and made it this option, and pretty much everything he does he has a counter to it. So if you're playing one way he'll counter it and you just have to know that.

It does help understanding that, but he's gotten better with his offense and the things that he's added over the years.

Q. What did you think of Tony Madlock's bunch the other night? Did you get a chance to watch that?

PENNY HARDAWAY: Yeah, I did, I watched it, it was pretty cool because I mean just making the NCAA Tournament was history and to get a win on top of that.

We're proud of our brother, me and Tim Duncan talk about it all the time. We all come from the same soil, man, in Memphis and we all had dreams and wanted to achieve certain things, and to see it happen live at Alabama State with Tony is, man, that's just a blessing. That's all God, because we couldn't have dreamt this. We wanted this for one another where we are now and where he is, but you

can't dream this stuff up, man, it's pretty good. That's what March Madness is all about.

THE MODERATOR: All right. Thank you.

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