

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Round - Akron vs Arizona

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Climate Pledge Arena

Arizona Wildcats

Tommy Lloyd

Media Conference



people are living because literally your life is ebbing and flowing on a ball going in a basket and you scoring more points than them. So but getting back to what you said, honestly, I don't think anything extra special, I think I ended up in a great place and I'm fortunate. So I'm thankful for my players, thankful for my staff, but all I honestly care right now is about playing Akron tomorrow.

Q. Should we get the how many from Kelso-Longview area are coming up out of the way?

TOMMY LLOYD: I don't know anybody from Longview. (Laughing).

Q. I said "area."

TOMMY LLOYD: Yeah, I mean I'm sure there will be some people from Kelso coming up. I have a great group of friends still from there.

Yeah, what's really cool about it is they figured this thing out that when I give them tickets I get taxed on them, you know, so like that's real, you know. Like there's this other side of it. I kind of got that first couple years I didn't realize it and I was getting these tax bills and I'm like, what? Like, what?

So I honestly I don't have one friend request a ticket. A few of my family members did, but other than that nothing crazy. So I hope there's a great contingent of them coming here because I'm proud to be from Kelso and I'm proud to have great friends and great family from there as well.

Q. Along those lines, wondering when you got here yesterday was it weird because you hadn't come here yet this year, for years, whether with UA but then also your time at Gonzaga, seems like were you always over here, so was it strange at all?

TOMMY LLOYD: No, honestly it feels normal because I've done it so many times but we didn't come up here last year either. It was one of those quirky things in the schedule. For the last two years I haven't been here.

You know what was cool is, you know, my family is growing. My kids are older. They got significant others, we got a grand kid. Everybody's up here together on the

THE MODERATOR: All right. We'll start with an opening statement and then take questions.

TOMMY LLOYD: Well good to see everybody. Great to be in Seattle, great to be in the NCAA Tournament. We're excited for the opportunity. Obviously Akron's going to present a bunch of challenges, they have had a great season, Coach Groce has done a great job. Hey, from my perspective you throw the seeds out the window and you go out there and you put 20 minutes on the clock and the score's going to be 0-0 and let's see what happens.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. You have won 110 games in your first four years at Arizona, which is kind of mind-boggling. I wonder what do you think that success stems from, what is it that's special about your coaching?

TOMMY LLOYD: Well, I feel like we should have won 120. I don't know. I don't know if there's anything special about it. To be honest with you, I mean I think it's just a simple approach. I'm pretty much a day-to-day guy. If I say something, I try to do it. I think this day and age with players, I think, you know, I'm I guess hard enough on our guys but I think that I have good enough relationships with them that I can do that.

I love competing. I love competing. I love the challenge of it. Like this year going to the Big 12 I know was probably going to knock your winning percentage down a little bit, but I tell you, I enjoyed every minute of it. Even the tough minutes, like every day just the challenge that this job brings and you're kind of defined through competition, I mean that's pretty cool. I don't think a lot of people get to experience that.

Now it makes for maybe a different lifestyle than most



trip, and we went out to dinner last night with one of my best friends I grew up with Cody Morrison and his parents Rusty and Melissa and his two kids.

And what's cool is Cody's dad was my Little League coach, and had a huge influence on me. Almost get emotional thinking about that. I'm up here now because of guys like him. That means a lot. So I mean, that was cool for me, to go out to him. He was my Little League baseball coach, my youth football coach. Thank God he wasn't my basketball coach (laughing).

But cool stuff like that. That's what's cool coming back here. I don't get up here enough. My life's moving pretty fast right now, but trust me, I've never forgot where I come from.

Q. You have coached a lot of great players in your time when you were assistant at GU, obviously and now at Arizona, curious when you get a guy who is going to be a lottery pick maybe or even just go in the NBA Draft, how does that make you a better or different coach, how do great players push you?

TOMMY LLOYD: Oh, wow, we're opening up the box here, Pandora's Box, right. You know, I think the expectations on these kids is so strong, and they're so public now with social media that you literally phrase your question as supposed to be, what does that mean? Who has that right? Because you know what, it's really hard.

Here's the deal, there's probably 50 people that are supposed to be lottery pick, well only 15 can be. So what, the other 35 fail? I think learning how to navigate that is the most important thing because at the end of the day what's the objective? Well, the No. 1 objective should always be to have a happy, healthy productive life. And I think we put such expectations on these kids, that they don't understand that if they're not that lottery pick, you have a 18, 19, 20-year-old kid thinking they failed. And then have you the people around them that are associated with their success thinking they failed.

So what do they do? They push, they prod, and imagine being that 18, 19, 20-year-old kid, I mean that's a lot.

So I think a lot of times my job is to help them manage that process and have them understand that is a process, it's not an event. Everyone wants it to be an event. You do this, well that's going to come. That's not how it works. It's a lot more complicated than that.

So I think for me it's made me a better coach because I've had to step back and realize that, man, I got to help them manage not only the ups, but I really have to help them

manage the downs and but at the same time I got to be the most maybe honest person in their life with basketball, like, no, that's not good enough or maybe you're not ready for that yet or maybe that's not the right thing for this team. Then kind of walk 'em through that stuff.

So, yeah, it's a complicated process, but at the end of the day I hope everyone steps back and I know we got NIL, thankfully, but these are still kids. Just because they're 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 26, whatever it is in college now, they're still young adults, they're still developing and just because they make a few bucks doesn't mean people should be throwing shade their way.

Q. You've been to the Tournament each of the last four years, how do you take those experiences into this particular tournament?

TOMMY LLOYD: Well, I think that you have to understand each team's journey is unique and it's their first time as a team. So you have to acknowledge that. You can't just say, hey, two years ago this happened and expect that lesson to be learned by everybody. I think that the coolest thing is about this tournament is it's one and done. It's the coolest thing and the worst thing about it all together.

So you have to have your team prepared to come out to play, come out and play consistent basketball. I think you really have to call on the things you've done all year. That's the approach that I take. So thinking that I mean, I'm sure players that have been there, I mean obviously there's probably a little bit of an advantage of having played in a few tournaments and stuff like that, but all in all I don't think it matters because once that ball goes up, like I said the score's 0-0.

I don't think, you know, if one team hasn't been to the Tournament as much as the other I don't think the team that hasn't been is going to say, well, you have been to the Tournament more than. We have we're going to take it easy. That's not how it goes. These games are knockdown, drag-out affairs and you got to be prepared to compete like that.

Q. I know you talked about this on senior day, but what's the ride been like with Liam on your roster and now here in Seattle for it to be kind of a full circle moment for him to have GCU also in the building?

TOMMY LLOYD: Oh, yeah, that's cool I thought you were saying the Washington thing, I mean we're from Spokane, not Seattle, so it's not quite full circle. The lines don't connect there.

But it's been great having Liam around. As a parent what



do you want? You know, you want your kids to have an opportunity to grow up and have a normal happy life. You kind of as you get a little bit older and your kids get older you kind of give up on the dreams of hoping they're doing these amazing things and this and that, and I don't think there's anything wrong with leading a normal life. I think Liam's on course of leading a happy normal life. He and Halle have a young son, Luka, brought a bunch of joy to our family this year for us all to be together. My daughters are doing great.

So yeah, I mean it's really cool having us all together, experiencing this stuff because I've been doing this 26 years, and I've been very fortunate, this is my 26th time being in the NCAA Tournament. My kids have grown up going to NCAA Tournament games, so March for us has always been I don't want to say a home wrecker in our family, not in a bad way, but has disrupted our life where at the end of these tournament runs, whatever happens, our kids are tired because they have been on the road for us. It's hard for them to go to school. We would fight tooth and nail to get them to go back to school because they're coming home they're tired. They have been on the road for three, four weeks with us.

So these are special times in our family's lives and we have lots of amazing experiences from hotel security coming knocking on our door telling us that our kids need to quit running up and down the hallway, our kids are playing tag. I mean like you know and so then you add in, you know, how we grew up, you know, with the Few kids and the Rice kids, our kids were growing up on the road together. So these are just really special times for our family that, you know, it's been kind of a unique way to raise a family but also awesome experiences.

So now it's really cool to have them all here as adults. So I know that's saying a lot there, but it's been really fun to have Liam around this year. You know on a day-to-day deal he and I just -- it's just basketball. And then what's cool is if he and Halle don't want to cook dinner, which they don't often, they come up to our house and have dinner and we get to hang out with Luka. So that's been a lot of fun.

Q. Talked to a few players in the locker room and they say one of the biggest emphasis this week is shut out the outside noise, don't welcome it, any of that. What is the importance of that with the players, especially this week?

TOMMY LLOYD: Well, I think it's important. I've really become disciplined and learned how to do that. All these things, if you don't acknowledge them, this chatter and all this stuff, it's just stuff that's floating out there and it doesn't

stick to you. So I think it allows you to be maybe the most authentic version of yourself.

So we've talked about that with our guys and hey, I'm not putting limits on their phone, they have to have the discipline to do that themselves and I think it's important. I think it's important to just hunker in on your deal, pour yourself into your teammates. You worked all season for this and come out and try to give it your best effort, because we know you can play good tomorrow and lose. So there is not much room for error.

Q. Coach Groce has mentioned a couple times that he's studied some of your past teams at Arizona to put together the offense he's done this year. How does that make you feel to know that someone is studying what you accomplished and does it change how you approach a game?

TOMMY LLOYD: I wish you would have told me that four days ago so I could change our offense.

I mean, no, listen, it's flattering, like -- hey, I mean, listen, every coach is a thief. You know, a lot of best ideas are things you get watching something on TV or decide to go study another team and yeah, I mean, that's cool that people do it. I'm doing it all the time. I'm watching his team playing and I'm like oh, that's interesting. I think that's how the coaching mind works.

Nothing that I'm doing with basketball hasn't probably been done before. I probably learned it from somewhere else, but I know this, I mean, I mean, I'll say this and I've said it, you know, John was coaching at Illinois, they came up and played us when we were at Gonzaga and they beat us at a point where I mean we're talking maybe two or three people had ever done that. And he was, you know, really innovative. He was doing things on the offensive end of the floor that we really hadn't seen much of.

So yeah, so I have a lot of respect for him as a coach and for him to say something like that, I mean that's cool, but at the end of the day like I said, our two teams are going to go on the floor tomorrow, and he and I aren't playing against each other. It's going to be the guys out there figuring it out.

Q. I'm curious you said that you had dinner last night with your old Little League coach and got emotional talking about it, did you express that to him, hey, I want you to know I'm at this point in my life because of you, can you tell us a little bit about that conversation?

TOMMY LLOYD: Yeah, I mean I did, you know, I did, I did. I thanked him. I thanked him for being a great coach. And

I don't get to see him much often anymore. And, yeah, it's cool, that was one of the cool things growing up the way I did. I grew up in a small town where you played all the sports and you pretty much, all your best friends were your teammates, and those are still the guys that are coming that used to bug me for tickets that aren't bugging me any more for tickets, they're just coming. So that's a cool way. I mean he, you know, my dad, you know, grew up in a way where he really didn't get to play sports because of his family situation. He was a guy had like a lawn mowing business at 12. And then he worked and he was a carpenter at 18. And he worked his ass off to kind of break a cycle and of how, for how his family was, so our family could be different. And that's the real right there, I never had to do that. I grew up, I had a great childhood.

So Rusty would do a lot of the coaching and my dad was usually the sponsor and was around and didn't know much sport, but my dad was busy and it was really cool that he was around for all that stuff. So I appreciate all those memories. And then, listen, that's why I coach. I coach because of those experiences I had from the coaches. I mean, I can -- we don't have time, but I could probably list every coach I had and what they meant to me, and that's special stuff. I hope that doesn't get lost on today's generation because that's, those were my mentors, I didn't even know what the word mentor meant back then, I was six, seven, eight years old, but those experiences are things that I carry in my life to today.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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