

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Round - Liberty vs Oregon

Thursday, March 20, 2025

Seattle, Washington, USA

Climate Pledge Arena

Oregon Ducks

TJ Bamba

Brandon Angel

Media Conference



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

Q. You are a New York city native and there are a few New York point guards in this NCAA Tournament. As a New Yorker And a lot of New Yorkers love the big stage playing basketball, what is it going to be like for you being able to play in the NCAA Tournament with kind of the flair with that New York City kind of attitude that you bring to the court?

TJ BAMBA: I mean, five years in college, this is my first time being in the Big Dance, so I'm super excited about that. I'm looking forward to it. I'm just looking forward to going out there, have fun with my teammates.

This is a team with a bunch of seniors, so it's do or die for us, so I'm just going to go out there, be myself, just try to make winning plays, do whatever I can to impact the game and in a winning way. So I'm just excited and the rest will take care of the rest. Being from New York like you said, we love the big stage, so I'm just excited.

Q. Playing so close to home you're obviously going to have a lot of your own fans here but you're also in Huskies territory, so you're definitely going to have some jeering from the crowd. How do you like both playing in front of your own fans, a lot of them and also kind of playing the villain a little bit?

BRANDON ANGEL: Yeah, having a home crowd makes a big difference. We appreciate our fans. Both home and on the road. So having the Duck fans on the road will always be great and whatever opposing crowd we have, then bring it on and that's just more energy in the arena and more stuff for to us build off of and fuel on.

Q. Both of you guys, when you came were spoke in the fall talked about how one of the reasons you came here is because of the success that Dana has getting teams to this point. Curious what you have seen throughout this year long journey that is different or what makes him unique in his ability to be successful in March like he has?

TJ BAMBA: I just feel like the expectations that he sets for us. From day one in the summertime to today every practice has been the same the intensity level. He's always demanded a certain level of energy, focus and attention from us and our teammates. Because of that we always have the growing mindset, growth mindset of every single day, every single practice, every game just trying to get better and improve.

Especially during that five-game losing streak that we had midway through the Big Ten. He kept telling us if we just focus on the little things and just try to improve and get better, we'll see the results that we want to see. So we just are firm believers in that and the rest will take care of the rest.

Q. You guys have a super experienced team, what has this week been like since you guys left and headed to here? What's it been like in terms of motivating the teams and in terms of practice?

TJ BAMBA: Practice I feel like yesterday we had one of the best practices that we had all year. I feel like everybody knows what's at stake here. We just all come into practice focusing up, trying to have energy, really talking. It's March, it's the little things at this point. Every team that you're going to play is good and is here for a reason.

Some of my teammates they have been saying that teams who have the most energy in March are the ones who are the most successful. So we just all been listening to each other trying to talk and do the little things that's going to help us win.

Q. As far as preparing for a tournament game with such an unfamiliar opponent, how does that preparation process look different these last few days?



BRANDON ANGEL: I think the preparation stays the same regardless of what point of the year you're in. You're going to prepare the highest level and be ready for any opponent and the staff does a great job building a scouting report and giving us a clear plan for how we want to approach the game.

So that part doesn't change. The only thing that changes is it's win or good home, and that's something that we all embrace. And for those of us who have never been in March Madness, it's what we work for. So we're excited, as obviously that added level of excitement coming into this game but the level of preparation always stays the same.

Q. Has it felt different for you?

TJ BAMBA: No, I agree with what Brandon just said. Just embracing the moment, taking it for what it is, everyone knows what's at stake, win or go home. So everything I agree with everything he said.

Q. At the beginning of this season before things got underway you told me you could not wait to show the nation what you had been working on this off-season and what this team had been working on this off-season. With what you guys have been able to achieve this year, do you feel like you guys have met the goal that you set, all the expectations that you have and how much more is there left to show heading into this March Madness tournament you think for you guys?

TJ BAMBA: I feel like throughout the year even before the season started when we spoke to you, we all are hungry and driven and we just trying to prove to ourselves really that we belong. So throughout the year from the beginning of it in November when we went to Vegas, we won the tournament there. We beat some big-time teams, that was just like another stepping point for us to show ourselves and the world who we really are.

So I don't think we're done yet, necessarily, because it's a big opportunity ahead of us. Starts tomorrow with Liberty, we're just taking every game, taking every day one game at a time. So I feel like to say like we achieved or did anything is an immature statement because there's so much season left and we're just trying to swing away and do what we all think we can do.

Q. Obviously the variety of different experiences you guys have had in March but because of the group being so veteran led throughout the entire roster, does it almost give you guys a bit more of a hunger?

Because for a lot of you guys this will be your last chance to make a run.

BRANDON ANGEL: Yeah, absolutely I think we touched on it a couple times already, there are a lot of veterans on this team and a lot of us haven't been to the Tournament yet. So this is kind of why we all came to Oregon, something we've kind of built around all year. Coach has said a lot of the times you got one shot to get this right and we've kind of all embraced that and taken it upon us that it's our team and we all, we win as a team, we lose as a team and we all go to March or we don't is something Coach has said a lot.

And being veteran led this is our last go around and this is my first time in March, T.J.'s first time in March and some of the other guys first time in March. So we've all been building for this moment and this is what, this is why we come to work every day and show up and prepare.

So we're all excited and the veteran-led team gives you that little bit of stability. We have a lot of experience, but we also have the other side, which is the hunger and the desire to make it to this point of the year and go on a run this time.

THE MODERATOR: All right, thank you. We'll be back with coach in a few minutes.

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