

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

Friday, March 21, 2025

Seattle, Washington, USA

Climate Pledge Arena

## Memphis Tigers

## Penny Hardaway

## Dain Dainja

## Colby Rogers

### Media Conference



Colorado State - 78, Memphis - 70

THE MODERATOR: We'll go ahead and get started with an opening statement from Coach and then take questions for the student-athletes.

PENNY HARDAWAY: Again, I give God all the praise getting this far. Didn't end the way we didn't want it to end, but I'm proud of this group.

THE MODERATOR: We'll take questions.

**Q. Talk about kind of some things you did well and some things that could work on a little bit out there regarding today's game.**

PENNY HARDAWAY: Things we did well early we got the ball inside, kind of pounded it inside. At the end we could have done better, shot the ball better, could have knocked down some shots to help the inside. When they packed the pain on Dain in the second half we just didn't make enough shots to kind of help open it back up.

**Q. Dain, you had a nice run there in the first half, early second half, and then I think you went score less the last 12 or so minutes of the game, did Colorado State change anything on you over that last stretch and how they were defending you?**

DAIN DAINJA: Yeah, they just packed it in, just like Coach said, so I was just really looking for my teammates, we got some open look, just couldn't knock 'em down.

**Q. I know you don't want to make excuses, but you**

**obviously missed Tyrese. How much of an impact did that have on today and then I guess your thoughts on the season now that it's over.**

PENNY HARDAWAY: Yeah, obviously we missed our leader, that's our vocal leader, our best defensive guard, a guy that gets after people and understands, and his leadership and his experience we definitely missed that. The season we did is not a failure, obviously because we did well in the, won the regular season and the conference championship, just unfortunate how it ended here.

**Q. What can you say in a post-game locker room like that, like your point, the season isn't a failure, but obviously you guys are really frustrated and this is a program that has a history of long NCAA Tournament runs, but it's been a long time since Memphis has had one.**

PENNY HARDAWAY: Yeah, we tell this group, unfortunately the way it ended, it's not how we wanted it to end. We had an opportunity to do some special things. Just couldn't get it done. I still told that group that I was proud of them and that they just should hold their heads high. We wanted to go further, obviously, but just everything wasn't in our favor today.

**Q. Anything different coming into a game where it's all on the line, anything different in that preparation?**

COLBY ROGERS: I wouldn't say anything different, just more of just more attention to detail, be more desperate. It's win or go home, so I don't look at it as pressure, but more of like a great opportunity. So I wouldn't say anything different, it was just I guess more excitement, more desperate to win.

**Q. You've been really out spoken in your faith, how does that help you after a setback, a loss like this today?**

PENNY HARDAWAY: Yeah, it's life. You got to handle adversity. This is adversity. I trust God in every situation, no matter what. I'm an ultimate competitor, and when things go bad you have to rely on that. I rely on that.

**Q. Dain, second half obviously didn't go for the team**

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**the way you wanted it to. You had a monster first half. How would you describe this season and the progress in your game, the experience you've had at Memphis?**

DAIN DAINJA: Yeah, I feel like it's been well for me. I learned a lot of things. Created good relationships with the coach, with my teammates. I learned a lot this year. Starting off from the first game I feel like I've grown so much, even over the court, even just as a man. Coach here has helped me out with a lot of things, just the small details of things of just being a pro.

**Q. A big picture question for you, when you were hired you came in, you had a ton of AAU connections and we thought, this guy's going to be a great recruiter, and obviously you're a relationally-based person, but in the era of NIL do you think had a being a great recruiter matters anymore?**

PENNY HARDAWAY: I think a little bit it matters because you try to build a relationship. But in the overall scheme of things it's about the money, to be very honest with you. But I still try to have some relationship with the guys, but in this era it's more about who can give you the most money.

**Q. How do you win in this era? Do you think that you have to, you can't write the biggest check, is it about we better have a killer strategy every game? Obviously you had talent, you guys seemed to have a decent NIL pool compared to a lot of other schools across the country.**

PENNY HARDAWAY: Yeah, you got to have the chemistry. You got to have the guys to have the care factor, that want to play for the name on front and not just the name on the back, more important on the front. The NIL is important, I mean, but you also have to be lucky as well and not have injuries. When you have injuries sometimes that derails everything.

**Q. It's probably not easy in this moment to compare the way this season has ended to the way previous seasons have ended, but when you do kind of look at it like that, is this one, is the way this season ended a little, like is it any more difficult to swallow than say the way last season ended?**

PENNY HARDAWAY: I would say yes because of Tyrese going down in the conference semifinal game. That's the same way Caleb went down last year. You got to have some luck. When Tyrese went down we knew it was going to be, it was going to hurt, because he's a guy that's been here before. You need as much experience as you can. That team went to the NCAA last year, beat Virginia the first round and then lost to Texas. And Tyrese was the one

that was in that game that guarded Stevens the entire game. So it makes a big difference. So, yeah, this to me is different in some ways because Tyrese being down and the guy that we really relied on the most for all the experience.

**Q. Some of the stuff that gets said at times, at this time of year, times like these, is just keeps getting pointed out that the lack of success in the NCAA Tournament. Do you think about that in a time like this or do you think that that's going to stick with you as you go into this off-season?**

PENNY HARDAWAY: You know, if it does that comes along with the job. We want to make deep runs in March. We haven't done that yet. It doesn't matter what happened in either of those games, I haven't gotten it done yet, just got to get better. I understand that's going to be the subject, just have to grow from it and just keep getting better and that's what I'm doing.

**Q. You've overcome a lot of different hurdles this year, from finally winning the regular season conference title and winning a lot of games in the regular season, single digit losses in the regular season for I believe the first time in your tenure or second time, but the one thing that still has yet to be overcome with the loss today is, you know, how can you get to the second week end of the tournament moving forward, what do you think is it going to take for you to kind of get past that after this?**

PENNY HARDAWAY: You just got to keep recruiting, you got to get the guys here that care. You got to have luck of not having any injuries. Just got to keep getting better. I mean, I understand that goes along with this. I didn't -- I fully understand what the post-season is all about, and it's just really unfortunate for us that we haven't been able to get over the hump for various reasons, if you watched our NCAA runs the last three years. The first year didn't finish the game against Gonzaga. Second year lost at the buzzer. Then this year you lose and then you don't have Tyrese. So you know, I know how it's viewed and I just have to continue to get better and keep growing.

**Q. Coming over the NIL question and you're hearing your Coach say it's all about the money, what else is it that would attract you to a program that gets you guys to get there and stay and perform the best you can?**

COLBY ROGERS: Well, I think for me it was just having a chance to play in March. I never had a chance, never was close to it, so that was kind of a big thing of my decision. Then having a platform of playing like our non-conference schedule, playing against the best competition, and then

just trying to better myself professionally, being around guys like Dain, PJ, being around Coach Penny, future pros and a pro himself, I just felt like that was the best thing, best decision for me being around that and soaking up that knowledge and then playing on this stage of the so that's kind of what goes into it.

DAIN DAINJA: For me it was just, for me I feel like my biggest thing was development and just being around a pro. I sacrificed I turned down a lot of schools just to come here and just being able to play in games like this. I wanted to win. I wanted to go to the team that wanted to win. I talked to multiple guys, I talked to Tyrese, Moussa, PJ before I even committed here and we all just bought in, we all just wanted to win at the end of the day, it's never about the money or anything, we just wanted to play in games like this. For me it was just, like I said, just being under a pro, just somebody who you look up to.

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