

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

Friday, March 21, 2025

Seattle, Washington, USA

Climate Pledge Arena

**Arizona Wildcats**

**Tommy Lloyd**

**K.J. Lewis**

**Carter Bryant**

**Trey Townsend**

Media Conference

Arizona - 93, Akron - 65

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

TOMMY LLOYD: Thank you. First off, want to congratulate Akron on a great season. Coach Groce does a great job. Obviously we're fortunate today to come out on the right side of it. These games are something you never take for granted. I was sitting watching them last two days in my hotel room, and you can feel the stress in your stomach because I've been fortunate to be in 26 first-round games now. So I know how they feel. I know how they feel when you're seeded low and how they feel when you're seeded high.

That's why our mantra, basically, is we threw the seeds out the window. These are two good teams playing. They both have had good seasons, earned their way here, and we had a job to do. Our guys did a very good job coming out, having our emotions in a good sweet spot. We weren't too high, weren't too low, and, obviously, we came out, made three threes to start the game. That's a great start.

But you just know as a coach that there's something coming, and then Akron hit back, and then our guys settled in. I think other than being a little bit loose with the ball in the first half, I thought we played exceptional. So credit goes to the players and the coaching staff for their preparation. Thankful for everybody's contributions, and I can't wait to see who we play next.



THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. Trey, you've scored in double figures in four of your last five games. What's working for you right now on the offensive side of the ball?**

TREY TOWNSEND: Yeah, just seeing the ball go in, that obviously helps confidence. Throughout the struggles, my teammates and coaches never lost confidence in me. They kept putting me in good spots, and I started to convert them.

But credit goes to my teammates, especially today. I was getting right at the hoop. They were passing it to me right where I got a wide-open shot. So it wasn't too hard because I got great teammates.

**Q. Each of you, which dunk was your favorite tonight?**

CARTER BRYANT: I would say Trey's put-back dunk. Yeah, that was probably the best one.

K.J. LEWIS: Definitely his put-back dunk. He dunked, so it was surprising.

TREY TOWNSEND: Yeah, I'm the old head, but I'll give it to Carter's little lob, I think, from Henry. His head was above the rim. I didn't get quite that high on mine, but I appreciate the compliments from them.

**Q. Trey, for you guys to come out, that 9-0 run out of the gates to set the tone early, how much did that get you guys firing in the right direction to be able to continue that throughout the night?**

TREY TOWNSEND: You always want to start making every single shot during every game, but we knew they were going to fight and come back. It's March Madness. Everyone's playing with their season on the line, so we didn't let that inflate our egos too much because we knew they were going to battle, and I think our guys did a good job trying to stay as level as possible.

Obviously, it boosted the momentum a little bit, but we had some adversity, and I think we battled great throughout the rest of the game.



**Q. Carter, that second-half run, those dunks really started stacking up on each other. When you guys are seeing all that success around the rim, how do you feel that builds among everybody to do that?**

CARTER BRYANT: I think, like Trey said, for us, it's just trying to stay level, just making good play after good play, simple play after simple play, and I think when we make simple plays, we're one of the best teams.

**Q. Carter, for you to have the block on one and the dunk on the other end, that sequence there in the first half, kind of how that seemed to be right in the middle of your run there. How was the mood on the sideline after that and kind of the way you guys were feeling at that point?**

CARTER BRYANT: I think I just give all the credit to my teammates and the coaching staff. They have been getting on me all year to play harder, play harder, play harder, and I think obviously you want to play your best in March, but just making simple plays and making effort plays, they kind of stack up, and that's why runs happen.

**Q. You guys had 12 first-half turnovers, only four in the second half. What was the adjustment you had to decrease the errors you had?**

K.J. LEWIS: Coach just came in at halftime and told us we had to be smarter taking care of the ball. We pride ourselves on taking care of the ball, and I think the second half, we really locked in on the little mistakes that we were making in the first, and we were being more stronger with the ball when we were driving and not playing too loose with the ball, so getting off it early. So just easy adjustments that we got to go into the next game with.

THE MODERATOR: All right. We'll take questions for coach.

**Q. You've been in the wrong end of these situations before, five guys in double figures. Just talk about what you said to the guys to get you prepared and kind of just run away with this thing before you had a chance to even --**

TOMMY LLOYD: Well, I mean, I guess if the wrong side's 16-2 in your last first-round games, I mean, I guess that's a wrong side that I'm willing to live with a little bit. The odds are pretty good. It's amazing -- not that Gonzaga needs any publicity, but I think Coach Few won his 16th or 17th straight first-round game. It's almost mind boggling. It's like an all-time record.

We want to be that consistent too. We just had -- our mantra was Akron all week, and we kind of have some behind-the-scene things we talk about to keep us centered, and understand that we don't need to get ahead of ourselves. And in games like this, it's really important to control your emotions. You can't get desperate. You can't let the moment -- you can't let crowd noise, you can't let one of their threes feel like six points. You just have to dial back your emotions again and then kind of stick to the plan, and I thought our guys were sensational at that tonight, so I was really proud of them.

**Q. Is that toward the ceiling of where you guys can play offensively between what did you on the boards, assists, and maybe just the efficiency that you had?**

TOMMY LLOYD: Obviously it's a great offensive game, and I mean, I want to see what else is out there. I'm not going to put any limitations on us. I challenged our guys before the game, asked them, Could we out-rebound these guys by 15? And I think the answer ended up being yes. I think we out rebounded them by 31, which is -- that's how you -- you give yourself a lot of margin for error if you can control the glass like that.

But in order to do that, you got to get them to miss shots. When you miss shots, you got to have guys that assume you're going to miss and pursue rebounds.

So just a great moment-by-moment effort by our guys. They stacked up lots of good moments within possessions, and I thought it was just tight as we played defensively all year against a team like that. With our switches and our coverages, I thought our guys did a great job.

**Q. Now that you're here, how do you feel the Big-12 and your schedule prepared you tangibly in nights like this?**

TOMMY LLOYD: I made no bones about it. It was a real challenge, but we loved every second of it. It was awesome. Going through it, I feel like it's -- you know, it's going to make me a better coach, which ultimately is going to help our program long-term. I feel like it got our players better. Each one of these three guys next to me here, what's really cool is -- you know, if I had more time, and trust me, I don't want to be here all day, I could get into specific, you know, parts of the season or games where they really struggled.

For each one of those guys to step up today on this stage and play the way they did, it shows a lot of growth and development. So I'm really proud of the guys because ultimately that's what you want. You want your players to continue to get better. And, you know, I'm the keeper of

gate, but, you know, they're the stars, and so to see them go out and shine like that tonight was pretty special.

**Q. You guys were 3-10 from the line. Is that a little concerning heading into the next round against Oregon?**

TOMMY LLOYD: No, we're a great free throw shooting team. But if you would have told me we had be 12-25 from three or 3-10 from the line, I might have taken that. We missed our first five free throws -- or maybe six. That's who we are. I think this is one of our better free throw shooting teams we've had.

The one stat that's interesting to me is usually one of our goals is to we want to make more free throws than our opponents attempt. And we were on the flip side that have tonight, and that doesn't happen too often to us.

Yeah, then obviously we turned the ball over more than our opponent. Fortunately, we were really efficient offensively and shot the ball well from three and got the ball inside a bunch at the rim, so I guess there was some tradeoffs tonight. But I'm pretty sure we'll be fine from the free-throw line.

**Q. Jaden Bradley was 3-5 from beyond the arc today. That's an element of his game we haven't seen a ton this season. Does that give you guys an advantage through the rest of the tournament and what do you think about that development?**

TOMMY LLOYD: Well, obviously, I've had conversations with him and K.J. a little bit on three-point shooting, but at the end of the day, I really trust those guys, and I want 'em to know that I have confidence in 'em, and I want 'em to shoot threes when they're comfortable. They don't feel like they have to shoot 'em all the time.

Yeah, but if they could step up, the combination of those two, and make a few threes here and there, it's really an added element because what teams are deciding to do is not guard 'em.

And listen, that's hard living, not guarding somebody, because you're giving up open shots in a meaning full moment. They're both savvy players. They understand how to drive and play offense. It's not like this is the first time that somebody's guarded them like that. I think they both -- I think K.J. had a travel early, going a little bit too quick on it, but other than that, I thought they handled it great.

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