

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: Second Round - Oregon vs Arizona

Monday, March 24, 2025

Seattle, Washington, USA

Climate Pledge Arena

Arizona Wildcats

Tommy Lloyd

Caleb Love

Tobe Awaka

Anthony Dell'Orso

Media Conference

Arizona - 87, Oregon - 83

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: Well, obviously, it was a great game and tons of respect for Oregon and Coach Altman. If you could take the outcome, the negative part of the outcome, away from either team, it's fun competing against them. That was fun tonight. We had a lot of fun.

Giving credit to a lot of these guys here. We've really been talking about just kind of developing -- I don't want to say unemotional, but a real steady approach, zero-zero score, so-what-now-what-type mentality. These guys executed it to perfection today. To go down 14 or whatever we did early and then not panic and just realize how much time was left in the game and just to literally take a lead by halftime, that says something about this group.

Just tremendously proud of these guys and all three of 'em individually. Tobe, you know, he's a beast, a double double in the first half. Henri's in foul trouble and those two become quite a duo. So Tobe had to carry a heavy load. Delli hit a big three, had a nice little shake. Was that a dunk on that baseline drive or not? Are we going to give you a dunk on that one?

ANTHONY DELL'ORSO: It was pretty close.

TOMMY LLOYD: Pretty close. Okay. But those free



throws were huge. You step into a game where you haven't been playing much down the stretch and then do that. And then Caleb was sensational. We've had a lot of conversations, and Caleb has so much potential and he's so good already. What's cool is how much better he can get. And his approach today, just staying steady and staying unemotional. I think there was a couple ball-handling errors I probably would have taken back. But I'm picky.

I was just really proud of how he came out and played in that moment. It just says so much to me about his development as a player and a person, and he was obviously the best player on the floor today, and he was able to carry us to victory. So thanks to C-Love for that.

THE MODERATOR: Let's start with questions for the players, please.

Q. Caleb, how satisfying was that game overall for you, especially because maybe a few years ago you would not have been that steady? And I also want to know, were any of you panicking when you were down 15? And if not, why not?

CALEB LOVE: Super satisfying. Just knowing that this group, what we went through, the adversity, it's built us for these moments. Us going down early, we never panicked, we never altered anything. I just think we were so poised throughout that whole game, and nobody was worried about anything but finishing out the game and winning the game.

So I give credit to my teammates, my coaches. They had a great game plan coming into the game and it was shaky early, but that's what these games are about. You're going to face adversity but how do you bounce back. And like Coach said, we got a so-what-now-what mentality and that's what came out tonight.

Q. Delli, you didn't grow up looking forward to March Madness. Talk about playing in this atmosphere, what this has done and how this experience has been for you.

ANTHONY DELL'ORSO: Yeah, this experience has been great. Obviously, the wins help. But, yeah, growing up



didn't really know much about it, didn't know much about college in general. But as I kind of got older and started my freshman year and stuff, I realized how big of a deal it was. You go throughout a long season, you play two games every week just to get to this moment.

So it's been great, the energy from the crowd is there. We have a great fan base that's with us, so it feels like we're at a home game pretty much every time. This experience has been great. There's no one else I would rather do it with apart from these guys, but it's so great to get that win and get to the Sweet 16.

Q. This is going to be game 10 with Duke. Did you expect this sort of long history with Duke? Do you look forward to this matchup? Does playing against Duke define your career in any way? Just wonder how big a matchup this is for you.

CALEB LOVE: It's a big matchup because it's the next game. It's the only game that matters. Obviously, our mind was focused on Oregon and we got it done and now we're going to get in the film room and lock in on Duke and what they do. Obviously, they're a great team, they're well coached, and we'll be ready for 'em when the time comes.

Q. Caleb, Coach Lloyd referred to your steadiness. Curious, how does your faith help you stay even-keeled in big moments like this game and all season long as well?

CALEB LOVE: It plays a big part. I give credit to my mom for instilling that in me early as a child. And just trusting in God and keeping my faith in him that's what keeps me steady and poised. In every situation, knowing that whatever outcome it is, he's going to have me covered.

And so I give all my credit to God, and my relationship with him has grown over the course of my college career. And I'll be honest and say it's about been up-and-down, but I say this past year I've really grown with my faith in him.

Q. Can you talk about what kind of a leader Caleb is? And then, Anthony, if you could answer that question as well.

TOMMY LLOYD: Yeah, Caleb's really grown in his leadership role. I think that as a young player, the spotlight was on him in such a way that -- the highest of highs and the lowest of lows. I think for a long portion of his career Caleb kind of had to just take care of himself, which I totally get, I totally understand.

But this year I've really seen him kind of grow into that leader role and be more mature about it. He's unbelievable

with his teammates. I get asked a lot what it's like to coach Caleb, and I just tell them it's really simple. I've never had one bad experience. Never had one bad experience. I've never had one talk-back, never had one bad body language with me, never had anything like that.

So he's been a great gentleman for me to coach. And I don't know if people -- people that have this perception of him otherwise just don't know him. I'm really proud of the leader he's become. I told Caleb coming into this tournament, even this tournament's not going to define his career or make his life better. He's been through so much already. He's so ready for the next step. I think when this college thing ends for him, I'll be sad because I'm going to lose a great player, but I'm also going to be happy for him, and I think he's going to have a sense of relief and he's going to kind of -- a burden is going to be lifted from him in his life and he's going to be able to move forward into his next phase of his life and his basketball career and I don't see any way he's going to be denied from reaching his dreams.

ANTHONY DELL'ORSO: Coming in, you hear all these preconceived notions about UNC and Caleb and that whole deal, but for me, I never judged him, never had any thoughts of my own until I want to meet him myself and get the real deal. And I think people don't have that because they don't ever get the chance to meet him and get to really know him.

On the court throughout this year, we've been super connected in the fact that we play a similar position, we are getting cross-matched and doing different represents, and we workout every day together, every morning. Like, I'm probably the closest with him.

Like, he's an unbelievably leader, whether it's his voice or his actions or him leading the way or as simple as him being in a timeout and telling everyone to calm down and relax because we got this. Like you said, in that 14- or 15-point deficit, how are we so poised? We're so poised because guys like Caleb that have the stage like that are able to stay calm, makes everyone else calm.

So that's a credit to Caleb, that's a credit to how he's kind of been brought up and stuff like that, but if you want to describe him as a leader, that's how I'll describe him. He steadies the ship for everyone.

TOMMY LLOYD: Hey, guys, how about some questions for Tobe? This dude, I'm telling you, he's a badass, and I love him to death. You've never met a bigger gentleman in your life. I mean, he's a 4.0 student -- I mean, I think, right?

TOBE AWAKA: No, for sure.

CALEB LOVE: For sure.

TOMMY LLOYD: Yeah, it's close. Anything that is associated with his name is done with quality and class. And you might not know that by the way he plays because he's rugged and he kicks ass out there, but this is one of the best human beings I've ever met. So I think you guys need to get to know him a little bit.

Q. For Tobe, what did you feel like you guys did really well to sort of keep Nate Bittle kind of under control and from not getting as many touches in the paint maybe as he has previously? And then for Caleb, you were the only one here last year that played Oregon when it was a PAC-12 game. Did that feel like almost like you guys were in Vegas at the PAC-12 tournament playing with sort of the atmosphere and everything?

TOBE AWAKA: I mean, just a credit to the coaching staff. They did a great job in terms of scout, knowing what he likes to do. I think on our part, me and Henri did a good job of sort of chesting him up, making his catches difficult. PK earlier today did a great job of just sort of giving me the rundown of what he likes to do in the post, what his go-to move is, what his counter is, and things like that. So we had a great preparation during shoot-around and I think all that really helped in game.

TOMMY LLOYD: And PK is Przemek Karnowski, the old Zag Polish hammer, and he's a stud.

But hey, listen, Nate Bittle is a great player. We couldn't keep him off his left shoulder. We tried, we tried, but he just is -- he's got a way of getting to it and he kind of has an awkwardness to that hook shot, but man, it's so effective. So yeah, just tip our hat to him and his player development's been really cool to watch.

THE MODERATOR: Let's let the players go and take a couple more questions for Coach, and then we'll wrap it up.

Q. I don't think you're much of a screamer anyway, but I wondered when you guys were down 15 and you're in the huddle, are you thinking, like, I need to yell at them to wake them up?

TOMMY LLOYD: No, no, I don't think so. I'm obviously -- you kind of blank out in some of those moments. I just think we wanted to stay steady. I knew there was so much time in the game and so many possessions, you just didn't want to dig a deeper hole. I felt like if we cut it to nine then seven -- I mean, I've been in so many of those games where I've been on the other end of 'em. You almost feel

like it's inevitable that a good team's going to come back on you.

So I wanted them to feel that and I wanted our guys just to hang with it. I think we kind of tried some things with the game plan, maybe a little bit too much, too much scheme, early, but I think it was the right plan and when our guys got settled into executing it, I think it was pretty effective.

And maybe you saw that after kind of that -- those first two media timeouts. We kind of settled into executing our plan and we really didn't make any adjustments from the plan A that we had coming in the game. So Jack Murphy and TJ Benson and Rem did a great job kind of giving our guys a winning plan tonight.

Q. For those of us who don't regularly watch Caleb, those threes at the end seemed pretty nonchalant, the dunk was amazing. Do you get that from him, is he a closer for you or is that something he's developed?

TOMMY LLOYD: For sure. He's our closer, but he's not our only one. I'm a big believer -- and obviously, you want to have a guy that's comfortable with the ball in his hands and not afraid in those moments. But I've also just thought the best way to close games is make the right basketball play. Speaking of closing, I guess we had a three on one fast-break where two guys went for the alley-oop and it didn't go in, and my good friend, Steve Kerr, texted me. Like, What was the hell was up with that three on one? And I said, Yeah, yeah, yeah, I know, Coach. And he was like, Well, just so you feel better, Draymond would have did the same thing and Stef would have pulled up and shot a three.

So I mean, I've always felt like at Arizona, my four years, we've lived on the edge of excitement and maybe there's times I wish we had a little bit more conservative approach to things, but I also think that let-it-rip mentality is kind of who we are, and I think it's provided way more positives and way more benefits than negatives for us.

So, yeah, just really, really proud of the guys tonight. That was awesome and I'm so happy we get to stay together and keep competing.

Q. I know you had the late turnover, but generally speaking tonight, throughout the season Jaden Bradley has been a calming presence. Can you talk about his leadership and his ability to maintain composure?

TOMMY LLOYD: He's been awesome. He had 12 tonight, 12 and just steady, four assists and three steals. I mean, he impacts winning and he has a real maturity to him and a

steadiness. What did he have, like, 19 or 20 last game? I mean, like, he's just really grown into a great player. He really is calm. He really is calm. I even had a ref come up to me last game and he said, I'm having problems with 0 and I'm like, What? Him? I'm not used to guys saying that, he's usually so calm and really doesn't interact with the officials, so Jaden's the consummate point guard, and he's, he's, he's a great point guard, we're lucky to have him, and I'm really proud of how he's developed as a player and how he competes, and for him to kind of be kind of the silent leader of our team.

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