

# NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Round - Duquesne vs BYU

Wednesday, March 20, 2024

Omaha, Nebraska, USA

CHI Health Center

**BYU Cougars**

**Dallin Hall**

**Jaxson Robinson**

**Spencer Johnson**

Media Conference

THE MODERATOR: The student body representing up here is Spencer Johnson, Jaxson Robinson, and Dallin Hall. We're going to go straight to questions.

**Q. Guys, just want to get your thoughts on settling in into Omaha and getting ready for this stage.**

SPENCER JOHNSON: It's been great. We got here yesterday and had a good night's sleep. The hotel is awesome.

Got out and had practice this morning at Creighton's practice facility and got after it. It feels great to be here. We're excited.

JAXSON ROBINSON: Going off what Spencer said, I think this is a new environment for everybody for the most part. Spencer and Trevin came, I came. I didn't really play.

But, I mean, everybody is super excited just to be able to get out here and compete against Duquesne. They're a great team. So just itching to get on the court.

DALLIN HALL: We had a few fans show up to greet us when we got here, so we're excited to get to work tomorrow.

**Q. Spencer, I'll start with you on this, and anybody else who wants to chime in. You guys beat Central Florida I remember in a game where you won in the 60s. You don't play a lot of games under 70. Duquesne likes to live in that world. If Duquesne tries to approach the game in that regard, keep the score under 70, how comfortable are you guys in that**



context, and if they try to dictate it that way, do you try to ramp it up or just try to slug with them in that regard?

SPENCER JOHNSON: Yeah, that's a good question. I think that it's important for us to stay true to who we are as a team. We played a couple of games in the 60s. It's not very common, but we're our most comfortable when we can get out and run in transition and make teams play at our pace.

It should be interesting. It comes down to we just have to guard and rebound and everything will take care of itself.

JAXSON ROBINSON: Kind of like Spencer said, we have to make sure we stay true to who we are. We live in transition. That's where we thrive. So making sure we get out and just not let the defense dictate what we do and just be the aggressor. That's what we focus on every single game.

Just making sure we do that.

**Q. For Spencer, you haven't felt the buzz maybe necessarily yet, but can you reflect on the 2021 COVID protocol tourney that you were in and played in and feelings of that and how that might compare to what you are in right now?**

SPENCER JOHNSON: Yeah, it was just so different. We got there, and we were all in a hotel, and I think every team had a floor that they were confined to in that hotel.

Everything was indoors. We walked to our practice facility. We would walk to the games. It's just so different.

To be here in March Madness and to have this experience is really cool, and we're excited to be here and just get some big-time games rolling.

**Q. For any of you guys, with respect to Jaxson, knowing you had played in a Power conference before arriving at BYU, but having been through now the 18-game grind of a Big 12 Conference schedule, how do you reflect on that and how do you feel like maybe that prepared you for what you are about to face?**



DALLIN HALL: Obviously, yeah, playing in the Big 12 is a new experience. I loved it. It was a fantastic experience. We got challenged every single night.

It's super physical league, very talented. I think it prepares us well. Ultimately, once you get into the tournament, it's 0-0, fresh start for everyone.

You have to be on your A-game to win in this tournament. So we're excited to step up to that challenge.

JAXSON ROBINSON: Yeah, just like Dallin said, it's March. Everything is reset, 0-0, both teams. Just making sure that you don't dwell on the past or look at the past and just move forward. Every game is a new game. Duquesne is a great team.

So the Big 12 was a great experience, great competition. I think us three guys and every one of my teammates live for moments like that, playing against the best competition in the country.

Like I said, it's 0-0, so just making sure that we're focused on the now.

SPENCER JOHNSON: I agree. Competition brings out the best in people. Sometimes it brings out the worst, but that's just how it goes, right?

The Big 12 was awesome. Great competition every night. It was never like, oh, tonight is an easy game. We have tonight off. Every game was big, and it was hard, and it was physical. I think it prepares us really well.

You come into the tournament here, and every team is really good, conference champions or just a really good team overall. Yeah, we're excited.

**Q. How important is it getting off to a fast start for your team to function at a high level?**

THE MODERATOR: Dallin first, please.

DALLIN HALL: I think it's key. We saw the difference it made against TCF as well as Texas Tech. Obviously, like Jax was saying earlier, we want to make sure that we dictate what we do and not the other team, and we play our game.

So we believe we're prepared. We have a great coaching staff that prepares us well. We trust in one another. And if we lean into what we know makes our team special, we believe that we'll be good for the game.

SPENCER JOHNSON: Well said.

**Q. Spencer, obviously Duquesne's coach is retiring after this. You guys probably heard. Their players talked about how that is incentive for them, motivation. What kind of -- first of all, can that be a factor on the court, that sort of thing, and then do you guys have any sort of motivation that is driving you guys?**

SPENCER JOHNSON: Yeah. No, I'm glad you pointed it out. I didn't know that. So I guess that could be motivating.

I think for us it's just motivating that we're here. This is the first time for a lot of guys. It's certainly the first time in a post-COVID or whatever you like to call it.

So we're just excited to be here, man, and just to feel the environment and the atmosphere. That's super motivating in that we have worked so hard this whole season, this whole offseason to put ourselves in a really good spot.

Now that we're here, it's like we did all that work, but now we're here, and it's time to really show out.

**Q. Jaxson, you've really thrived in that six-man role, especially this year. What is it about that role and coming off the bench that helps you kind of elevate your game to the status it has this year?**

JAXSON ROBINSON: Just doing whatever I can to help my team win in whatever way that is. Coach just wanted me to make sure that whether I'm coming off the bench or starting that I just focus on winning. That's what I'm all about.

The accomplishment is something I'll remember for the rest of my life, but what matters to me is being in this tournament and winning with my guys.

**Q. Again, for any or all, does Duquesne remind you of a particular team in the Big 12, or are there individuals that look like he plays like this guy or that guy? Anything like that in your prep?**

DALLIN HALL: I think they're a unique team with pieces from a couple of teams that we've played, like TCU, Texas Tech. Obviously they have their own style and their own attributes, but there's a couple of pieces from those teams we've played.

They're a skilled team with skilled players. Yeah, I don't know if there's an exact team that I would pin them as.

JAXSON ROBINSON: Yeah, going off of what Dallin said, I think they got a little bit of a few different teams.



Especially defensively they're a great defensive team. There is a lot of great defensive teams in our league.

Just combining a few teams, but, I mean, like Dallin said, they're unique. They like to get out in transition when they get the opportunity. If they don't, they want to slow the ball down, run and set play.

That's a little bit different than what we're used to in the Big 12. But I'm pretty confident in our defensive ability just to stay locked in for all 30 seconds and hopefully get a stop in the rebound.

**Q. Dallin, this one is for you because, as has been mentioned, Spence has played in the NCAA Tournament before. Jaxson has been there, even if he doesn't always claim it because he didn't play a ton before he transferred. Have you had a moment in your first March Madness where you've kind of pinched yourself already, like this is what I've been working for? How do you maybe take that moment and then transition to you tip off tomorrow at 11:40 local time, and it's just another game, so you have to kind of move past that.**

DALLIN HALL: I think Selection Sunday was kind of that moment seeing our team up on the screen realizing since I've been a little kid, this has been my dream.

As far as embracing the moment, I got some good leaders sitting next to me, some in the locker room, and a coaching staff that has prepared me this whole year.

I'm leaning on those guys and then just trying to embrace the moment. That's what I've always tried to do my whole life is just enjoy it, be present and focus on the process because that's what translates.

**Q. For all of you guys, Duquesne's coach spoke earlier and was impressed with your guys' physicality. He said you have a little bit of East Coast influence from Coach Pope's days with Coach Pitino. How much do you pride yourself on the physicality that you bring on the defensive end?**

SPENCER JOHNSON: It's everything. Transitioning from the WCC into the Big 12, everyone kept telling us, hey, this is a super physical league. You have to get your body ready. You have to be ready for the physicality night in and night out.

I think we really experienced that. It is a really physical league, but we had such a great year, and we definitely over-performed in what people thought we were going to do. The large part of that is due to our physicality.

I think it surprises some teams. I don't know if we necessarily will win kind of the eye test in the warmup lines. You look at us and be, like, oh, man, who are these guys out there, whatever. But I think we surprise some teams, and that's pretty cool.

JAXSON ROBINSON: Like Spencer said, I think it's a huge piece to our team. It sets the tone for each game, making sure the five out on the floor are super physical to start out.

I think we've seen the other side of that when we're not physical to start out the game. That's something that we really pride ourselves on and make sure that we have a lot of energy in that aspect defensively and offensively, especially on the rebound margin.

I think we're one of the better defensive and offensive rebounding teams in the country, so being physical is something that's part of this program.

DALLIN HALL: I just harp on what they've said. We call it the combat zone, and our physicality in that area inside the three-point line is what helps us win when it comes to rebounding, when it comes to making sure we own that space. Our coaches really emphasize that. They prepare us well. When we execute that, we're really hard to beat.

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