

# NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: Second Round - Duquesne vs Illinois

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Omaha, Nebraska, USA

CHI Health Center

**Illinois Fighting Illini**  
**Head Coach Brad**  
**Underwood**  
**Coleman Hawkins**  
**Ty Rodgers**  
**Luke Goode**  
Media Conference



with their two lead guards and kind of their supporting cast. Something that we want to do is try and get out in transition. We've been doing that all year.

I think speed up the tempo as much as possible, but this team isn't afraid to have a low possession game as well. There's been some times in the Big Ten where we've had to have low possession games, and if that's something we need to do to win, I think we're capable of doing that.

TY RODGERS: I agree with Luke. I think we're just as good in the half court as we are in transition, so I feel like we can play either way. We kind of just go with what the game brings us.

COLEMAN HAWKINS: Yeah, I think Morehead State tried to slow things down yesterday, and we kept staying the course and stuck to what we did. Ultimately once we got stops and rebounds, we were able to speed the game up a little bit. So just staying true to our principles, staying true to what we do, not rushing things and then not turning the ball over as well I think is a big key because that leads to -- a lot of their points are scored off of fastbreak points and second-chance points. Yeah, just not turning the ball over and getting great shots.

**Q. This is for Cole Maine and Luke. You have been part of a lot of teams here at Illinois with a lot of star players over the years. What maybe makes this team unique and maybe more equipped to go further in the NCAA Tournament than some of the previous teams?**

COLEMAN HAWKINS: I think our biggest thing is our uniqueness. I think people are able to play multiple positions. I think there's just a different style of play. In my early times here it was more ball screens and high-lows. Now I think everybody here is created for their own, and we're playing through that.

We kind of don't run a ton of actions. We kind of just create for ourselves and make teams have to double-team us and get out and run in transition. I think that's been very beneficial for us.

LUKE GOODE: I think the biggest difference is just the togetherness and the maturity of our team, especially this year. I think our team has bonded on a higher level than

THE MODERATOR: With us is Luke Goode, Ty Rodgers, Coleman Hawkins for Illinois. We will start with questions.

**Q. What does Duquesne do defensively to knock people off their games and what do you see from them on film?**

TY RODGERS: I think they're very aggressive, very handsy defensively. They bring that unball pressure. They're heavy in the gaps. An aggressive style defensively, so yeah.

COLEMAN HAWKINS: Like Ty said, they're really handsy. Coach kind of compared them to Penn State, Ace Baldwin-like. Real handsy. Trying to get in the passing lane, deflect passes.

Kind of help from all over the place. Yeah, we just have to make sure we're secure with the ball, catch and receive passes with two hands, yeah.

**Q. A similar question, I'll go down a slightly different path relating to Duquesne and their propensity to try to win games in the 60s or very low 70s. Do you try to speed them up or are you willing to play their game if that's how they want to dictate it? What are you more prone to do in that regard?**

LUKE GOODE: I think after watching film on Duquesne, they like to control the tempo. They do a good job of that



normal.

Everybody on the road is hanging out in the hotel room. We're all playing Uno in the locker room before media days. It's a different type of bonding and togetherness that we've had this year. I think that attributes to winning those close games.

I think maturity too as well. When you've got fifth year seniors out there -- Quincy, Marcus, Justin, Justin coming off the bench. You have and Dain, who is in his fourth year of college basketball, Coleman, and you have guys that have been in the program. Ty now for a second year. Coleman and myself. We know what to expect. We know what Coach Brad wants and how he wins games.

We go into the games and preparation knowing how to help our teammates out and what to do in certain situations, and I think we've shown that over the past last game and then the games in the Big Ten Tournament.

**Q. This is for Luke and Coleman. You guys know it's been 19 years since Illinois has been to a Sweet 16. You guys were toddlers at the time. What's it mean to have this opportunity to be one step away and have the opportunity to be that team?**

LUKE GOODE: Yeah, it's a great opportunity. We don't necessarily talk about that as much. That's more something kind of other people talk about. We just look at it as another game, another opportunity to win a game.

Our goal after we won the Big Ten Tournament, we said, you know, it's going to last through Sunday night, and then once it hits Monday, we've got six more games until the end of our season. That's been our mentality. We haven't really thought of records or anything like that or kind of the history of Illinois. It's more just like we've got to focus on us, get ready for Duquesne, who is a great basketball team, and take advantage of this opportunity.

COLEMAN HAWKINS: Yeah, for sure. Like Luke said, I don't think it's really something we pay attention to. I think it's more so the fans and people who love Illinois who want to see the program do great kind of nagging and pulling that second weekend.

Yeah, like Luke said, we're just focused on the next game, and this next game is Duquesne. Focusing on that and not focusing and trying to get ahead. I think if we go out and play hard, we'll have a good chance of playing that next weekend, so...

**Q. This is for Coleman. How has Marcus's ability as a passer been able to open up opportunities for your**

**front court? He has averaged -- he's had at least eight assists over the last three games. How has that ability been able to open up things for you?**

COLEMAN HAWKINS: I think it's been great because whenever teams -- whenever we are in our pistol action and he's backing defenders down, they have to double-team because he's a strong guard. He's 6'5", 6'6", and he's bringing the ball up the court, and most guards are 6'2" and maybe smaller or not as strong as him.

It's been great to see him drawing double-teams, which gets people open. I feel like he makes the right play majority of the time. He gets the ball out when he needs to. Ultimately, it's led to back-side threes and step-in threes for me and for other guys, so it's been great to see that.

If we don't have a shot, we're playing in rotation, and we're able to rip-drive, spray it to other people. It's been great to see him take advantage of that opportunity, and he hasn't shied away from it, so I'm proud of him.

**Q. Ty, this is kind of about Coach Frazier. How has he kept it light during practices or on the bench? I've seen videos on social media of him still being able to blow by some of the guys during practice, or he is still able to get up and dunk the ball. How has Coach Frazier kept it light for you guys?**

TY RODGERS: He just brings that energy. Defensively putting that fire in us and making us want to go out there and get a stop and put kills together. He's always on us in practice. He just brings that motor and brings that intensity. He is someone we look up to.

We seen what he did when he played at Illinois, so he is a good role model.

Yeah, he just brings that energy, and he helps us go.

**Q. Coleman, how does Dain change you, the way you play, how the team plays when he is on the court?**

COLEMAN HAWKINS: I feel like Dain has done a great job of being a successful post scorer. I feel like we've seen that from -- well, we've known all year from Dain. He's been getting a lot of the reps on the scout team actually, and I think it's been pretty beneficial because he's been able to get there and get his confidence up.

I'm in there guarding him, and he's working on his game. So it's great to see Dain go out there. It allows Marcus to have -- I feel like Marcus and Ty kind of have a pressure release, and Terrence, because I feel like every time we



throw him the ball and whenever he gets to the rim, I feel like it's going to be a bucket. It's been great to see him kind of shine in these last couple of games.

I feel like it's been great for me defensively as well because he's able to guard bigs, and I'm able to slide off of guys and kind of help from that forward spot or guard guards as well, so...

LUKE GOODE: Yeah, having Dain as an inside prince, it makes us that much harder to scout. You have Coleman who is not necessarily a prototypical college big man with his back to the basket all the time catching post passes. Coleman is more on the perimeter looking for options that way, but Dain just brings a whole other dynamic to our offense.

He's a presence in the paint. I think one of the biggest impacts he's had over the past week and a half of games is his offensive rebounding. I think he's been great in the post.

Obviously 9 for 9, that's special in the tournament. That type of performance like that, it was great from him. It just adds another dimension to our offense.

You talk about Coleman having the ability to pick-and-pop, and then you bring him in, move Coleman to the three and four to guard a guard, and now you have an inside presence that can dominate a game and go 9 for 9.

It's really hard to scout, and it's hard to prepare for.

THE MODERATOR: Gentlemen, thank you very much for your time. We are joined by Coach Brad Underwood.

BRAD UNDERWOOD: Obviously excited to be here. Tremendous respect for Morehead State. Preston and the job he's done there is remarkable. That was a very, very good basketball team.

Didn't love being down 9-0. I think the positive side of that was we had 48 1/2 minutes to kind of make it up. Pleased with the way we played. I was really excited at halftime because I felt after that little stretch, plus-10 for the half, and then I thought our defense, I thought our physicality, I thought our ability to bring guys off the bench and have them perform at a high level was very important.

So here we sit. You don't get to enjoy the wins very long. Now you're getting one of the hottest teams in college basketball in Duquesne.

I've known Coach Dambrot a long time. I have a lot of respect for him. He's doing a great, great job there.

They're hot. I think nine in a row. Maybe 16 out of their last 19.

They have taken on his personality. They play the way he likes. They're physical. They're tenacious, gritty. We'll have to play awfully well, and they're a team that comes from a great conference and kind of just steamrolled hot going into the tournament and played their way through it.

Here they are, and they were outstanding yesterday against a very, very talented and very gifted offensive team in BYU and just really I thought took them out of what they wanted to do.

We know we have our hands full. We have to play well. We'll take advantage of today in preparation and recovery and be ready to go tomorrow night at 7:40.

**Q. Brad, Luke mentioned Penn State as a comparable to what they tried to do defensively getting into you, handsy full. I imagine Rutgers is kind of like that, too. What do you hope they took away from those lessons and those games that can lead into this one?**

BRAD UNDERWOOD: I thought we were pretty good in those games other than the last minute and a half at Penn State. Again, I think that they've got guards that are elite at raking and digging in balls. I think you've got to make great decision when you get into the paint.

I think they have a shot blocker very similar to -- you mentioned Rutgers -- to cliff at Rutgers. They're very, very effective that way.

They'll be disruptive. They like to run through passes. Good thing is we don't pass a lot in terms of initiating offense, but again, yeah, they're athletic, handsy, they're physical. They've got a propensity stat-wise to foul a lot, but they have six, seven front court guys that they just all throw out there.

Yeah, they want to drag you in the mud, so to speak. We've got to be ready for that.

**Q. As a follow-up to that last point, when they do try to drag you in the mud, does it behoove you more to say we're going to play our game and do things that way, or do you try to kind of slug in the mud with them?**

BRAD UNDERWOOD: We'll take whatever comes. I think that's one of the things I've enjoyed about this team is I think we see a little bit of everything in the Big Ten. I think Rutgers is probably as good an example as anybody of a team that can just flat-out guard you and make things -- challenge you all the time.



Duquesne is not going to give you anything. You're going to have to go earn it. I think that's the one thing that it always comes down to loose balls, offensive rebounds, can you sustain a defensive rebound, can you get a couple of baskets in transition, can you make free-throws? Those are all the things that you are going to have to do to win a game like this.

**Q. Dain Dainja-related. Keith, your counterpart, opined that without playing Dainja a lot, he didn't think Illinois was really a national title contender, but with him heavily in the mix, he can see it, he thinks you are. I would like you first to react to that. Then, also, if navigating the season with a player as good as Dain offer not playing him a whole lot, sometimes for stretches of multiple games and all that, if it was hard for you just on a personal level, or if you are just being a coach and it's so matter of fact that it's not hard?**

BRAD UNDERWOOD: No, I think to the last part of that, I think you want everybody to be successful. I'm no different than that. Dain has handled his situation as well as anybody I've ever seen in terms of just being a prepared teammate, continuing to work hard.

He's obviously always had to worry about conditioning. He runs extra. He gets on the Versaclimber extra. He did does all those things. He's provided us great lift in the Big Ten Tournament. He helped us early. Coleman was out for a stretch.

Again, it took us a little bit. We're a non-conventional team a little bit with the way we approach the ball, the way we score. We still don't throw Dain a ton of looks in post-ups. He's getting it kind of organically through playing flat on the baseline and getting into offensive rebounds and running.

So it's been a little different for him, but I'm ecstatic for the way he's handled it.

To Keith's point, I think we're No. 2 in the country in offensive efficiency. A lot of that was he was a part of, but a lot of it he wasn't. We posed a lot of people problems with a pick-and-pop five, and so I don't know. Everybody has their own opinion, but I sure like having him. I thought he's been impactful and will continue to be as we move forward.

**Q. I wanted to talk about Coleman Hawkins and just his development over the course of four years. He's that pick-and-pop five you're talking about. How has he maybe grown as a player, and how dangerous is he and tough to guard for opposing teams at this point?**

BRAD UNDERWOOD: Well, he's grown immensely. When you are around him every day and the people who have seen him, he should be what the picture of a college student-athlete looks like. He's run the gambit.

As a freshman, wasn't ready physically. Played some on a good team. As a sophomore, we probably gave him too much too early he hadn't earned, a starting spot. That team was really good. We played him a lot as a four-man. There were challenges with that, and he got benched.

He handled that adversity great. He's always been a great teammate. He's very, very competitive. Last year he's thrust into a leadership role with a team of a bunch of freshmen, two transfers, and Terrence Shannon and Matt Mayer, and he was forced into a leadership role, so he's had to grow up very quickly.

Then this year it's just all kind of been a culmination of all of those learned lessons put to use with some transfers that have been awfully good, with some veterans, and his role.

As a pick-and-pop five man, he's been special. We had a conversation early in the year, we needed him to shoot. He's a terrific, terrific shooter. When he shoots the basketball, he's very, very effective defensively. He's guarded everybody from Zach Edey to smaller, quicker athletes. In the Wisconsin game in the Big Ten Tournament we slid him over to guard AJ Storr.

His versatility on that end, his intelligence on that end have played a huge part in our success. Coleman has a bright future.

**Q. I've seen on social media Coach Frazier turning back the clock a little bit. He's able it on blow by some of the guys, defend some of the guys, and even getting up and still being able to dunk the ball. What all has he provided for the team the past few years as far as just keeping it light and fun with the players?**

BRAD UNDERWOOD: Those have to be Photoshopped. There's not a chance in hell he's doing that.

No, Chester is competitive. I think assistant coaches have tremendous roles and relationships with players and development of players. We've stated since the day I took over we were a development program.

There's a lot of facets of that word "development," and it's not just on the court. You know, it's off the court. It's the weight room. It's nutrition. It's academics, social issues.

Chester, the rest of our staff, all do a great, great job, but



Chester is fiery. He's a great, great competitor. He gives us an emotional fire sometimes, and most every day, to be honest. He has the ability to be an every day guy and bring it. That carries over to our team.

**Q. Given the intensity of the lifestyle you lead as a high-level coach, is there any party that sees that Keith is stepping down, and is there a sliver in there that envies the idea of down-shifting, maybe doing something else, going slower?**

BRAD UNDERWOOD: No, I think that anybody who had has done this for a long time, and Keith has done this and for long enough, for a long time, you know, I think that the profession is changing. It's getting harder. It's not getting easier.

We're dealing with the portal now. Right now. The portal. Really? This is the greatest moment in time for a college coach and a team. All of that takes away from maybe other things.

As you get a little older, you get a little different perspective on life, on truly what's important. So I've got a great understanding of people wanting to step away. I get it.

Am I ready for that personally? No, but I'm also pretty blessed. I get to coach with my son, and I've got a wife who is very, very supportive, two wonderful daughters. I try to keep them around as much as possible.

I have a really I think gift that I can flip a switch and step away from basketball pretty easily, but I get it. I'm happy for anybody who chooses to be able to be done and know that they get to do it pretty much on their terms.

Keith has been a grinder, a worker. He's had tremendous success. Jealous of really the way he's done it. A lot of respect for him.

**Q. I wanted to ask you what your opinion is of the college basketball replay, the review rules after the game last night with Kansas. Do you think that fouls should be reviewable?**

BRAD UNDERWOOD: You know, I don't like to comment on stuff until I have both sides of it. I wish we had -- like the NBA, I wish we had a challenge. You're going to get me started.

My frustration comes from the fact, we play a different game in college than everybody else. We play a different game in the United States than everybody else. We're the only country in the world that doesn't play by the same set of rules at all levels.

High schools don't have shot clocks. Some of them do. Some of them don't. We have a different lane. We have a different three-point line.

College basketball plays halves. Everybody else plays quarters. So there's a lot of things that are out there, but I do wish we had a challenge. I think it would be -- I think it would help clean maybe some of that up, but you know, it was a tough play. You kind of live with the outcome.

**Q. Brad, Luke has always seemed ready in these moments, postseason moments. What is it about that? What is it about him that gives him that and the consistency that he's brought to your program?**

BRAD UNDERWOOD: Yeah, Luke, what was it, two years ago we played Houston, and we were without Jacob Grandison, out with an injury. Man, he stepped in as a freshman and just was tremendous in these moments.

He's not afraid. Luke has tremendous confidence. He's got a swagger about him that allows him to go out there and be successful. He puts in the work so, I think he's confident in his abilities. Now he's a little smarter than he was two years ago on the defensive side. He gets it. I thought he did a great job yesterday.

I look at a very confident guy with some swagger who is not afraid of the moment.

**Q. I know you're focused on the huge challenge ahead, but fans are so eager to get back to the second weekend.**

BRAD UNDERWOOD: So am I. It's really hard, but you know...

**Q. What would it mean to have this team be the one that does that for this program?**

BRAD UNDERWOOD: If we're fortunate enough tomorrow, ask me that then. I'll tell you then. Not getting too far ahead.

**Q. You probably didn't watch, and I hope you don't mind the question. Maybe you did, but FAU you played. Northwestern you know so well. Northwestern won. Any reaction to just what they've -- being able to do that without Berry and Nicholson and what they're dealing with?**

BRAD UNDERWOOD: Go, Big Ten. No, no surprises. Boo is special. Boo is special. I've said this all along. I thought Northwestern had maybe the best role players,



most well-defined as any team out there.

The team they put together, you know, I know Ty was out. Martinelli comes in and gives them something completely different. They developed -- Chris did a great job developing depth, but when you have boo, things are going to run pretty easy. He's as good a point guard as I've seen in this league in my time. I think he's one of the best in the country, but it's not just his scoring or his ability to do that. It's just his confidence, his swagger that permeates throughout that program.

Defensively they're always -- they've been really solid here the last couple of years. It doesn't surprise me. FAU has had an incredible two-year run, but I thought that was a tough matchup for them when they got Northwestern. I felt really, really happy for Chris and really happy for our conference.

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