

# NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Round - Georgia vs Gonzaga

Thursday, March 20, 2025

Wichita, Kansas, USA

Intrust Bank Arena

## Gonzaga Bulldogs

## Mark Few

## Nolan Hickman

## Braden Huff

## Khalif Battle

### Media Conference

Gonzaga 89, Georgia 68

THE MODERATOR: The victorious Gonzaga Bulldogs are with us. We'll ask for an opening statement from Coach.

MARK FEW: It's one of the greatest feelings you can have in the world to advance in this tournament and to get to enjoy another 48 hours with this group of mine. So couldn't be happier.

We played a great first half on both ends. I thought our defense was solid throughout the whole night, and I'm happy our guys took the plan and executed it perfectly, and we beat a really, really good and well-coached Georgia team tonight.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. Mark, what was the key to the defensive play, especially the first nine minutes of the first half?**

MARK FEW: I think making plays. I thought our guys were really aggressive. We played as physical as we could. We knew Georgia was a very, very physical team. We saw that on tape. For the most part, especially in the first half, we limited them to any easy baskets and cut down their threes. I think the only place they hurt us was the free-throw line.

By and large just being aggressive and sticking with the plan.



**Q. Mark, the success on the three-point line both ways, guarding it and the other way and what these two guys did for you, Nolan and KB from that line?**

MARK FEW: Yeah, hey, I wish we would shoot it like that every night. It would be awesome, and we probably wouldn't lose.

You know, that's basketball. When shots are going in, it's an old coaching adage, everything looks better. Our defense has been rock solid here this last two, three weeks. Even maybe into a month here.

I'm glad it was able to travel, and I'm glad it was able to function against a high-level team like Georgia.

**Q. For Nolan, can you just talk about the comfort level? I think you said coming in that this level of play was easy for you guys, you are used to being here, right?**

NOLAN HICKMAN: Yeah, that's just the testament to what Coach Few has done with previous Gonzaga teams. We're always here. This is my fourth year here. It's kind of like riding a bike.

**Q. Nolan, if I could ask you to expand on that, could you sense a difference in confidence versus tentativeness, their not being on this stage before?**

NOLAN HICKMAN: Yeah, for sure. The first possession I kind of felt a sense of that. My guys were kind of like calm, composed, very energetic, ready to go. I don't quite want to bash any of the Georgia guys, but it showed. It showed in the first possession of the game.

**Q. Coach Few, I think your winning percentage speaks for itself. Your tournament appearances. Can you just talk about your disposition and managing these young student-athletes, the consistency that you have shown?**

MARK FEW: Hey, it starts with having great players. We've had an incredible run of great players and the best thing when you get players at Gonzaga, they're coachable. They listen because they understand that if everybody is on the same page, it really leads to winning, and that's why



they came to GU in the first place.

So it all starts and ends with having great players, and it's heart-warming and comforting to see when they got a couple of seniors come in here and step up and play great on the biggest stage. They put so much time in and so much heart and soul into it. Their families have too. It's awesome to see, and then also with B. Huff. His minutes sometimes have been limited this year just because of what we've had and what we're trying to do, but he always rises to the occasion. We throw him in there, and he delivers like tonight.

**Q. Mark, just because of the standard you've set over the years, how would you respond to I've heard throughout the season this isn't a vintage Gonzaga team, what you guys did tonight?**

MARK FEW: First of all, it's sad you're leaving us, Dennis. I don't know who I'm going to go to for the real scoop on conference alignment and all this stuff, but congratulations on that.

No, I mean, look, I think it is vintage Gonzaga team because it got itself to the NCAA Tournament and it's advancing. I think sometimes when the standard is national championship or bust, it's hard to live up to it. It's hard for me to live with myself sometimes. Sometimes I put those expectations. After doing that and winning a gold medal this summer, you want more. Winning is kind of addictive, as Steve Kerr always says.

I think teams take time sometimes, and I think this team right now is playing how we all envisioned it playing. It was great to do it on, like I said, the biggest stage, but now we've got a huge challenge of coming down the pipes here. We're playing a great team and a great program, much like ourselves, in this next game.

**Q. Braden, the last couple of games for you, what was that like starting? What was your comfort level out there? Didn't look like you had any jitters at all.**

BRADEN HUFF: I think I've told you this, but mindset all year, just stay ready, whatever my role it, whatever the game entails these guys make it easy. Ryan is always going to find me. These guys were hitting shots tonight. It was just one-on-one for me, which makes it pretty easy.

Yeah, I think having that year under my belt helps. Yeah, whatever it entails, I'm ready.

**Q. Mark, question for you and for Braden: What was the plan with Asa Newell? You were really able to limit his shots and touches. Braden, executing that plan**

**and being a part of that, how do you feel like it went for you guys on defense?**

BRADEN HUFF: Yeah, I mean, the coaches, they went to work right after Selection Sunday, so they had a good plan in place how to defend him. I mean, we recruited him here. He's a really good player, really talented.

Yeah, just limit his touches, try and be physical with him, make it as hard as possible. I mean, he still had a pretty good game, but just make it as tough on him as possible.

**Q. For Khalif, you have talked about waiting six years to get on the stage. How did it compare to what you thought it would be, and how much fun did you have out there today?**

KHALIF BATTLE: It felt good. Really can't put it into words. Kind of been watching this as a kid, and you don't really get the opportunity past places. That was part of the pitch when Coach recruited me that I would have a chance to be here.

Over time my love for not only just my brothers on the team and my coaching staff, but just to be a Zag and understanding what that means and the pride that comes with it. So to be dancing and to be with these guys is special, and I would run through a wall for them any day, even after I have the jersey on.

It's been special for me, and I just want to keep on dancing.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

