

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: Second Round - Gonzaga vs Houston

Friday, March 21, 2025

Wichita, Kansas, USA

Intrust Bank Arena

Houston Cougars

Milos Uzan

L.J. Cryer

Emanuel Sharp

J'Wan Roberts

Media Conference

THE MODERATOR: These are the Houston Cougars. We're going straight to questions.

Q. Milos, you came off your first NCAA Tournament appearance, two Big 12 championships, conference and regular season and the tournament. How do you and the rest of the team try to take on the same task and not get caught up in March Madness?

MILOS UZAN: I feel like we we've got a veteran group. All these guys have been here before. They try to keep the main thing the main thing. Just don't try to skip any steps. Our first step was to win the Big 12, and then we got to the tournament. Our next step was to win the tournament. Now we just have to take it game by game while we're here.

Q. When you look at this matchup, does this feel like a second-round type game just based on the seasons that both schools have had, or do you feel like this is the type of matchup that you would normally see later on maybe second week in Elite Eight, that kind of stuff?

L.J. CRYER: It could be a later matchup, but last year we played I think A&M in the second round. So you are going to play somebody that's really good in the round of 32. So yeah, that's out of our control at the end of the day how they make the brackets. We were going to get matched up with a good team, and it just so happened to be them.

EMANUEL SHARP: At this point of the tournament there



aren't really any bad teams. Every team is great. It's about us focusing on us and not worrying about whether this could be a later team that we would have played in a later round. We just have to focus on executing and doing what we're supposed to do.

Q. This isn't your first time meeting Ryan Nembhard in the NCAA Tournament. Both had 30 in that Creighton-Baylor game from a few years ago. What do you remember about Ryan from that game, and what do you make of the season he's had?

L.J. CRYER: He's a great player. He's won everywhere he's been. Steering the ship for Gonzaga right now. He has great vision. That game we played, I didn't know he could score like that, so it kind of took us for a little surprise.

He's a tremendous passer, and he's definitely leading the team right now. I got a lot of respect for him.

Q. I'm curious about the ankle and how it felt playing on it yesterday and where do you feel like you're at about the next day and the recovery?

J'WAN ROBERTS: I'm feeling pretty good. Got a lot of treatment at the hotel. I try to stay off my ankle as much as possible. Just get a lot of rest. I'm ready to go.

Q. Milos and L.J., they like to run a faster pace. They score 80-plus. For those of us that have seen you defensively and what you can do and maybe game plan to make teams play your style, how do you do that? How do you make a team that's a faster pace maybe play your game?

MILOS UZAN: I mean, shoot, we play extremely hard. We try to win every game, and I feel like in order for us to do that, they got to play on our terms. We're not the fastest team, so yeah, we're going to have to slow them down on the defensive end and slow down their pace, so...

L.J. CRYER: Kind of like he said, we have to play the game on our terms at the end of the day, and just be us. We know they play pretty fast, and we're kind of the opposite of them. So just go out there and do what we do at the end of the day. Yeah, don't get caught up in playing



their game. Just try to play ours.

Q. This is for any of you guys. Coach talks about not being too high or too low but with a first half like you had yesterday, is there still some excitement that you guys have from that?

J'WAN ROBERTS: Going into games, we understand that we're not a first-shot team. We kind of rely on our defense to be our backbone to stuff, and I feel like once we start making shots, it's a whole different ball game. We didn't go into the game aiming to shoot 61%. We wanted to come out the most aggressive team, jump out on our opponent first, and I feel like our defense and our energy led to us making shots.

So I feel like rolling into this tournament, we just have to keep being consistent and just being us.

EMANUEL SHARP: Yeah, pretty much the same thing. We never go into the games with an offensive mindset. We go in there trying to play hard, play defense, rebound, and usually the offense comes after that. Even if we're not hitting shots, we're still rebounding.

Like Wan said, when shots are falling, it makes the game that much easier for us. So just continue to play hard and give the right effort, and things will come on the offensive end.

Q. This can be for any players. You follow college basketball. When you see what Gonzaga has done, your streak is just as impressive, but they've been to nine Sweet 16s. I think you two teams have the same amount of wins over the last eight years. You lead the nation. What do you see? What comes to mind when you see that program, that name?

EMANUEL SHARP: It shows they have a winning culture, just like we do. Throughout the years, it shows that. The record shows that. We're consistent with our effort throughout the years and teaching the young guys the culture and keeping that alive, and it looks like they do the same. Hats off to that program. It's a great program. They are a great team.

L.J. CRYER: He pretty much summed it up. It's culture versus culture. That's all I have to say.

Q. J'Wan, you went undefeated on the road. Compared to other years, did that help you prepare for the Tournament this year?

J'WAN ROBERTS: Have the road games prepared us?

Q. Being undefeated on the road, did that help to prepare you for the Tournament compared to other seasons?

J'WAN ROBERTS: Yes, 100%. Especially when we go on road games, I just try to tell the guys, you know, most road games you're looking at crowd. We got a small portion of Houston fans, so any support that we can get, it's appreciated, but we are trying to stay together.

Going on road trips or being in the Tournament on a neutral court, you kind of treat it the same way. But the outside noise, we try to get that out the way and just trying to focus on us. It's only us and the coaching staff that's been with us every day behind closed doors.

Just going into these games on a neutral court, we just try to believe in and just trust each other as much as we can.

Q. Milos, as a point guard, Nembhard has 333 assists. When you look at that number, what do you think as a point guard?

MILOS UZAN: That's impressive. He has 300 assists and probably 70 turnovers. Is it somewhere around there? His assist to turnover ratio is off the charts. I know he is probably leading the country right now.

No, he's a really good point guard. I'm excited to match up against him and see what it's like, so...

Q. Leading up to tomorrow, how important is your leadership to the team leading up to tomorrow?

L.J. CRYER: You said leadership, right? It's going to take a lot of leadership in this game. They're a good opponent. They're going to make runs. We just have to be able to weather the storm, and we're going to have to have guys making sure we're engaged at all times and not getting too low because at the end of the day they're a good team, and they're going to have their moments, and we're going to have ours. When we have ours, we can't be too emotional and going crazy. We just kind of got to be steady.

J'WAN ROBERTS: To add on to that, just letting the guys know it's two teams that are trying to keep their season going on. We're going to get their best shot, and they're going to get our best shot.

So I just feel like it just comes down to who wants it more. It's a one-game tournament. We're not trying to think about, you know, ahead of time. We just try to be where our feet are and realizing that you just have to limit mistakes and just go into this game and be overly prepared and just know that if we lose, our season is over. So we



just keep that in the back of our heads and just trying to keep this going as long as we can.

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