

# NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Round - Oakland vs Kentucky

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Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

PPG Paints Arena

## Oakland Golden Grizzlies

## Trey Townsend

## Blake Lampman

## Coach Greg Kampe

### Media Conference



and it's crazy that I'm playing for him now at the biggest stage possible. It's been a great experience for sure.

**Q. Has he changed at all during your guys' time at Oakland? Has he mellowed? How has he evolved?**

BLAKE LAMPMAN: Yeah, absolutely he's changed. I remember my first year someone came in with different colored socks and he gave us -- they were either kicked out of practice or running stairs the entire time and now we got DQ Cole pulling up in Jolly Rancher socks and stuff like that. So he's definitely changed. He's definitely adapted and that's kind of a testament to his success as a coach and how he's able to stay a Division I basketball college for 40 years because he adapts with the times. He definitely has calmed down, too, with his coaching style. I'd say he still uses some words that are probably a little PG-13. But definitely calmed down since my first year and the last 30, 40 years.

TREY TOWNSEND: Yeah, I got asked this question after the Horizon League Championship game and my dad wasn't a big fan of my answer by saying he's slightly changed. He would tell you that he has changed tremendously, just as you could see on the sideline how he reacts to certain things over his years since my dad played for him. So I would say he's definitely mellowed up a little bit.

**Q. I believe your coach recently said he looked at Kentucky, thinks you guys match up well with them. As you've studied them in preparation, how would you assess how you match up with them?**

TREY TOWNSEND: I mean they're a very talented team, a lot of talented players. I think for us personally with this matchup zone that we play, I think it's hard for my team to kind of prepare for us and get for what we're about to throw at them. It's not something you see every day. So I think we give every team a good matchup. I like the size we have. We can compete at every position we have, but like I said, our defensive style is not something you see every day so it makes it difficult for any team that we play.

**Q. Trey, Blake, Kentucky has a roster full of the**

MODERATOR: Questions for student-athletes.

**Q. Is it any more real now that you're here? I guess describe the last 24 hours, just sort of the process of, okay, now we know, settling in and just playing ball?**

TREY TOWNSEND: Yeah, for sure. It was great getting down here when we did. As soon as you get to the hotel you see all the March Madness logos. You see your logo on most of the walls of the hotel. Makes everything, like you said, start to feel a lot more real. But this whole group is excited, ready to compete and we can't wait to finally get on the court, but definitely starting to feel a little more real.

BLAKE LAMPMAN: Just making it try to feel like another game. Yeah. Get here a couple of days early before our last tournament and we're trying to keep it as consistent as possible. Obviously you got media and other things like that. But, yeah, it's a cool experience, and walking through here, seeing the behind the scenes of kind of what you've watched as a kid is a really cool experience for us but trying to stay locked in and be ready for Kentucky tomorrow.

**Q. Guys, Trey, can you take us through your very first meeting, interaction with Greg Kampe?**

TREY TOWNSEND: I honestly probably wouldn't remember the first one. I was probably one or two or maybe three years old. He was holding me as a baby. But my first conscious one was going to the games and watching him coach on the sideline and after the games going down and giving him a fist bump and high-five at those camps, but he's a guy I always wanted to play for



**McDonald's All-Americans, first round NBA draft picks. How much extra motivation does that give you guys to go up against guys like that?**

BLAKE LAMPMAN: Yeah. If you saw our nonconference schedule, you would see we've been playing guys like this all year. We played Illinois, Michigan State, Ohio State, Xavier. So it's not really about who we're playing. We're focused on us, and I truly think we can compete with anybody in the country and we're going to have a great test on Thursday. So I'm looking forward to it.

TREY TOWNSEND: Yeah, I just think that's where we've succeeded so much as a team is not trying to let those bright lights get too bright for us, just knowing that if we play our game we're able to compete with anyone regardless of the status they may have. We're just going to go out and out work everyone play and that's what's gotten us this far.

**Q. You guys are 8 and 1 in games that are decided by five points or less and all the time I hear you over there saying we love each other more than they do. Is that why you guys are here?**

BLAKE LAMPMAN: It's definitely a big part of why, I believe. This has been the tightest group I've been with since probably my entire life, but definitely since I got to Oakland. And we've got guys that have stayed at Oakland. Me, Trey, Chris, Osei. Guys that are older that have been through the system with Kampe and we've built a relationship off the court. I have a relationship with everybody on the team, and when we say we love each other, it's true. It's real. And in college basketball today it's hard to get something like that, especially with the portal and NIL and stuff like that. Egos get so big, and this group has been pretty consistent in just staying -- getting rid of egos and putting the team first and being we-minded.

**Q. Trey, given your family connections to Oakland and your experience there, what's it like to have a chance to play in the NCAA Tournament? What does that mean to you?**

TREY TOWNSEND: I mean this whole journey of being a part of Oakland has been just such a dream come true. Not one moment is more special to me than another. Just being able to wear this uniform, this Oakland University uniform and represent this university that I've been around my whole life that, like you said, both my parents were a part of and played basketball here, it's been such a special thing for me.

This year obviously it's been such a wild year, I've just been trying to really appreciate every single moment with

these guys. Like Blake said, this is the closest group I've been around and I'm trying not to get too ahead of myself, not think about the future because these are the greatest years of your life. My parents always told me that college would be the greatest years of my life, and they truly have. Getting this team to the tournament, that's something I've always wanted to do and to do it with these guys, I couldn't have asked for a better year so far.

**Q. With Kentucky having a lot of connections to Pittsburgh with Kyler Perry being from here and a couple of the players from here, a lot of times a smaller school would be considered the underdog and maybe the fan favorite. Do you feel like you have a chance to win this crowd over or do you feel like there's going to be a very pro-Kentucky feel to the game?**

TREY TOWNSEND: Is that for me?

MODERATOR: Trey, you can start.

TREY TOWNSEND: I mean, obviously being a 14-seed against a 3-seed like Kentucky, you're always going to be considered the underdog, but I think everyone loves a good underdog story. I think we're very capable of beating a team like this and I think that just draws to the underdog story. People believe we can do it. We all believe we can do it. Our whole staff believes we can do it. That's really all that matters when it comes down to it, is what the people in our locker room and our circle believe in and I know we all believe we can do it so we're just excited for the challenge.

BLAKE LAMPMAN: Yeah, I think we're all fully prepared that it's probably going to be an away game tomorrow, but this is kind of what we play for. We love that. We love the nonconference schedule we have that coach gives us every single year and we play big time teams at their place. No one is really coming to Oakland very often. So I'm expecting an away game and hopefully we can have a result like we did at Xavier and get a W.

**Q. Don't want to put you on the spot, but you talk about everyone loves a good underdog story. I know you guys have watched a lot of college basketball over the years before you even got to Oakland. Do you guys have a favorite underdog moment in the NCAA Tournament? Any games stand out?**

BLAKE LAMPMAN: The more recent one is -- I'm going to probably butcher his name, but Doug Edert in St. Peters. It was crazy to see how he exploded. His name was everywhere. So as far as individually. And then you gotta think back to Davidson and Steph Curry and how they went on their run. That's been all over my social media lately,

and I remember kind of watching it when I was in high school, just watching highlights and stuff like that. So I would say those two.

TREY TOWNSEND: Yeah, I mean every single upset in this tournament is a special moment. This whole tournament is such a special thing. It's hard to just pick one that tops the others, but if I just think back to my high school times and things like that, I think of Loyola Chicago's run that they had. That was the biggest one throughout my high school time, but like Blake said, St. Peters that was amazing and obviously Fairleigh Dickinson last year. It's a great time. It's March Madness.

MODERATOR: Any others questions for our student-athletes? All right. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Questions for Coach Kampe.

**Q. Greg, asked the players this, and you've talked about -- you've done a ton of radio interviews this week and you've talked about how you've changed, but with the player stuff, the player control, letting them wear their own shoes, letting them wear their different colored socks, letting them be them as opposed to all uniformity maybe years ago, what made you change that? Was that just kind of out of necessity given where the game is going?**

GREG KAMPE: Absolutely, Tony. Many people know Tom Izzo and I are really close friends and we talk all the time and he and I have discussed this on numerous occasions. Our generation of coaches was, you know, really strict rules, you know, we're a team and that's what we're teaching about the team concept and that. And Steph Curry goes out and is the MVP of the NBA finals wearing purple, green or some shoes and how many I going to sit there and tell our kids we can't do that? I think you have to change in this business, and over the 40 years there's been a lot of change. I just think the last three or four it's really, really been noticeable that you have to change if you're going to survive in this. And so one of the things that I've decided to do is come up with some non-negotiables. There are non-negotiables. There's three or four non-negotiables, and as long as I am allowing them to do other things, they're going to have to follow those non-negotiable. And they're simple ones, not being late, all the things you have to do to be successful in life.

So yeah, I've changed quite a bit, but it was out of necessity. I mean, I want to keep doing this. I wanted to keep doing this for a long time. I don't want to be that grumpy old man.

**Q. You obviously know John Calipari and Kentucky**

**quite well, but now you know that that's who you're playing. I guess what did you learn maybe about them the last 48 hours that you didn't know or anything that makes you feel even more like you got a chance?**

GREG KAMPE: Well, because of the friendship, you follow your friends, you follow those teams. I watched their LSU game. I watched a couple of preseason non league games, and I knew they're an unbelievably talented young team, but for one of the differences in his team this year is he's got a senior that's averaging, what, 20 a game? So that's probably what has solidified them as a national champion contender, and they definitely are a national champion contender, their athleticism. And then I think the other thing that's a little different for his team this year is, man, they can shoot it. Number one three-pointing shooting team in the country. So those are what keeps me up at night trying to figure out how to stop that stuff.

**Q. Coach Calipari has made no bones about the fact that you and he do have a relationship. He's always admitted that he doesn't care to play against other coaches that he's friends with, yet you seem to kind of relish this opportunity to take him on. Why is that?**

GREG KAMPE: I was just doing Westwood in there, and I think that got a little bit mis-skewed in that I made the comments that this is the best thing that we could have. It's not. It's a compliment to Big Blue Nation. It's a compliment to Kentucky. You haven't seen Oakland play at Rupp Arena. We play everywhere in the country. We haven't been there because of the friendship. But getting Kentucky in this tournament is the greatest thing for Oakland, because we cut the nets down in our league tournament. We got to stand under the confetti. We got our moment, and now this is all house money. So we come into this tournament, wouldn't you want the spotlight to play the best? The reason this is such a good matchup for us is because you're the best. Kentucky is known as the best program -- it's arguable, but many, many people -- you have the greatest fanbase in the country. There's no argument with that. Izzo and he to me are the two best coaches in the country, and we're playing at prime time, 7:00, CBS. We're not on TRU or whatever. We're on CBS at 7:00. Why wouldn't Oakland want that? This is our time to step into the spotlight and shine. Now, could we we fall on our face? Sure we could. But why would we want to run from that? Why would I want to play some team that we might have a better chance to beat, right? I want the best, and we got the best. So that's what those comments were meant to be.

**Q. This is the fourth time in 20 seasons that you've taken Oakland to the NCAA Tournament. Kentucky knew they were in. When they went into the SEC**



**tournament. You guys, though, a regular season, Horizon League championship, your fate is still determined by three days in March. As the 1-seed, do people understand how difficult it is as a Mid Major to get into the NCAA Tournament without that safety net?**

GREG KAMPE: No, they don't. I don't think administrators understand. I got a boss that does, which I'm lucky. But I don't think administrators do that. Surely fans don't. 21 of the 32 -- is it 32 leagues? 21 of the 32 First Place championship number one seeds got beat in their conference tournament. 21 of the 32. It's the hardest thing there is to do. Is it fair? A lot of people say, yeah, it's fair, because that's our championship, right? Like I said a second ago, cutting the nets down and the confetti, we got to experience that. And so that conference tournament for us is what this tournament is for the Kentuckys and Michigan States of the world.

Now, now we also have a chance to go do something special, right? We have a chance to change my players' lives. If we win tomorrow night, it will change my players' lives. In 2016 or '17, we're playing Michigan State. They're number one in the country. We've got the ball, down two with five seconds to go, and a pro that I had, K. Felder shoots a shot, gets fouled. It rolls around the rim and if it goes in, we beat the number one team in the country. Would have changed Oakland, would have changed our lives. Would have changed those players' lives. This group has another chance to do that for Oakland University and for themselves. So, yeah, it's hard to get here, but when you do, look at the opportunities that you have. This is the Holy Grail for Mid Majors, right? It is. And I've said this many times over the last week. The NCAA basketball tournament, and please don't change it, please don't change it, but it is one of the three greatest sporting events in the world. And I know you're a soccer guy. You argue the World Cup, and you're probably right. The Super Bowl and this tournament are the three greatest sporting events in the world. And Oakland and my players are a part of it and they get to cherish that for the rest of their lives.

**Q. Coach, since RMU joined the Horizon League you've gotten a chance to play in Pittsburgh at least in the region a few times, playing against Coach Cal who's from here. Can you talk about getting a chance to play on this stage in Pittsburgh?**

GREG KAMPE: Yeah, I'm a big Pittsburgh guy. I come here a lot. We used to play Pittsburgh all the time when Jaime was here and Ben. We had some great games here. I started shaking. We practiced over there today and I started shaking when I walked in that building because they beat us twice in overtime.

The baseball stadium here. I'm a big baseball guy. I've gone to every stadium in the country but four and I think it's one of the three top stadiums. So I love this area. All right. The food's good here, too. So when Robert Morris got in the league I really liked that. Andy Toole is a hell of a coach, great friend. So coming here, and then putting on top of it that Cal is from here, you know, this is his hometown, and Moon Township and all that kind of stuff. It's just kind of really neat that we have the opportunity to do this in Pittsburgh. It sure beat going to Spokane, Washington or Salt Lake City or someplace like that. We're going to have a really good contingent of Oakland fans here tomorrow, and I don't think that would have happened if we were somewhere else. So I'm really, really happy with the draw, which is another reason I was glad we got Kentucky.

**Q. Greg, with facing Calipari here with Kentucky having a couple Pittsburgh area kids and himself and Orlando Antigua having Pitt ties, you come in, like you said, playing with house money as the underdog, what's it like to feel like there's a chance you could maybe win over the crowd, even though it may be pro-Kentucky at the start? And how much do you remember of Fang Mitchell and Coppin State doing that here back in '97?**

GREG KAMPE: I think it's good and bad that they have those Kentucky kids because I've found out through the course of doing this over the years and having players going back home, sometimes that's not good. You know, sometimes they get a little bit nervous, the first shot doesn't go in, they press, which I'm hoping might happen tomorrow night a little bit, just a little. But so in 2011, maybe, we're playing Texas in the NCAA Tournament, and Kansas was in the same region, and those two schools don't like each other a lot, right? So we're playing Texas, and we have a chance to win the game, and the last five or six minutes of that game, that arena was all Oakland. It was unbelievable. You know, I mean, people that didn't even know where Oakland was was up cheering, I mean every time we scored it was crazy that the underdog in this tournament -- it's what makes this tournament so great, the underdog, everybody in those stands. Sorry. Probably my kids.

Spam. It's what makes this tournament so great. If we play well tomorrow night -- and we're capable, I'm telling you, we're capable -- and it gets down to a close game, I've gotta believe, as big as Big Blue Nation is, there's going to be a lot of people in here that they don't want to play Kentucky in the next round; they'd much rather play Oakland. So if we can do our job, we'll see that happen again like it did 12 years ago.

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

**Q. With Trey Townsend growing up in Oxford nearby, just everything he's been through, to see him kind of get rewarded with a chance of playing a tournament at the end of his career?**

GREG KAMPE: It's an unbelievable. I mean, if this was a Disney movie, the people wouldn't believe it. They wouldn't believe that this happened. If you see the pictures of him when he was little in our building at games, I mean, his mom every couple weeks, she's my dentist, too. You know. But his mom every couple weeks sends -- she finds these pictures on Facebook from when he was young and sends them.

Quick funny story. So you probably saw where his MVP trophy, the dog broke it. I don't know if everybody saw that or not. But dad's a big photography guy. He's got press passes. They were taking a picture of the dog with the net around its neck with the MVP trophy, and the dog went like that and knocked the trophy over and it broke. So I told Trey, I'm going to Tweet that. I go check with your mom, and her answer was, well, there's going to be a little bit of pain in his next visit if he Tweets that.

It's just an unbelievable story. And usually when kids of people you know come to your camp, they're not very good, right, and then you gotta tell them, well, I don't know if he's going to be able to play. And I was like, oh, my God. This is unbelievable. This kid is really good. And his brother plays soccer at Oakland, and he's a very good player. So it's been -- the greatest recruit I've ever had is his dad because we got his son 40 years later.

**Q. Coach, the other day Keith Dambrot announced he was retiring. I got a chance to talk to him, he goes, look, I'm 65. I'm just not built to do this until I'm 70. I can't do that. Look, you're in better shape than most of the guys in this room, so I'm not going to put the age thing on you, but what keeps you fresh? What keeps you engaged and not being like, I'm just ready to be done with this?**

GREG KAMPE: So Keith's a good friend. I've known him for years. He was in Michigan for a long time. And he's a hell of a coach. And I texted him. I did not know -- I texted him the moment they won -- I was watching. The moment they won, because he had text me when we won ours. I texted him that moment, attaboy, and then I was surprised by that. But for me, there's nothing else I want to do. I want to do this another 10, 12 years. I play a lot of golf, and I don't think if I could play every day I would like it as much as I do when I have to sneak out to get it and I know I probably shouldn't be out there.

But there's -- being around those kids and watching them grow and develop is what my job is supposed to be, and it's what it's always been at in Oakland. I just, in the lobby on my way over here, a young man who's all gray walked up to me to shake my hand and I looked at him and he played on my first team 40 years ago. Those are the things that motivate me. And as long as Oakland wants me, I'm going to do this. And I hope to get another 10 or 12 years because I love it and there's nothing else in my life that I would want to do but this.

**Q. As we've talked about before, fourth time in the NCAA Tournament, and I've asked you this in the past, but we're here again, so I'll ask you it again. You took this program from Division II into Division I. Now you've been in the NCAA Tournament four times. You've played Carolina, you've played Pitt, Texas, now Kentucky. Would you believe that your first day on campus at Oakland University? If someone came there and told you this is what's going to happen, would you have believed that?**

GREG KAMPE: No. Absolutely not, and would I believe I'd still be here in 40 years? No. You know, I'm just lucky. I'm lucky. I really am lucky. I've just -- everything has fallen in the right -- that doesn't mean we haven't had bad times and hard times and things like that. We have. I mean I've had five NBA players in the last 15 years and three of those NBA players didn't get to the NCAA Tournament. You coach an NBA player at the Mid Major level and you don't get to the NCAA Tournament, you gotta question yourself in that. We went four straight years in our conference tournament where we lost a single possession game that kept us out. And those teams were good.

We were number one seed and lost and then we went to Clemson and won in an NIT game and that team was good enough to win NCAA Tournament games, but we didn't get the chance. And that's what I'm stressing to my guys this week. You've earned it and you've got the chance to change your lives, to do something special. So yeah, I get where you're coming from with the question, but it's really, I'm just fortunate. That's it. I'm fortunate to be here today. I'm fortunate to have these great kids around me, and I've been very lucky.

**Q. Greg, you mentioned you don't want to see the tournament change, expand, whatnot. I'm sure there are a lot of people that like hearing you say that, but why when that theoretically could make it easier for you to get to this tournament?**

GREG KAMPE: Oh, it's not. It's not. The only reason I would be for expansion to the 96 or whatever they're

talking is to keep us in it. If that's the only way we're going to stay in it, then I'm for it.

What I'm saying is don't keep us out. You know, we're what make this tournament, the little guy. Why does everybody love "Hoosiers," right, the greatest movie, why? Because the little guy. And today is the anniversary the day that Jimmy Chitwood in real life made the shot. I don't know if you knew that, but it is. Today is the anniversary where Milan beat South Bend 33 to 31 or whatever the score was and Jimmy made the shot that turned into the movie "Hoosiers." That's what college basketball is. That's why it's one of the three greatest sporting events in the world. And just don't let the Jimmy -- Trey Townsend, Jack Gohlke, Blake -- they could be Jimmy Chitwood tomorrow not. Don't take that away from us.

**Q. Coach, congratulations on being here in Pittsburgh. If you beat Kentucky tomorrow night, is that going to be your biggest win ever in your career?**

GREG KAMPE: I think it will be the biggest win in Oakland's history. I don't like talking about something that might happen. I'd rather talk about the things that have happened. I think because of the stage and because of what I answered your question earlier, I think it would have to be. But me, personally, my dad played football at Michigan. My brother played football at Michigan. The first word I ever said in my life was Michigan, which the famous broadcaster from Michigan used to call them. My dad taught me that for some reason. I grew up in Michigan's football stadium. So for me, personally, when we beat Michigan, that was the greatest -- I don't know if that would ever get matched, because of what that meant to me in my life growing up and what the University of Michigan was to our family and that. So for me, personally, that probably will be the most -- the proudest moment of my life because I got to call my parents and brag a little bit.

But for the university and for these players, yeah, if we could do it, yes.

MODERATOR: Thanks, Coach. Appreciate it.