

# NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: Second Round - Oregon vs Creighton

Friday, March 22, 2024

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

PPG Paints Arena

## Oregon Ducks

## Jermaine Couisnard

## Jackson Shelstad

## Coach Dana Altman

### Media Conference



talk to her. So that was kind of cool.

**Q. Jermaine, kind of going off that, how many games had she been able to go to before last night?**

JERMAINE COUISNARD: None. She don't like flying. This is the only closest place she can get to. So they just drove. And I told her, like, one day you're going to have to do something, drug you up, do something to get you to fly. She wouldn't do it. So it was cool. Just my first time in March Madness and her first game. So that was dope to me.

**Q. How often do you get to talk to her after games when she's at home?**

JERMAINE COUISNARD: Every day. Every game. Or if it's not that night because we play in a different time zone in Oregon, so she'll probably call me the next morning, but after every game, good or bad, I'll talk to her for sure.

**Q. Jackson, last night was the latest instance of you hitting some free throws late in the game to help kind of put it away. You had some instances of that last week. Starting off as a freshmen, what's it like being on this stage and getting comfortable in this atmosphere and also being put in those situations a few times the last couple of weeks and being able to come through for your team as a young guy?**

JACKSON SHELSTAD: Definitely something I've been getting used to. But I just try to keep my confidence, and my teammates and coaches do a really good job instilling that in me every day at practice and in the game. So when I'm out there I don't feel, like, shaky really because I know they trust me and I just gotta deliver.

**Q. I know you guys would have been 10, 12 years old when your coach was at Creighton and then came to Oregon. But have you guys gotten an idea from him or social media or anything like that about how much this game means to him, maybe not revenge, but just the personal connections that he has to playing Creighton?**

MODERATOR: Questions for the student-athletes?

**Q. Jermaine, what was the feeling like yesterday, obviously being that efficient, having that kind of performance? And are you a kind of player that kind of goes through hot stretches, cold stretches? What do you do to try to keep what happened yesterday going moving forward?**

JERMAINE COUISNARD: It's just how the game flows. I feel like my teammates just put trust into me. I feel like it depends how the game is going. I feel like any one of us guys can get it going. I feel like yesterday was just my night. It's just not about me. It's about my team, so whatever they need for me to do for us to get the win, that's what I'm going to do.

**Q. Jermaine, is grandma coming back?**

JERMAINE COUISNARD: Yeah. Yeah.

**Q. Good luck charm?**

JERMAINE COUISNARD: Yeah.

**Q. What was her reaction to how it went for you yesterday?**

JERMAINE COUISNARD: It was amazing. I got to see her -- well, I really didn't see her before the game. I just know that I put her on my ticket list just in case she came because my dad just told me. I kind of heard her when I was warming up, but I was so locked in, I didn't really pay attention. So after the game, I was able to sit down and



JERMAINE COUISNARD: He gave us a little heads up what Creighton can mean to him so I kind of feel him. I know he did more years at Creighton, right, than he did at Oregon. So of course he have feelings for them. Like he said, he still watches their games to this day. So I feel like it just means more. Just like when it's time to battle, it's time to battle. So I feel like of course he's going to want to win, of course. I feel like that's something that we gotta install just to help him be at peace about winning tomorrow for him.

JACKSON SHELSTAD: For sure, obviously this game is going to mean a lot to him. He's there for a long time, and I think he still has a lot of ties with Creighton. I know his family still lives out there. So they probably have a lot of people, like family and friends out here for this game, but we just want to get the win for him and for our team, just move on.

**Q. Jackson, as a facilitator offensively, when a guy is having a night like Jermaine was having last night, how does that impact you at all in the way you're distributing the ball, helping run the team, anything like that?**

JACKSON SHELSTAD: I mean it's easy for me because I just gotta get him the ball and get out the way. But he got really hot, and he's super competitive, and when somebody said something on the other team, you know, us on our team, we know not to say anything to Jermaine because that's what gets him going. So that was a bad idea. So after that, he started getting -- he got it rolling. So we just got him the ball, and he was hot. So he was, yeah, he carried us.

**Q. Jermaine, after you guys finished yesterday, after you got your 40, Oakland had a pretty crazy upset of Kentucky. One of their players, Jack Gohlke, super insane performance, 10 three-pointers, finished one short of the NCAA Tournament all time record. I'm wondering, this has taken social media college basketball by storm. Did you see any of that? Have you heard any of that?**

JERMAINE COUISNARD: Yeah. I watched the game last night because of course the guy that recruited me to come to Oregon, he's coach at Kentucky now. So that was the game I was kind of like watching just to see. But it was amazing seeing him shoot the ball like that yesterday.

**Q. Are you guys, you in particular, do you just get so locked in --**

JERMAINE COUISNARD: Yeah.

**Q. -- that you're really only able to focus on yourself or can you take a little step back, watch a crazy individual performance like that and just appreciate it?**

JERMAINE COUISNARD: Of course, I'm a basketball guy. It don't matter what type of basketball it is, women's, men's. I like watching basketball. So it was like -- it was just a kind of crazy game just seeing a guy just like shoot the ball that well against a high competitive team like that and just him not backing down, just him showing his competitive spirit just being the underdog. And that's kind of our story here. So it was kind of cool to see him.

**Q. Jermaine, what's the keys that you're looking at for the pick and roll with you and Dante? It's such a basic play that you're taught at second grade. And yet you guys have been so effective with it this season that few teams can stop it. What are the things you're looking for to make that play effective?**

JERMAINE COUISNARD: Just the defenders have to be on it, stop me from getting downhill, which I'm great at, and if they help, I got these two guys that's around me to shoot the ball. So it's kind of like -- and then if I dish it off to Dante, which he really don't kind of miss. He kind of ended his streak yesterday with missing a couple of shots that I was mad at him. Even though he had a great game still missed a few shots but I feel like he could have went 12 for 12 again. It's a kind of hard thing to guard when there's two players like that and you got players surrounding you that can really shoot the ball.

**Q. For both you guys, Coach McDermott from Creighton called you guys grossly under seeded, which is a compliment. Now that you're healthier and Dante is playing the way he is, is this the version of the Ducks you thought you would be?**

JERMAINE COUISNARD: Like you said, there's three players that's still sitting, particularly four. They're still sitting down on the bench. So we're not even at full strength, which we could have been in the Top-25 easy in the country this year. I just feel like our players just took on the role that we had and just embraced it, just embraced that we had to do more for us to get where we wanted to go. I feel we did a great job doing that this year and just competing. That's all it is.

JACKSON SHELSTAD: For sure. I think everybody is just kind of buying in at the right time and everybody's just kind of figured out the right role towards the end of the season. We had to come into the PAC-12 and win three games in a row. And we've been playing with more hunger, it seems like, recently coming out with an edge, like chip on our shoulder. So we just gotta keep playing the same way.

**Q. Jermaine, you've had big moments, this team's had big moments and you've always been quick to get past that and immediately focus on the next game at hand. I'm curious just at what point last night did you stop celebrating the 40 point game and turn your attention to tomorrow's game?**

JERMAINE COUISNARD: It's kind of hard, just because you see yourself everywhere, just strolling -- any social media, but it's just like coach said, once he handed us out the scouting reports it was time to lock in on our next opponent and that's what I'm focused on. The game that's past, that was a wonderful game for us, but I feel like we're not done yet, we got more to accomplish.

**Q. I'm doing a story on hype guys. The handshake guys at the end of the lineup. I talked to Gabe on Wednesday, I think. What kind of energy does that bring to the team to put guys in that role, especially for somebody like him who's obviously a walk-on? I guess it's a gig that's sort of handed down, those guys move on. How important are guys like that to have as part of your group and what do they bring to the team collective?**

JERMAINE COUISNARD: Like I said, every basketball team got locker room guys. You got some guys that don't even play, but they are great teammates. He's one of those guys, you see him, he work out like he's a starter like he plays 40 minutes, 30 minutes every day. He stays in shape, he lifts every day. He does the right thing to be a right teammate. Never down on himself. No matter what he never brings his personal problems. Like I told him every day, everybody on this team played a big part of why we got here. So even if that's from just clapping or just encouraging players, I feel like he played a big role in that. He's a good player. So I feel like he played a big key to our team.

JACKSON SHELSTAD: Yeah, for sure. Everybody on this team is very important and has a role and Gabe is one of our most vocal guys. He's a senior. He's been in the program for a long time, longer than anybody, him and Dante in this program. So I mean, he knows the ins and outs and everything we do here. So he's a great leader, one of our great leaders. And we just love having him.

**Q. Jackson, you've been thrust into a role where you had to play a bunch of minutes, and you've had to be really good for this team as a freshmen. Dana earlier this year said they were hoping you'd maybe grow into that role and they weren't just going to give it to you and they've had to. I'm curious how you've been able to manage the high pressure, the high stress? You**

**always seem pretty calm and collected on the floor. Where does that come from? How have you been able to develop that as a freshmen?**

JACKSON SHELSTAD: I mean I don't really look at it like it's pressure or big moments. I just kind of go out there and play. It's what I've been doing my whole life, playing basketball. So it's not new, just at a higher stage now. But I just trust my work, but also my teammates and coaches, I trust them, and we all trust each other. So it just makes it easier when I'm out there playing. So, yeah, I don't really get like shaky in the moment.

MODERATOR: Questions for student-athletes? Any questions for Coach Altman?

**Q. Dana, is your seat wet, because McDermott left something for you there?**

DANA ALTMAN: What's that? (Laughs). No idea what you're talking about.

**Q. He spilled water all over there.**

DANA ALTMAN: Oh, is that right?

**Q. He said to make sure you sat there.**

DANA ALTMAN: Well, I think it's dried off. I don't know.

**Q. He had a lot of great things to say about you, obviously, and talked about a golf game years ago when you were recruiting his son, et cetera. Can you just talk about the relationship that you've had with him over the years?**

DANA ALTMAN: He's a really good guy, really good basketball coach, and a lot better golfer than I am. So, no, I love the job he's done at Creighton. It's so good to watch from afar, and like I said yesterday, it might be my ego or whatever, but I still feel a part of it. I still cheer for them. My family is all back in Nebraska. And Oregon might be 1, but Creighton is 1A. And he's been so good to my dad, my brother. So, no, I think the world of he and his family, and he's done a tremendous job, and again, I'm sure he'd say the same thing. This game is not about us, it's about our players, and they don't care that I was there. My players don't care that I was there. They just want to win. So hopefully our guys will be ready, and we'll play well. But Creighton is a really good basketball team and really do a lot of great things, both offensively and defensively, and we're going to have to bring our A game. There's no doubt about it.

**Q. Dana, what do you remember about that golf game**

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**with Greg? He said that he ended up on the wrong side of a cash exchange, that he did not win that one.**

DANA ALTMAN: Well, I don't remember it that way. I do remember he left his 6-iron in my SUV. But, no, it was out at Omaha Country Club, and Bruce Rasmussen, the AD, put it together, and it was a lot of fun. But like I said, I think I did clip him that day, but I've seen his game since then. I mean, that was 15 years ago. And he's a lot better player than I am. I'm awful and he's pretty good.

**Q. Now that you've had a chance to watch them on film, prepare for them a little bit, what stands out about this team and the match-up that it presents?**

DANA ALTMAN: Well, I know one thing. I wish I wouldn't have watched them at midnight last night because it was a little hard to fall asleep after that. Watched the Drake game, and as soon as that was over started watching Creighton. And I tell you, they're a scary offensive team. They shoot -- we're just not used to playing a team that takes 29 threes a game being half their shots. So it's a different prep in a very short time. They just play so differently than anybody we've played. Maybe Alabama, but that was so long ago, that was in November, and we didn't have half our team then.

So it'll be a different experience for our guys. You really gotta stay focused because they can hit you with three threes really quick and make a nine, 12-point run very, very quickly. Again, they're just -- they're different than what we face. I think the teams in the Big East may be a little used to playing them, but when they get outside the conference, a team that takes that many threes we just haven't faced.

**Q. Dana, what do you think about Dante's match up against the three time Big East Defensive Player of the Year?**

DANA ALTMAN: Ryan is tremendous defensive player. They play that deep drop coverage, and he just protects the paint, and he's long, and he's got unbelievable timing. He just, really -- instincts are good, a little bit like a couple of guys we used to have, Boucher and Bell that played around the rim and just had exceptional timing on blocking shots. And at three a game, he's a presence in there. And not only the shots that he blocks, but he alters so many.

So there's a reason he was three-time Defensive Player of the Year. He's very, very good and in the Big East there's a lot of good defensive players, so it tells you how much the coaches think of him. But he is a presence back there, but Dante's been -- as soon as he got himself in shape, you know, he didn't play for us until mid January, and so he struggled to get himself in shape a little bit, but he's kind of

worked himself into shape in games, having to play 35 to 40 minutes a game. He's kind of worked himself into shape. So it'll be a good match-up. Dante will compete, Ryan will compete. Those two, that match-up is a big part of the game.

**Q. If you don't mind, this is probably going to take you in a couple different directions, but Bruce Rasmussen here in Pittsburgh. I'm just curious what it means to you just to have him here, even though he's probably ready for Creighton, but I mean just to have him here and your relationship with him, and also Kevin McKenna, still on your staff, was obviously a big part of helping you build Creighton into what it's become. I'm curious about the dynamics of those relationships and what those two gentlemen mean to you?**

DANA ALTMAN: Well, Bruce and I have known each other for 30 years. We helped raise each other's kids. We traveled together, played a lot of golf together. Creighton wouldn't be what Creighton is today without Bruce. I mean, all the buildings that were built, you know, all the things that have happened for Creighton Athletics, I feel Bruce had the biggest part of that. You know, he built that, and did a great job. So, again, we are good friends. We remain good friends. I know he'll be cheering for the Bluejays tomorrow, but a guy that worked at Creighton for 40 some years and just did a tremendous job. And Kevin -- that's one of the reasons we still have such great feelings about Creighton is our relationship with Greg and Bruce. But Kevin is a Creighton grad, you know, and propelled him to the NBA, you know, his time at Creighton. So Kevin's got -- he's a Creighton grad. My son graduated from there. So there are a lot of ties.

But tomorrow, all I care about is my players now, you know. It's tough to play Creighton. I wish the committee wouldn't have done that. There are other threes we could have played. But they did and so we'll have to play a game. But my focus is on Dante and Jermaine and the fellows I got now. And I'm sure Creighton feels the same way.

**Q. Dana, when you spoke with us the other day ahead of South Carolina, if memory serves, I think you told us you saw some shades of UCLA. In there, comparatively. I'm curious, anyone in the PAC-12 that you see similarity wise to Creighton that's maybe aided in prep?**

DANA ALTMAN: Not really. As I mentioned, the 29 threes, we don't face anybody that is that three-ball dominated. The most explosive offensive team in our league is Arizona, but they play a lot differently. But they can get it going from three. When we played them at their

place, they got it going from three and gave us fits. And if Creighton starts hitting them like they did that day, they'll give us fits, also. But we don't really have an offensive team or a defensive team that plays like them, and that's why part of the prep is different and difficult, because putting four shooters out there, five when Ryan is hitting them from the top and guy I bring in off the bench can shoot it. So, yeah, it's a different prep, different team.

**Q. Dana, I don't know how many teams in college basketball this season have three guys that average four or more assists like Creighton does. How much does that play making ability on their roster lead to their offense being one of the best in the country?**

DANA ALTMAN: Well, one of the most underrated skills in basketball is passing and catching the ball, and they got a lot of good passers and they catch the ball and move it really well, and they're ready to shoot it when they do pass it. But they're a very good passing and catching team. And that creates a lot of problems. And they've got the floor spread so much because all of them can shoot it that it creates gaps. It's hard to help and hard to get in those gaps because if you leave those shooters too much, they've got an open look.

And then Alexander is so good at getting in the seams and making plays. So there's a reason they're a three seed and ranked in the Top 10 or wherever they're ranked. They make plays for each other. And the other thing, you know, you look at their stats, they've started the same guys all year. I looked at that, 33 starts, 33 starts. They're used to playing with each other, and they got those three guys back from a year ago, their core. And they're just -- they make plays for each other, and again, they've got their six-man, seven-man rotation. They've all been there all year, they've all played all the games, and they do a great job of knowing where each other is going to be and they run their stuff, and it's really good stuff.

So, no, offensively they're a handful. Defensively their numbers are good, and that's why I say we're going to have to bring our A game. We're going to have to play very well.

**Q. Dana, this match-up obviously allows for a little bit of nostalgia looking back. When you took over here, what was the culture you were trying to instill with the group that you inherited and when that 2011 CBI match-up and that three-game series happened, how much did that challenge after a year some of that culture, because here you're playing your former team and your former players are playing you and all that. So after that year of building, how did that CBI match-up play into things?**

DANA ALTMAN: Well, all I remember really is they had so many of the players that had left, Kenny Lawson and Ethan Wragge and Gregory and Antoine, Josh Jones, those guys had all played for me the year before. So that's tough playing those guys. And I think the word culture is overused. There were certain things we were trying to establish that we wanted as a coaching staff. But I think the personality of your team changes year to year. There's certain needs that your team has that as a coaching staff you try to provide. There's certain things you talk to your leaders about that you think are really important in competing and the parts of the game that you want to emphasize because you can't emphasize everything. Creighton does a job of emphasizing three-point shooting, not fouling. They don't create a lot of turnovers, just pack it in and let Ryan block shots. And that'll change once Ryan graduates. They'll change a little bit. So there's a certain way that every coach wants to play the game. There's certain things, work ethic wise, competitiveness wise, that you want to instill in your program. And getting your team to believe those things when you got a lot of guys coming in every year sometimes takes a while. Sharing the basketball, I mean everybody that they trust, their parents and their AAU coach and everybody they know has told them to shoot it every time they get it. And so, you know, you just -- you go through those ups and downs every year. You try to get guys to believe the same things you believe. And back in '10, '11, we were just trying to get guys to compete the way we wanted to play. We had a lot of guys who we were pressing and doing some of the things we liked to do.

And so long time ago, James, but I can remember the first year we were just trying to get the guys to trust me a little bit because here's a guy from Nebraska coming and hadn't been in the PAC-12 or anything. So it wasn't like I was coming in as their first choice. I said I think I was maybe 38 or 39 on the list. So the first year was trying to get them to trust me and trying to get them to compete at the level we wanted to and tried to lay a foundation that we were going to play a certain way. But it was a long time ago, but it was a tough -- I remember playing the games. I hated it, because I -- Kenny Lawson and Josh and those guys, Antoine, you know, those guys that I still stay in touch with. I still get texts from -- when we win a game at Oregon, I still get texts from my Creighton guys.

So that was a tough series.

**Q. And following with that, a dozen plus teams pass up on playing in the NIT, let alone the CBI these days. What did a player like Joevan Catron mean to you where you inherit that guy and that's where you ended up in year one, but that was about competing. You**

**rattled off all these names of guys from here and there who were your guys. When you're trying to instill a culture like that, would that player even exist today?**

DANA ALTMAN: Joevan was unbelievable. We wouldn't have won any games that first year. He and EJ and Garrett Sim were unbelievable. I remember the meeting. We played well in the Pac-10 Tournament at that time. We beat Arizona State in the first round, beat UCLA in the second round and gave Washington a good game in the semis. So it was Sunday afternoon and we knew we weren't getting in the NIT and the CBI contacted us and we had a team meeting and I said what do you guys think? I said I need at least seven of you that want to play. I want to play. I need at least seven that will play. And a couple of guys, it was spring break, I remember, and a couple guys had made plans, and they didn't want to play, and Joevan looked at them and stood up and said if I got a chance to put Oregon across my chance one more time, I'm doing it. And that ended the discussion, everybody, okay, he's going. But it was really emotional. He just stood up and said, hey, if I got a chance to put Oregon across my chest one more time, I don't care where it is, I'm doing it. And that's when I knew one guy believed. And, you know, the rest of the guys, EJ and Garrett, they wanted to play, too. Don't get me wrong. But someone had to stand up and say it, and Joevan did. And he's still in town and he still follows our program and I still get texts from him all the time about keeping the guys going. When we don't play well I get a text from him, too, what the heck's going on?

But you want your former players to be engaged like that. So but, no, he meant the world to us that first year, no doubt.

**Q. Dana, just wondering if you've met Jermaine's grandma yet and are you going to make sure that she's around for the ride as long as it lasts?**

DANA ALTMAN: No. I met her last night and I told her, where the heck have you been? She doesn't like to fly, and if I'd have known that, we'd have had the bus pick her up in Chicago and drive her all the way out to Eugene. No, I did meet her last night. And you know, that's one of the great things that you get to see. Jermaine was there with aunts and uncles and dad and mom and grandma. There's a whole table of them enjoying dinner. And, you know, and grandma had a big smile. So that was one of the great things you get to see, and that's a night he'll never forget, his grandma and mom and family will never forget. So, but yeah, if I'd have known that result was coming, we could have got her to the games a lot quicker.

**Q. I actually have two. One's light though. Antoine**

**after you guys got the win yesterday tweeted out that he's got a lot of love for you but still bitter about the over and back violation. I'm wondering how many times has he brought that up to you over the years since it went down?**

DANA ALTMAN: Oh, not much. There for a couple years they were upset about it. But time kind of wore off. But, no, Antoine, played a lot for me as a freshmen and did a great job for Greg. And he's in coaching now. So it's kind of exciting to see him get his career started and try to get going.

**Q. A basketball one, if you don't mind. Kind of the origin of your belief in the match-up zone, when you went to it. Ever since Kyle and Rodney were at the tip of your press, has kind of been your base. What intrigued you about it and why has it been a staple of what you do defensively do you think?**

DANA ALTMAN: Well, I mentioned when we went to Creighton, we were not very good. And so we felt like we had to play differently than all the other teams in the league. And nobody pressed and nobody was playing that way. So we couldn't keep up with Illinois State, Bradley, those programs were really good. And we knew we couldn't match them just playing man-to-man, playing straight up. So we went to some presses and some zones to just throw them a curve. You know, our fastball wasn't good enough. Fellas -- a lot of guys can hit the fastball. Some can't hit the curve. So we've gotta have some different pitches.

And I just feel like it gives us something else. And right now when our numbers aren't quite the same, chasing somebody around in our press or even man-to-man for 40 minutes, you know, when you're trying to play guys 38 minutes, is pretty tough. And so we've changed some things up and tried to use the zone a little bit. Tomorrow will be tough. When they can spread the floor with all those shooters, it's usually convenient if one or two guys can't shoot it, then you can get in the lanes a little bit more and crowd things up, but when you got a team that can spread the floor like them, I don't know how much zone we'll be able to play.

**Q. Dana, the pick and roll has been such a huge play for you guys offensively, yet it's one of the most basic plays in basketball, down to the youth level. Why has it been so effective to you when it's such a common practice in this sport?**

DANA ALTMAN: Well, a lot of times you get away with illegal picks, you know. And so I'm always complaining about that on the defensive end, but on the offensive end

it's part of it. But, no, I mean, if you have guys that can spread the floor and you got a guy that can make good decisions, it's tough to guard. If you extend your defense and try to double or hedge it hard and you got a good play maker, good passer, he can make plays. Creighton has got Ryan to go to the rim, and they can throw it up to him any time, which is going to make it very difficult. And our pick and roll offense got a lot better when we had Dante to throw it up to.

So it's -- all the guys want to do it because that's all they see in the NBA, and I'd like them to be a little bit more concerned about their passing and catching and making some better cuts, but it's such a big part of the NBA that guys want to do it, guys want to work on it. And it is hard to guard. You know, you get a good guard that can break a defense down and you got a guy that you can throw it to the goal to, it's a very tough defensive assignment.

MODERATOR: Thanks, Coach.

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