

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

Saturday, March 23, 2024

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

PPG Paints Arena

**Creighton Bluejays**

**Coach Greg McDermott**

**Ryan Kalkbrenner**

**Trey Alexander**

**Baylor Scheierman**

**Steven Ashworth**

Media Conference

Creighton - 86, Oregon - 73

MODERATOR: Now we'll start with an opening statement from Creighton's head coach, Greg McDermott.

GREG McDERMOTT: As I told the team, epic game. Not sure I've been part of one quite like it in 35 years, and obviously Oregon has had a hell of a year. What Dana has done to navigate all the injuries and get the team to this point where, you know, they're a point away from advancing into the Sweet 16. It was anybody's game. Baylor made two veteran, veteran plays at the end of regulation, recognizing in transition down four, just get downhill, put your head down. Then we executed the press and got it in the guys' hands, we wanted it to be and we got the foul right away. And Baylor works on that little loader mid fade away all the time and he knocks it down to get it to overtime. And then to regroup after the big shot that Cousnard hit, that was a tough shot. Baylor was right there to tie it at 71, to regroup and get ourselves ready for the second over time. Really proud of our guys. They've stuck with each other all year, and these four have been a rock. They've been absolutely a joy to coach. They don't care who gets the credit. They share the basketball. They play in an unselfish way. And I can't say enough about Jasen Green and his impact on the game. He wasn't playing a lot, coming off an injury that he had, but he stayed ready, and he kept working. And whether he was on the scout team or playing a little off the bench, he was always willing to do whatever he had to do to help the



team. So I couldn't be more proud of him and the impact that he had in this game. He deserved a night like this for how selfless he's been and his approach to this team.

MODERATOR: Questions for student-athletes.

**Q. Baylor, just what was going through your mind at the end of the game? You're down four, your season is on the line. What was going through your head?**

BAYLOR SCHEIERMAN: Like Mac said, we were able to make him take a tough shot and I got the rebound quick and I knew we had some numbers. And like Mac said, we were down four and so wasn't going to be able to get it all back at once and there was time left on the clock. So just decided to try to get downhill, get a foul and go to the free throw line.

And then the second play, we do have a play for a three, and they kind of took away the first option and Kalk came and set a great ball screen and then rolled and sealed his guy. And like Mac said, that's a shot that I work on a lot. And the guys had the confidence in me to give me the ball there at the end. And so did the coaches and I'm just happy I could deliver for them.

**Q. Greg, Dante's free throws with about 34 seconds left in the second OT period were the first and only baskets that Oregon managed. You outscored them 15 to 2 in that final crucial five-minute second OT. How were you able to limit them offensively and just dominate that critical stretch?**

GREG McDERMOTT: Switched our ball screen coverage later in the end of regulation and into the overtimes. So we were a little bit more aggressive. Tried to make Cousnard give it up. We don't do it a lot but we practice it a fair amount, and our guys executed it when we needed to. He was on a roll and he was killing us, and I think that adjustment and their execution was able to knock them out of the rhythm they were in offensively.

**Q. Ryan, you were going against a dominant center today who finished with 20 and 20. Can you speak on that performance against him and how challenging**



**that was?**

RYAN KALKBRENNER: Yeah. He obviously is a really, really good player. Tried to make things tough on him a little bit when he caught it in the post. But I think where he got us most is I'm going over to block a shot and he's going in and getting the rebound. That's just a tough situation for our guards to be in because he's so big. So credit to him for putting himself in position getting those rebounds and put-backs. But I think when he had the ball on the block and back-down situations, I let him get a few easy ones but for the most part did a solid job. Yeah, this time of year, just survive and advance. If a guy has a good performance on you and you still get the win, just move on to the next one.

**Q. Steven, what allowed you to get three more there in the overtime periods and how much did Shelstad being out allow -- did it compromise their defense at all and allow you to get open more?**

STEVEN ASHWORTH: Yeah. I think with him being out it could have potentially offered up a few more looks. He did a really good job understanding his role in the scout. But really later in the second half and into the over time, Trey and Baylor did a really good job of getting penetration into the middle and really kicking the ball out and I was able to lose my man a few times, and the shot went in. A few of them didn't, but at the same time just had to keep shooting, and luckily a few of them dropped.

**Q. Trey, couldn't help but notice that you guys were really loose going into the second overtime. You were looking at your crowd, you're laughing. It's like a tight, tense game and you guys just seemed like you were having fun. Why was that the approach to the second overtime?**

TREY ALEXANDER: It's what it's meant to be, is for us to be in this situation. We know that. Me and my teammates always try to find the fun in everything. So this situation we kind of live for. It's the fun of the game, and I think that for me, even though my shots weren't falling, I knew that Baylor was going to step up, I knew Steven was going to step up. So I tried to do whatever I could to get those guys in situations to be successful. It was a great team win. We had some big plays down the stretch from different guys and I think that's what this team is all about is having every man step up in a different situation.

We just knew that we were ready for the second OT. We do this all the time in situations in practice. So we were ready. We knew we were probably more winded than them and we felt like they were walking the ball up the court and things like that and they were still able to push it

going into the second OT. So we were just still trying to play our game.

**Q. Ryan, you don't shoot a whole lot of threes. You nailed a pretty big one in that second OT. Can you break down that play, that sequence? What did you see out there that made you decide to toss that one up from deep?**

RYAN KALKBRENNER: Well, Mac told me to make 100 after practice and 100 before practice, the two practices we had before we came here. So that helped prepare me. But, no, Mac's always giving me the green light. I work on that shot a lot, even though I don't shoot it a ton during the game, I got confidence in myself to take that shot. And I know that's probably the number one shot Mac wanted on that possession. (Laughs). But, no, I just work on it, so I'm confident in taking that whenever it's a close game. Saw I had a little bit of space and let it fly.

**Q. Guys, you were 30 seconds away in regulation from having your season ended. What does it feel like to now know that you'll be playing next week in Detroit?**

TREY ALEXANDER: Yeah, it's a great feeling. I know I speak for everybody up here. We love this group of guys. We love rocking and rolling together. We love everything that comes with the road trips and us just being able to have another week with each other. So we're going to cherish them. We're going to try to stay in the moment and just continue to love each other and continue to play at a level that we feel like we can play at. And from there we'll just kind of let the dominoes fall where they do.

**Q. Jasen was like baby Rodman out there. What did you think of his performance the way he came out and started crashing the glass, drawing fouls, and obviously your reaction to just the monster dunk in overtime?**

BAYLOR SCHEIERMAN: Like Coach said, he's been a great teammate all year, even though he got that injury at the worst time and it kind of derailed some of his playing time early, but he stuck with it and did whatever we asked him to do, and for him to have that moment on that stage, like Trey said, we're so happy for one another when one of us makes a great play. And for Jasen to make that put back dunk there at the end and a bunch of other plays that he made, it's just great to see. And all of us are really proud of him. And like I said, he deserves that.

MODERATOR: Thank you. Questions for coach McDermott.

**Q. Greg, two-parter. Have you ever seen a duo do**

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**what Cousnard and Dante did in that they never left the floor in the second half in overtime and they scored all 39 of their points? The second part of it, when that could discourage a team, how did your team show the medal and your players show the medal to not let that be discouraging when two guys are having that kind of performance?**

GREG McDERMOTT: I've had three guys play 50 minutes so I've seen it a lot on our roster being out there a lot. Cousnard was terrific. He got 32, but it was on 33 shots. And I felt like, to Ryan's point, Dante is so physical on the back side on the rebounds when we come with help. We just didn't have an answer for him to try to get him off.

But they're two terrific players. We knew they were going to be hard to stop, and fortunately we made one more play than they did. But there was a lot of big plays by both teams, and Cousnard certainly made a bunch of them, as did Dante. But we had our fair share as well.

**Q. How much was it to limit everybody else besides Dante and Cousnard, what they could do, because they didn't get much help from the other guys?**

GREG McDERMOTT: Not many other guys took shots. But we had a plan for personnel. Some guys were going under, some guys were going over. And for the most part, we followed that plan. I thought we made some mistakes on Cousnard the first half in particular and to Kalkbrenner's point, he got caught a couple times with Dante where he got -- Dante was able to get an angle and when he gets an angle, it's over. But some of the shots he made over him. That's two really good big guys going at it and Ryan made a couple on the block and Dante made a few on the block that are really hard plays but they look easy because those two are so talented.

**Q. Kind of asked the guys this about coming out loose in the second overtime. Looked like they were having fun before the thing got tipped up. Before winning the second overtime, you and Dana looked at each other in disbelief. What was it like to coach that game even though it was really stressful?**

GREG McDERMOTT: We caught each other's eye at that point. It was just an incredible game. Baylor making the big plays at the end of regulation and Jermaine making the play at the end of the first overtime to send it to second overtime. And Trey gets a great look on the baseline after he fumbled it. He makes that shot 19 out of 20 times. But he misses it. So I think we were both in disbelief about what was transpiring in front of our eyes.

I know I'm really proud of our team for the way they

competed and I'm pretty certain Dana feels the same.

**Q. Coach, this is your third Sweet 16 appearance now in the last four years. What is it about this group that is special and makes them different from the previous ones?**

GREG McDERMOTT: I mean they're all special in their own way. Sometimes in sport, the hardest thing to do is what you're expected to do, and last year's group had huge preseason expectations on them, and we went through a terrible stretch where we lost six in a row and we were able to kind of rebound from it and get ourselves back in the tournament and get to the Elite Eight. This group has had that on their shoulders from the start. And when Trey and Kalk made the decision to come back after going through the draft process and Baylor deciding to come back for his fifth year, they had this in mind. This is what they were shooting for is to get back and have another opportunity to try to get to another Elite Eight. And we put ourselves in that position.

This team has just been -- and I've said it before to our local media. They've been an absolute joy to coach. And what you saw going into that second overtime, them being loose and them having fun, they love the game. They love each other. It's obvious when you watch them interact on or off the basketball floor. They are the first ones to celebrate their teammates' success and they're the first one to rally to a teammate when he makes a play that he didn't like. And it's just been an absolute blast to be part of.

Selfishly, I'm obviously excited that I get to coach them at least another week.

**Q. Greg, we spent the last two days asking a lot about you and Dana and this matchup. How does it feel to get this one? Does this make up for the over and back and with them joining the BIG TEN and going to Nebraska every other year, I know he's been avoiding playing you for personal reasons, but would you be open to doing this voluntarily and not forced in the postseason?**

GREG McDERMOTT: Yeah, everybody in Omaha cheers for Dana, and they always will. He's been there 14 years, so you people in Eugene understand why everybody cheers for him. He's a stand-up guy. He's about the right stuff in coaching, and we both preferred not to have this game against each other. We'd have both rather played somebody else. But one had to win, one had to lose, and like I said, it was an epic game. And they had a tremendous year, and while I know he's going to be really disappointed in the loss, I'm pretty certain that Friday he'll



be cheering for the Bluejays just like I would have been cheering for Oregon had they won.

**Q. Coach, double overtime game and it's a little past 12:50 am local time right now. Can you just sort of speak to your team's conditioning and if that posed any challenges playing that late into the night?**

GREG McDERMOTT: You know, I can't remember which overtime I talked to them and said we're built for this. You know, we play fast. We're on the attack, and we're ready for that. And our strength coach, Jeremy Anderson, our athletic training, Ben McNair, do a great job of managing their minutes and their bodies and how much we do during a week of practice in preparation for the game to make sure that they're ready.

Double overtime on this stage, the last game of the night, we got a couple lucky bounces there. I lost my mom this year. I'm pretty sure she helped with a couple bounces tonight.

MODERATOR: Thanks, Coach.

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