

# NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Round - Nevada vs Dayton

Wednesday, March 20, 2024

Salt Lake City, Utah, USA

Delta Center

**Dayton Flyers**

**Coach Anthony Grant**

**Koby Brea**

**DaRon Holmes II**

**Kobe Elvis**

Media Conference

THE MODERATOR: This is the Dayton student-athlete press conference.

We'll open it up for questions.

**Q. Koby, when you were in a wheelchair this summer, did you think this moment was possible?**

KOBY BREA: I'd be lying if I said I didn't think this was possible. Honestly, this whole year, just kind of reminiscing about this summer, just on everything I gone through. Just to be in this position is a blessing. To be able to play in this tournament, my brothers, coaching staff and everybody, it's just a great opportunity for us. I'm excited.

**Q. For the people who aren't familiar with your story, could you tell the others here why you were in a wheelchair this summer.**

KOBY BREA: Last year I played with stress fractures in both my tibias. This summer I put rods in both of my legs just to give some support. I was out for about five to six months. Got back on the court right before the season started. We're here now, so...

**Q. DaRon, you're the highest-rated recruit ever to go to Dayton. What attracted you to Dayton? Is this moment, making the tournament, what you envisioned when you committed?**

DaRON HOLMES II: I appreciate it. Yeah, what attracted



me to Dayton was the people. Through social media, I came from Arizona, and just having them in my final four, Dayton actually stood out with everybody who wanted me to come.

Also just getting to know the coaching staff, everybody was very nice and genuine. Definitely main reasons, is just the culture here.

Yeah, I've always envisioned us getting here in March. It's been a goal of ours. Just very excited that we're here.

**Q. Can you talk about what Coach Grant and the coaching staff have done to help prepare you for this moment, how they've gotten you to this point, really what they're doing right now to help you prepare for tomorrow?**

DaRON HOLMES II: Words can't even describe. It's everything. Like it's just a bunch of little things that they teach us day by day that we lock in on. They did a very good job of preparing us for this moment. I can't really say it's one thing. It's so many things they do well.

KOBE ELVIS: Yeah, I definitely agree with Deuce. They do a bunch of things really well. I would say the main thing was prepping us for each game, how to focus in on each game, understand that it's a season's worth of winning, that sort of thing, to get us to this point.

KOBY BREA: Yeah, I agree with the both of them. I think they did a good job with the scheduling, non-conference, going out to Charleston and playing against those teams over there, I think it prepared us for what we're going to be seeing this weekend and the rest of the way.

**Q. Kobe, you've had to take on a leadership role especially this year. Did that come naturally to you or was it something you had to learn how to do?**

KOBE ELVIS: Since I've been here, I've always been somebody that's kind of been one of the loudest people in the room, especially with this group of guys. Just my personality.



But definitely just try to do a better job of understanding each guy individually and understanding what they need for me to help lead them.

**Q. When I talk to players, it's their first time in the NCAA tournament, they all talk about how they're a little bit overwhelmed the first time, didn't quite know what to expect. What are you doing to prepare to not have the moment be too big, play your regular game, to go out there and have it be another game?**

DaRON HOLMES II: Kind of like you said. At the end of the day, it's just another game for us. It's a blessing to be here. But we've gone through a lot of adversity, a lot of things that prepared us for these type of moments. We're just going to do what we do. I think that's going to prepare us pretty well.

KOBE ELVIS: Yeah, I would agree with DaRon. We just need to be normal, go through our own normal routine, that sort of thing. I think just being normal, being ourselves is going to help us throughout this process.

KOBY BREA: Yeah, I'll agree with the both of them. Kind of like Kobe said, just be normal, what we done all year. I'm pretty sure the rest will take care of itself.

**Q. I think a lot of times getting to this moment you notice the coaching staff, the players. There's a lot of people behind the scenes that make it happen. Not sure if you know it's National Athletic Training Month. Talk a little bit about Mike Mulcahey and really what he's done in order for you guys to get to sitting right up here today.**

KOBE ELVIS: Mike's phenomenal. Throughout the course of the couple years we've been with him, he's kind of always had to be the bad guy, pull us out of games, pull us out of practices because we want to go out and compete all the time.

Yeah, I'll let you go with that (smiling).

KOBY BREA: Yeah, I mean, Mike, I have a special relationship with him just 'cause since I've been here in Dayton, I haven't been the luckiest with injuries and things of that nature. He's somebody that's really taken care of me, made me family of his own.

Just seeing the role and initiative he took this summer with me, the whole rehab process, going through the surgery and everything, he really was there for me, just like in a way that nobody else was.

He took care of me. He's one of the biggest reasons I'm

here today. So I'm really grateful for him.

**Q. Deuce, the trainers, strength coach Casey, what have they done through your entire career to make you bigger, stronger, quicker?**

DaRON HOLMES II: Oh, man. Like I said with Coach Grant and the rest of this coaching staff, I can't even really put a finger on it. It's so many things. Especially Coach Casey, Coach Mike, too. They make sure we get everything we need to be the best versions of ourselves.

In the weight room, Casey pushes us as hard as he can even though we may not like it some days. Sometimes we feel like, hey, this is a lot. But it's helping us out. We might not see it all the time, but it's like growing up with your family and parents, you might not understand until you get to that point.

With them, they do a very good job of that. They don't stop. Just because we're in post-season, it hasn't stopped. After the season, it won't stop. That's what the love of the game is for them.

**Q. For people who haven't seen Dayton play this year, what makes you different, what makes you so hard to guard, makes you guys unique?**

DaRON HOLMES II: Yeah, I'll start off.

I feel like what makes us unique is we have so many different weapons on our team. We play really well together. We're very streaky. We get hot, it can be very problematic for the other team.

Like I said, we just play together and we have fun out there.

KOBE ELVIS: Yeah, I'd say just how resilient this group is. I think throughout the course of the year, we find different ways to win. That's just something that's going to be huge for us in this process.

KOBY BREA: Yeah, I'd say the versatility of our group. Like DaRon said, we have a lot of weapons, but we also have a lot of players that can play at different positions and excel at that position. Just how united and together we are helps us on the court. The things we do off the court, we've seen how it helps us grow on the court.

I think we have a really, really good team and we're going to make some noise this March Madness, so...

**Q. Flyer fans go around everywhere. What are you expecting from Flyer fans tomorrow, three and a half**



## hour away plane ride.

DaRON HOLMES II: Yeah, I'll start off.

Like I've stated before, we could be anywhere, on Mars, Jupiter, they're coming. They're coming wherever we play. That's what the Flyers do, Flyer fan base, Flyer Faithful, Dayton 6. It's a blessing to have them. They really do their job.

KOBE ELVIS: Yeah, blessing like DaRon said. Crazy the expectation that we have of them to just show up all the time. But they definitely going to be here and be loud. We're going to be grateful for them being around.

KOBY BREA: I'll be honest, when I first saw we were going to play here in Utah, I thought I don't think our fans are going to be able to make this one. Just knowing how consistent and how passionate our fans are, the least we can do is expect a good crowd to be here. I'm super excited to see them in a different environment and just to support us, so...

THE MODERATOR: We'll excuse our student-athletes.

We'd like to welcome Coach Grant from Dayton. We'll ask Coach Grant for an opening statement.

ANTHONY GRANT: We're obviously excited to be here, excited to be a part of the tournament. For our guys, this has been the goal from the beginning of the summer when we got together to put ourselves in position to be an NCAA tournament team. We're excited for the opportunity.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

**Q. Can you talk about how that was your goal, at what point in the season you thought this is a tournament team?**

ANTHONY GRANT: Yeah, well, we had a chance over the course from the time we got together, we took an overseas trip this summer, had a chance to get together and have some practices. We felt like this team had some pieces that could put ourselves in position to be here.

Obviously you got to go out and play and do it on the court. In the non-conference, we were tested early from going on the road the second game of the season after losing our starting point guard, playing a very good Northwestern team. Coming down to the wire. We didn't come out victorious.

From there going to Charleston, the competition we played there, getting it to the championship game, losing to a

talented Houston team. We found out some things about ourselves early, some of the tests we had in the non-conference, SMU, Cincinnati, some home games that were very challenging.

The guys were able to respond to the challenge. The gauntlet we went through in A-10 play, sort of a target on our back every night. Our guys were able to answer that. We didn't come out unscathed. I think we've been battle-tested.

This team has been through a lot this year. I think they've earned the right.

**Q. You've coached for a long time. What is unique about this team?**

ANTHONY GRANT: That's a great question. I don't know that I'm prepared for reflection because this is still kind of a process for us, still kind of going on.

I like the chemistry that this group has been to build among each other. Like I said, it's been a lot in terms of from the summer, going overseas for 10 days, bonding together, the experiences that they got to share throughout the course of the season.

It's a team that has been able to meet the challenges. I think certainly in this tournament, that's what it's all about.

**Q. We've got Long Beach State playing here. Dan Monson as the coach was fired. Won three tournament games to get here. What are your thoughts on that situation? A unique situation in college basketball. It's a tough question, but do you feel like there's a right way and a wrong way to fire a head coach from a head coach's point of view?**

ANTHONY GRANT: I don't know the details of it. I don't know Coach Monson personally. I know his history. When I was an assistant coach at Florida, we played his team at Butler. Whenever that was, 2000 maybe. I think that was a Final Four year for us. Just his journey through coaching. He's done it for a long time.

I think from my seat, there's certainly a lot of respect for him in the way he's gone about doing it. In this profession, we're all stewards.

It's a job that we do knowing at some point you're going to hand it over to somebody else. We got the job from someone else. Whether it was a situation where a guy moved on to another opportunity or a school made a decision to make a change, I think at the end of the day the perspective is it's about helping people, it's about helping

young people to achieve their goals and dreams. It's about putting the university, the fan base in a position where they can be proud of the product you put on the floor, not only in wins and losses, but the type of young men that come out of your program.

At the end of the day, when it's time to hand it over, I think credit to him, his character, however it ended, whether it was a firing or a mutual agreement, that his young men were able to keep the main thing the main thing and continue on their journey and go out and win a championship, put themselves in a position where they've created memories of a lifetime. This is something they'll always have.

For Coach Monson, he's done it for a long time. Whatever he decides to do next, I think what he's done speaks for itself.

**Q. The nation is going to see the Dayton Flyers tomorrow. They're also going to see a representative of the Atlantic-10. To those not familiar with your league, what would you tell the nation about the A-10?**

ANTHONY GRANT: Like I said, you know, I felt like going through the A-10 was a gauntlet. It was really challenging from not only the talent, the type of coaches you have in the league, but the different styles of play that you see on a night-in-and-night-out basis, the preps you have to go through in order to play in our league. You don't really see two teams that play similar. It's challenging.

Obviously for us in the A-10, a lot of the reputation of our league, it gets made in the non-conference. We were fortunate this year that some of those games we were able to win and put ourselves in position where we could be an at-large team. Some teams were not fully healthy in the non-conference or trying to find themselves, like most teams do in November and early December, suffer some losses.

To go through 18 games in our league, it was a challenge. It was very challenging. I think obviously Duquesne ended up -- you look at the way they started conference play, the way they finished conference play, to go out and win the A-10 tournament, be a team that's in the NCAA tournament. I think they have four teams also invited to the NIT. It's impressive for our league.

I think the league is very healthy. I think it's very competitive. Really talented coaches and really talented players.

**Q. Is there anybody that you played this year that you've seen in Nevada on film that are similar, stick**

**out?**

ANTHONY GRANT: That's a good question.

In Blackshear, I think he's unique for a guy his size, his skill set. Probably the closest thing I would say to him is the guy that was in the same league that's now at VCU, Bairstow. That's the closest thing I think.

They're different, but that's probably the closest thing in terms of individual personnel, their skill set. You've seen individuals in our league that I would say have similar skill sets.

As a style of play, the way they play the game, man, I'm thinking. SMU is probably similar. I have to put combinations of teams together because the system and the personnel skill set-wise is similar to other teams, but the personnel makes it different, or the personnel is different in a similar system. It's hard to really say.

But they're really good. Just watching them on film, it's impressive what they've been able to do in a very tough league. Their league had I think six teams in the NCAA tournament. You look at what Colorado State did just last night to a talented Virginia team. This team beat Colorado State twice, so they're really talented. Really good team on both sides of the ball.

**Q. As you evaluate Nevada on film, you see what they do best, what stands out to you as some of the biggest challenges you'll face?**

ANTHONY GRANT: A variety of things. Starts with their personnel. They got really good personnel. I think the coaches do a great job of putting their personnel in situations where they play to their strengths. They do a good job of that.

I think defensively they have great length. I think one of the top 50 defensive teams in terms of what they've been able to do nationally. They make it difficult for you.

We're going to have to be at our best on both sides of the ball tomorrow.

**Q. As a veteran coach, how much has your job changed with the way NIL is now, transfers, transfer portal open while you're still playing?**

ANTHONY GRANT: It's changed a lot. I think obviously part of our job as coaches is to adapt to situations. I think it's in flux right now, college athletics, period, because there's been so many changes. You mentioned a couple with the transfer portal and NIL, to go along with the impact

of the extra COVID year. College basketball has gotten a lot older where you're seeing 24- and 25-year-olds competing against 18- and 19-year-olds.

Along with the NIL is the influence of the agents and then the different sponsors that guys have a responsibility to, along with the ability to change locations multiple times.

I think it's a different game than what it's been. I think the beauty of college athletics has always been the ability to bring a team together and grow a team together.

I think some of that, as a coach, you begin to question if that piece of it can remain a part of the game. I think whether it's basketball or football, really any sport, I think that's in the balance right now. So we'll have to see where it ends up.

**Q. Mid-major teams in this matchup on Thursday, a couple mid-major teams made it to the Final Four last year. Do you think that was a one-off, or has something systematically changed with basketball that's given more of an open path for mid-major teams to make deeper runs in this tournament?**

ANTHONY GRANT: I think just your question to me is more of I guess from your viewpoint. I think in basketball you've got really talented guys all over the country. I think when you really examine the game, not just last year, but most years, what some people call upsets, those of us in the business look at it and say, It's about matchups.

I think that's the beauty of the NCAA tournament. In the NBA you got to play a seven-game series. Typically, if all things are equal, the best team is going to win a seven-game series. In college sports, whoever plays the best on a given day... The matchups are huge. We're not playing a team in Nevada that we've played a couple times this year and we've got data on each other. This is our first time matching up against each other. So the matchups become really important. The ability to have your guys healthy and available is really important.

There's a lot of different factors that go into it. But for me, in basketball, a lot of good players all over the country. You put five out there at a time. It's really about the matchups to me.

I don't really get caught up in the so-called mid-major, high-major, low-major thing. I think that's kind of antiquated.

**Q. Can you walk us through the recruitment of DaRon Holmes II, what he's meant to your program, and how you've been able to keep him on campus for three**

**years?**

ANTHONY GRANT: I think just knowing DaRon, he's just a super human being. I think his parents, his family, has done a great job in terms of who he is as a young man, his values, his work ethic, number one.

We were able to build a relationship with him. A lot of it was during the COVID period. He saw kind of what we did with a young man like Obi Toppin. I felt like the style of play, the relationships, fit him and what he wanted to do.

I think it's really a product of just relationships. I think he's been able to stay true to who he is and trust his process and not get caught up in the things I think a lot of young people can get caught up in, is wanting instant gratification.

He's trusted his process, grown as a player on the court. I think he's grown maturity-wise in terms of his understanding of what he is, what he's all about. He's stayed true to that. It's a testament to him and a testament to his family that he hasn't gotten caught up in some of the other things that sometimes you can get caught up in.

**Q. The Wayback Machine, you played at Nevada in a bracket-buster game when you were VCU's head coach. Do you have any recollection of that game from 2009?**

ANTHONY GRANT: You're reaching (laughter). Man, I do remember we got beat in a close game. I thought the result of that propelled us for the rest of the season and allowed us to be an NCAA tournament team. I think that experience made us better.

**Q. What do you make of the narrative of a team that's never played in the NCAA tournament, not having experience, versus a group that has been here before?**

ANTHONY GRANT: I think experience in anything matters. I think obviously if you're experienced in the tournament, you know what today is like, right? You know what tomorrow is going to be like. You get a feel for that.

I think you also have experienced players in terms of the leadership that you have on the team, the type of competitive character that you have on the team. I think all that kind of stuff plays into it.

Certainly, yeah. Certainly, it is a factor.

**Q. There's a lot to be made of you guys coming out west and playing at 4,500 feet. Is that a concern playing at elevation?**



ANTHONY GRANT: I don't think so. Obviously we got here yesterday. Our guys were able to get some practice time in. We'll get some practice time in today. I think the excitement of the game, the stakes of the game, I think our guys will adjust. We'll be ready to go.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach. Good luck tomorrow.

ANTHONY GRANT: Thanks.

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