

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

Thursday, March 21, 2024

Salt Lake City, Utah, USA

Delta Center

**Dayton Flyers**

**Coach Anthony Grant**

**Nate Santos**

**DaRon Holmes II**

**Koby Brea**

Media Conference

Dayton 63, Nevada 60

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Dayton University.

We'll start this press conference with an opening statement from Coach Grant.

ANTHONY GRANT: What a battle. What a battle. Just really proud of our guys. They never quit, showed tremendous resiliency. They've done that a few times this year where the chips weren't in our favor. They found a way.

I'm extremely proud of the fight, the grit, the determination that our group showed tonight. That's a good basketball team that we beat. They've had a great year. But our guys never gave up. I'm proud of the way they believed in each other, believed in what we're doing.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open it up to questions for our student-athletes.

**Q. When there's seven minutes left, there's a timeout, you're down 17, what is going on in the huddle?**

KOBY BREA: In those moments, that's when we get the closest. I think we've been in those situations a couple times this year. I think we're comfortable in those situations. When we look at our captain, our coach, we see that he's not worried, he believes in us, everybody from the last player on the bench, every coach, they all believe in us. We believe in each other. We trust each



other. We're capable of doing those type of things.

DARON HOLMES II: Like, Brea just said, there was never a doubt in our mind. We went down a lot. There might be times where we argue on the floor, but at the end of the day we know we have each other. That's what matters. If you want to win big games, you got to stick together, just with anything.

NATE SANTOS: I'll third on that. I just think it's the belief in what Coach has us doing, belief in each other. We've been in these situations before. It could be tough to be in those situations, but we believe. That's what we did.

**Q. To what do you attribute the way you were able to mount that comeback? Was it defense, offense? More what you just said, the belief?**

DARON HOLMES II: Everything. Everything. Defense, offense, rebounding, communication, listening to coaches, teammates, all that. It just takes you to buy in. That's what it takes. We got a team that does that pretty well. That's what happens.

NATE SANTOS: Yeah, I'll say just a combination of all those things. But we really locked in on defense. I think they helped us up on offense. I think that was fueled by our belief.

KOBY BREA: Yeah, I agree with all of them. I think, most importantly, it's just a mindset, just understanding that there's still a lot of time on the clock. We can make something happen. Just believing in each other, having faith in each other, understanding that in order for us to do that comeback, we have to do it on the other side of the floor, get stops on defense. That will make it possible for us to get some points on the board, as well. Just take it one possession at a time.

**Q. Nate and Koby, seemed like Deuce carried you pretty much in the first half. You guys got on track down the stretch. Describe how that played out.**

NATE SANTOS: Yeah, I don't know, we know what type of player we have in Deuce. We stick with him. We believe



in him. When he's going and stuff, we believe in that. We feed off him.

I think that's kind of what helped us get it going, is he was going, and we were waiting till we did, so...

KOBY BREA: Yeah, I'd say for a large part of the game, he was the only one that was able to put the ball in the basket for us. We struggled a little bit. Going into the second half, we knew he was going to get a lot of attention, that opened up things for everybody else. That's one of the great things he does. Even if he's not scoring, he's still opening things up for other people.

Today it was me and Nate. Throughout the whole season, it could be any of our guys. We have so many people that are capable of doing those things.

**Q. Koby, how about you, when you got on track? You started to really feel it or what happened?**

KOBY BREA: Honestly, my teammates looked at me. They were like, We don't care if you shoot it contested, we need you to shoot the ball. When I had that kind of confidence from my teammates, that trust and belief, I feel like the only thing I can do is just pay it back to them.

It's really easy for me to do those things when I have that kind of trust from my teammates. They make it really easy for me.

**Q. It seemed like people watching from home were annoyed when the ball got in the basket and got stuck. Is there any moment where you think about that? Does it annoy you?**

DARON HOLMES II: We try to look past things like that. It can slow the game down. You have to tap the ball out of the net, take it out. Those seconds do matter.

At the end of the day we try to play through everything. Yeah, it can get like that. At the end of the day we have to just look past it.

**Q. You finished on a 24-4 run in this game. What can you say about being locked in, how you hunkered down, just finding a way to move on?**

DARON HOLMES II: Like I said in the previous press conference, we have a team that can get hot at any moment, even by metrics, if you just look at it. We did a very good job with that. We got hot when we got hot. We stuck together. That's what happens.

KOBY BREA: Yeah, I think in those situations, it's easy for

somebody to try to, like, just get a home run play, try to make it happen by themselves. In the situation we were in, I think we did a good job of just staying together and doing it together, taking it one possession at a time.

NATE SANTOS: I'll add that I just think it what makes being part of a team so special, especially a team like that, we can get in a little bit of a hole like that, we're able to fight and climb back and end up with a win.

THE MODERATOR: We'll excuse the student-athletes and continue with questions for Coach Grant.

**Q. You are one of the better three-point shooting teams in the country. Shots weren't falling early. How did you feel about getting those looks down the stretch, get back into the groove you were in the regular season?**

ANTHONY GRANT: Yeah, I think that's basketball. Sometimes shots fall. Sometimes they don't. I think in the first half, we allowed that to affect our energy on the other end. They were able to go on a run to close the half.

The thing we talked about at halftime was we've been in those situations before. We had to make a decision coming out of the half how we were going to mature and learn from the past experiences.

In the second half, I thought we started off a little tentative. I thought our defensive intensity picked things up. We were able to get out in transition. When you see the ball go in, obviously that helps everything. That helps your energy.

I thought the guys did a really good job of sharing it. Koby Brea made the point that his teammates did a really good job of making the extra pass and finding each other, whether it was for threes, layups, opportunities to get to the free-throw line.

I thought the team found a way to put themselves in position to have a chance. Then we made some plays down the stretch on both sides to win the game.

**Q. When you look at that 24-4 run to end the game, what does it say about this group's mental resilience?**

ANTHONY GRANT: Yeah, I think we played a tournament game in November against LSU. We were down I think it was 17 late in the game. We just played a game against VCU at home where we were down 17 in the first half and had to claw back, I think didn't take the lead until late.

We've had experiences together. I think as all the athletes

mentioned, this is a group that's close, that trust each other. They trust the talents. With I think seven and a half minutes, it was a 12-, 13-point game. We felt like we were making a run. We were able to make some plays on the defensive end which I think put us in a two-possession game with four to play.

We felt really good. We felt good where we were. We felt like we could continue to make the plays we needed to make. The guys made the plays offensively, and we were able to be disruptive defensively. Made all the difference in the world for us.

**Q. Your job is far from finished. You have a date with Arizona in the round of 32. Your initial thoughts on the matchup?**

ANTHONY GRANT: I don't have any right now. Obviously this game just finished. What we'll do is we'll let the guys get back to the hotel, we'll watch some film tonight. The coaches will be up late tonight studying Arizona. This tournament, it's a quick turnaround for both teams. We'll try to learn about each other the best we can and we'll be ready to go on Saturday.

**Q. Why did you have such an issue with Blackshear and Lucas particularly off the dribble for three quarters of the game? What did you do down the stretch to corral them down the stretch?**

ANTHONY GRANT: Both of those guys are really, really good players, man. Watching them on film, I have tremendous respect.

I actually coached Blackshear's dad in college, so... Yeah, he played at Stetson. That's an athletic family, man. He's a really good player. Obviously those are veteran guys. Lucas is a veteran guy. He's got tournament experience from his previous stop. Both of those guys are fifth-year guys. They're tough, hard guards. We wanted to make it tough for them, make it hard on them.

They both made plays that good players make, whether it was driving to the rim or jump shots or whatever. I thought the cumulative effect of the pressure at the end of the game made a big difference. I thought it got them out of rhythm. Lucas made a couple big shots there at the end. We were able to be a little bit more disruptive.

Obviously when the momentum swings away from you, sometimes it's hard to recover from that, right? In the first half, the momentum swung in their favor. They were able to build a bit of a lead. In the second half down the stretch, the momentum swung in our favor a lot because of what our guys were able to do on both sides.

**Q. You mentioned coming back from deficits of 17. Before that happens the first time in a season, what do you see in your guys that, when it does happen that first time, you think these are the guys that I know were capable of this thing?**

ANTHONY GRANT: Yeah, I mean, you don't know till it happens, right? The first time we went through that, I thought it helped our team. It was kind of a growing experience for our team to go through that experience and to be able to come out victorious. It's a confidence boost, right?

Every season it's about the experiences you go through together, right? All those experiences got us to the point where we were in this tournament, right? We know that we have a good team, right? We don't always play to the best of our ability. Sometimes we can get sidetracked, we can get off kilter. We can get out of character.

I think the thing that this team has done on a consistent basis is they've showed a level of grit, resiliency, togetherness that's gotten us to where we are, and thankfully an opportunity to continue to play in this tournament.

**Q. In a game like this, on the sideline in this moment of a 24-4 run, how much are you saying, how much are you letting the guys lead?**

ANTHONY GRANT: I mean, it's probably a combination. When you're in the middle of it, I'm not thinking 24-4 run. I'm thinking get a stop, get a score, where do we need to attack them, how do we need to attack them.

I thought down the stretch we got in a rhythm where the guys understood how we wanted to attack them and how we needed to make plays for each other. You saw guys doing a good job attacking the rim, extra pass for threes, ball being fed to Deuce inside, him making plays himself or making plays for his teammates, which is really how we've played.

On the defensive end, it was really one stop at a time, one stop at a time, a rebound at a time. We were able to get out a couple times in transition. You look up, all of a sudden it's a six- or seven-point game with over four to play and you're right there. From that point it came down to making plays on both sides of the ball. Thankfully our guys were able to do that.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, coach.

ANTHONY GRANT: Thanks, guys. Appreciate it.



