

# NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: Second Round - Dayton vs Arizona

Friday, March 22, 2024

Salt Lake City, Utah, USA

Delta Center

**Arizona Wildcats**

**Coach Tommy Lloyd**

**Caleb Love**

**Keshad Johnson**

Media Conference

THE MODERATOR: We will begin the 1:35 media availability for Arizona student-athletes. We're joined by senior guard Caleb Love and fifth-year forward Keshad Johnson.

We'll open up questions for our student-athletes.

**Q. For both of you guys, the experience of making deep tournament runs to a title game, what do you think that brings to the team? Do you think that brought anything yesterday, in particular?**

KESHAD JOHNSON: It's evident that having experience, the knowledge of what it takes to get there, it brings a sense of leadership, a sense of trustworthiness. When we say something, our teammates trust what we say. We've been there, done that. It's easier to learn and listen to somebody who's been there.

CALEB LOVE: I think having that experience, like Keshad said, our teammates trust in us, our coaches trust in us. We trust the coaches because we've got experience with the coaches, as far as Coach Rob has been there plenty of times, Coach Lloyd has been to the Big Dance.

I think they believe in us and we all trust in each other and we come together as one and go as one.

**Q. Question for Caleb. Congrats on the win yesterday. You got a double-double, 18 points and 11 rebounds. Is your rebounding aspect of your game that you focus on extensively, or do the boards come naturally?**

CALEB LOVE: I think Coach Lloyd and the coaching staff



has been challenging me to do that all year long. They let me go to the offensive glass. It's my job to deliver on that end. I've definitely been locking in on that, keying on that.

So I think it helps the team. We can get out on the break. When I lead the break, I feel like I find my teammates and we have good offense.

**Q. I wanted to ask you two about Kylan. You guys are 18-1 in games that he scores double figures. Would you two be able to talk about the offensive depth that he brings when he's able to get it going like that?**

KESHAD JOHNSON: When he's going, we're literally the best team in the country. Him being 18 years old, he's probably the best 18-year-old in the country. So we rely on him heavily. Whether he's making shots or not, as long as he's shooting and his confidence is there, we know he's doing other things on the basketball court that's just getting us open.

Me, I allow him a lot just being a forward, running the floor and throwing the ball. He shoot it, I'm going to rebound it. So I just tell him to shoot the ball. When he shoots the ball, make or miss, we're our best.

CALEB LOVE: I think him, when his confidence is high, we're hard to be beaten. We just lean on him for a lot. He's our point guard so he kind of runs the show and so he gets us into offense. When he's knocking shots down like he was yesterday, like Keshad said, it's tough for teams to go at us. We'll take care of him on the offensive glass.

When he's got his confidence up, I'm telling you, we're definitely tough to be beat.

**Q. All year, it's been tough to defend the three. These guys shoot the three very well. How will that go tomorrow, and what do you need to do to defend the three?**

CALEB LOVE: I think making it tough for them, getting them off their actions and making it physical. Make it a physical game. Just talking on the defensive end, communicating, and being tight on our switches and things



like that.

So I think it won't be -- it will be a tough task, but we're ready. We've been preparing for it all year long. We played teams that shoot the three. And so I think we just got to be tight with our switches, be better with our communication, and just know our personnel.

**Q. To follow up on the first question, with your guys' experience, do you feel a certain level of calmness in this environment? I know the NCAA Tournament can feel a little different, can be a little jittery, especially when you're a big favorite and 15 seed is playing tight with you. Do you feel a different level of calm?**

KESHAD JOHNSON: You feel the sense that, okay, we've been here before. But there's always anxiety in a good way. It's being on the stage, something you always dream of growing up. So that's always there. If that's not there, then you don't love the game of basketball.

But yeah. We've been there before, we know what it takes. We know once you get out there, you've got to breathe and you've got to be poised. We know that sense. Sometimes people that probably never been there probably don't know how to take that into consideration. That's the beauty of it. You've got to enjoy the moment. Go out, look around, look at the fans.

People don't get to make it here, you know. A lot of draft picks don't even get to play on the big stage. So enjoy the moment. We've just got to keep our teammates focused on the task at hand.

CALEB LOVE: I think you got to have a sense of calm, calmness, to you. You can't really be panicking in these moments because this could be your last game, and I think you've got to have a sense of, like, calmness and poise like Keshad said.

So when you're out there on the floor, you've got to have the utmost confidence that you're going to win the game. But you've got to have a sense of reality that anybody can be beaten. Once you've got that, you've got the humility that you can be beaten, you go out there confident about the play, confident about yourself, and stick to the game plan at hand.

**Q. What have you guys seen of DaRon Holmes on film? How are you going to stop him?**

KESHAD JOHNSON: We know he's a freak athlete. We know he's very skilled on offense and everything. We've got to try to make it tough on him. We know he'll make tough plays. That's the price to pay when you're going up

against great individuals.

So we've got to just stick to our game plan, whether it's trying to contest every shot, keep him off the offensive glass. We know he's active.

With those players, you've got to respect them and try to make their night as hard as possible.

**Q. What did you think of Dayton's comeback? What does that tell you about them?**

KESHAD JOHNSON: It's March, baby. It's March. That's all you can say. Nevada did a great job of having the lead, but Dayton is so grit, we know we're going into playing against a gritty team. It's March. Anything can happen.

**Q. This is obviously the last year you play in the Pac-12 as a team. Last year for the league. Is there a sense of wanting to put your best foot forward and kind of showing what basketball in the Pac-12 is all about here in the tournament? Obviously, you're playing for yourselves and playing for Arizona too. Do you kind of look at yourselves as representing the league and kind of its last hurrah?**

KESHAD JOHNSON: What we play for is bigger than ourselves. First of all, we've got to thank God for getting the opportunity to even play the game of basketball, first and foremost, let alone just being able to represent our conference, represent our families, our schools.

So you've got to give your all every time we step out on the court. A lot of times, when you're going through a season, towards the end of the season, you get a little lackadaisical because you know you've got more games ahead.

But right here, it's now or never. So of course we're going to go out and give our all.

CALEB LOVE: I think we've just got to play to win. I don't really think we're really looking to put our best foot forward for the Pac-12. I think this is for ourselves as far as us trying to win a National Championship.

Yeah, the Pac-12 got great history and all. Also, for Coach Lloyd, we want to probably make a statement for him, going into the Big 12 next year.

And then I think we've got a sense of reality that -- how do you say it? The people that played before us, you know, the Andre Iguodallas, the Mike Bibbys, the so on and so forth -- I can go on -- about them and putting our best foot forward for them, the people that came before us, and just representing them as well.

**Q. Caleb, 11 rebounds yesterday. What's your mentality when you're able to get to the rim and grab balls off of it like you were able to get in that game on Thursday?**

CALEB LOVE: To start the break. Just helping big O. He may have a big task as far as just, you know, boxing out his own man. Or Keshad might be battling with his man. So I can help them out and lead the break and get easy fast break points.

**Q. Did you have to tell Kylan to dunk that basketball? It looked like he was about ready to leave it for you?**

CALEB LOVE: No, he had his mind set up as soon as he got the ball. I did give him a little extra go ahead and go. I wish he'd have gotten a better dunk.

**Q. You mentioned Oumar Ballo. He's averaging four blocks a game over the last four games. What's gotten into him that you're seeing him attack the ball more at the defensive end?**

CALEB LOVE: He's been the big man in the middle all year. He's helped us so much throughout the year as far as being a big presence down there on the offensive and defensive end.

I think he's the best big in the country when he's playing like that, and he helps us a lot. If one of us gets beat, he's helping us vertical contest or he's blocking the shot. On the offensive end, he's the big man in the middle so he draws a lot of attention.

If he's not laying the ball up or dunking it, he's drawing a lot of attention and kicking us off for easy threes.

So he's a big part of us winning, and he's going to be a big part of us winning down the stretch.

**Q. Keshad, are you seeing a growth from him defensively in that respect, being more active to try to knock balls away?**

KESHAD JOHNSON: I played against him in Maui last year. I knew what he was capable of. That's probably one of the reasons I came here, you know.

For all of us, Oumar is an insurance policy on the defensive end. If we get blown by, we know somebody got our back and we've got to come and correct them.

But he's an all-around force -- defense, rebounding, dunking the ball, just drawing somebody's attention, as

Caleb said. He makes the game so much easier on us. We all make the game easier on each other, but he's for sure a great help, a great asset to our team.

**Q. Ke, you had ten points in the 16-zip stretch that kind of crossed over halves. What was happening offensively for you that you were able to take control of this?**

KESHAD JOHNSON: Arizona basketball is happening for me. Was just able to get out, get on a break. Caleb was able to give me a lob. Just running the floor. Had a couple of corner threes, just swinging the ball. That's the game of basketball. Everybody going to get their chance.

I wasn't trying to force nothing. Every shot I shot, I felt like it was going to go in, and those ten points went in. So the game of basketball is so unpredictable, you've just got to run and the ball will find you. You've just got to do your job.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks, fellas. Best of luck Saturday.

CALEB LOVE: Thank you.

KESHAD JOHNSON: Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, gentlemen. Appreciate you. Good luck tomorrow.

We're joined by Coach Lloyd. We'll open up questions for the coach.

**Q. Coach, you've never faced Dayton in your time at Arizona. In fact, the last time Arizona played Dayton was in 2000 at the Maui Invitational. What do you admire about the Flyers and Coach Grant? What are you focused on strategy-wise heading into tomorrow?**

TOMMY LLOYD: They've been a great program for years. I did play against Dayton once when I was an assistant in Gonzaga and they beat us.

What you admire about the program is the consistency. And the support there must be tremendous. I don't know a lot about the job. When you look at a place that draws fans like they do and consistently wins over multiple coaches, that's impressive.

Coach Grant has done a great job. They're a very well-structured program. They got a plan. They play off their good players, and they do a really good job. They force you to make a lot of decisions on defense.

When you're on offense, they do a good job too. They have multiple things they can do, whether it's press, zone, switch coverages in man. So all in all, they make you reach deep into your bag.

**Q. What is the difference between preparing for a morning game, as opposed to a night game? Are there any benefits or detractors to that?**

TOMMY LLOYD: No real significant difference. The only one would be you don't get a physical walk-through or shootaround. So you just have to kind of load up a little bit more the day ahead.

But this time of year, I mean, you're playing a team you haven't played all year. You're playing a team you're really not familiar with, and that works both ways. So it's a short prep so you kind of got to rely on what you do and what you do best, I think, at the end of the day. That's generally going to be the answer to your problems when facing an opponent on a quick turnaround that you're not familiar with.

**Q. Coach, what's the difference in trying to prepare for a first round opponent that you know is hard? Because I know we talked about it yesterday in the press conference. You said the 2-15 game is hard. What's more difficult about a 2-7 match-up when you're going up against a team like Dayton that you've never faced them before?**

TOMMY LLOYD: They're both really challenging. I would just say, as you get deeper into the tournament, usually the teams start getting better. That's kind of a logical answer.

So we know it's going to be a real tough test tomorrow. Dayton's had an incredible year. They've had an incredible couple years. It's a well-established program. And they definitely have a plan in how they want to play, and they're very comfortable executing that.

So we understand what we're up against tomorrow.

**Q. Coach, you guys are 19-1 when Kylan Boswell scores 10 or more points in a game. From your perspective as a head coach, how have you seen his offensive game progress from last year to now?**

TOMMY LLOYD: Kylan is a growing player. I think we still forget, he's young. He should be a true freshman this year. He doesn't turn 19 for another couple weeks. So he's still young.

So maybe there's been some inconsistencies there, and that's probably due to just his lack of experience. But I see

him growing and I see him growing by the day. We all know, when he plays well, there's a good opportunity that we play well.

So I was proud of how he approached that game yesterday. Those aren't easy games. Those are big moments for any player, but especially a young player on that stage. He did a good job of just playing basketball and not making it more than it is.

It's literally the same game we've been playing all year. And I think if you can approach it like that and play your normal game, which his normal game's aggressive and physical, he's going to have a chance to be successful.

So we just need him to stay in that lane, and that gives us -- obviously gives us a better chance to do well.

**Q. Can you talk about the importance of having Pelle play very well, given some analytics say he's probably the most impactful player you have per minute because he does so much?**

TOMMY LLOYD: Yeah. I mean, Pelle is really good. I don't need analytics to tell me how much he impacts us. He impacts every possession at both ends of the floor. He's a guy that gives you everything he's got. He's a guy that has great attention to detail, plays with amazing effort and energy.

And then offense level, you know, he's smart. He knows what we're trying to do and how to execute it. If we get knocked off our path a little bit, he knows how to get us back on it. So we really value Pelle and everything he brings to our program.

**Q. You've had teams try to slow you down throughout the season. What is the challenge in facing that and how do you kind of try to make sure that the game is played at your pace?**

TOMMY LLOYD: Well, you also need to be aware, when you're playing some of these teams, that you're not always going to get it your way. So you can't panic if you don't get it your way.

We're built to play lots of different styles. And, generally, if you want to be a team that's playing in transition, you better be a good defensive team so you're not taking the ball out of the net, especially these nets, because the ball doesn't come out of them. Just stays in there. Talk about stopping a fast break. Jeesh. Hopefully they have that fixed by tomorrow.

Yeah. And then you want to rebound the ball well. You

put those things together, good defense and rebounding usually gives you an opportunity to play in transition offense.

**Q. Tommy, watching DeRon Holmes on film, how do you describe what he brings?**

TOMMY LLOYD: DeRon's done a great job. I actually went down and watched him as a young player, might have been like a sophomore in high school.

At the time he was more of a perimeter base player, and he just continued to grow. I don't think anybody knew he was going to get this tall. Then he went to Montverde, which is tough to do, and then came back to Arizona Compass. I think all that was during COVID.

This kid was a top recruit and probably could have picked a number of schools, and he chose Dayton. I think he made a great choice for himself. He's become a player there that's featured. And his game has really grown, and they've done a good job helping him become a better player inside the paint.

That's what makes him tough. He plays inside the paint and out at three. He can drive the basketball. He can get fouled. He presents a lot of problems. They've done a great job developing him.

**Q. With this being the final season for the Pac-12, final season that Arizona is in the Pac-12, obviously, is there kind of like an extra sense of pride in playing for the league and kind of showing people what Pac-12 basketball is about this year?**

TOMMY LLOYD: If you guys want to create that narrative, that's fine. That's easy to do. To be honest with you, I'm happy for the other Pac-12 schools, that they've all won their first game. We're 100 percent focused on Arizona, and I'm sure they're the same.

Hey, I've been in that league three years. I think nationally it's been undervalued. But I would say deservedly so. I think a lot of the teams are really talented in the Pac-12; they just haven't played great in the non-conference, for whatever reason. Whether it's injuries or chemistry issues. I know how talented Oregon is. I know how talented USC is. I know how physical UCLA is. I've seen Stanford at their best.

You can go down the list. For me, I've always thought there's no way that these other power conferences are that much better than us.

But at the end of the day, you've got to do the work.

You've got to present the résumé to support your argument. And the Pac-12 just, unfortunately, hasn't been quite able to do that.

I think talent-wise, it should be a 5 or 6 bid league, I would say. For sure. In the last couple years. But perception-wise, we just haven't been able to get there the last couple years, and I guess it doesn't matter going forward.

**Q. With the connections between your program and Gonzaga, do you see any possibility of Gonzaga fans being pro-Arizona tomorrow and maybe vice versa, and how would that help you in a neutral site?**

TOMMY LLOYD: You hope so. I hope so. I've got a lot of great relationships there, and it's been fun seeing them around the past few days. It's almost surreal, when you think about it, because these are people I was around for a lot of years, obviously got very comfortable with.

Then you kind of remove yourself from that setting and kind of start a new journey. To kind of be in a parallel with them, it's a little different. But it's been great to see everybody.

And I hope so. I mean, I know I have a lot of dear friends, and I don't think they're rooting against me or Arizona. I think they'll be happy to see us win. I know my family will be rooting for the Zags. So, yeah, hopefully it helps both programs.

**Q. Your thoughts on Koby Brea. He's a pretty pure shooter in the way he rose up in the comeback and just the courage.**

TOMMY LLOYD: Listen, he's a coin toss guy, which is crazy. He's a 50 percent three-point shooter. Flip a coin, he's going to make or miss it. That's exceptional shooting.

So, yeah, I mean, you're like, Wow. I mean, this is a guy who's got a quick release, a good shooting pocket that's high and can get it off basically when he wants. They do a great job spacing the floor and putting him in positions where you've got to make decisions.

Obviously an elite shooter and a very good player. Yeah, he's dangerous. Looked like Nevada was having their way with him for quite a while yesterday. And then I thought Dayton's pressure on defense really changed the game. Then kind of got a few transition opportunities when they made threes and closed that gap quick.

I've been there. When you close that gap quick in a tournament, the momentum shifts. The feeling in the

building shifts. It can be a lot for a team, like the team in the lead, to overcome.

So just really impressed. Really impressed by Dayton, their playing, how they utilize their personnel. And obviously they have some elite shooters, and Brea's No. 1 on that list.

**Q. Coach, I know the opponents generally get more difficult the further you get. Do you think there's something to the belief that kind of getting that first one out of the way, those jitters, that pressure of the first game of the tournament?**

TOMMY LLOYD: I hope so. Especially after what we went through the year before, you've got to acknowledge that was in the back of people's minds. I know it wasn't in the back of people's minds outside the program. It was probably in the forefront of their mandates.

Inside the program, you've got to admit it's on your mind. So I think to kind of be able to get past that first hurdle, I mean, I think feels good. Hopefully, it puts us in a position where we can come out and just let it rip and play good, normal Arizona basketball.

**Q. Caleb and Keshad were here, guys who have played in title games, talking about the pressure of this tournament is real. What kind of difference can that make, the experience those two have?**

TOMMY LLOYD: You hope it allows them to settle in and understand that the pressure the tournament presents is external. That's an external force, created by you guys and family and TV.

Internal, we just got to play the game. And you really got to break it down in a possession-by-possession, task-by-task deal. That's what we're going to focus on. We're going to try to come out and play our best brand of Arizona basketball.

Probably neither team needs to do anything superhuman to win. Probably whichever team can play the closest to their normal game is going to have a great advantage. So that's going to be our focus.

**Q. Coach, I know you talked about getting dinner with Dan and Mark earlier in the week. Did you and Mark ever kind of talk about the possibility if both of you were to advance in the tournament about playing each other?**

TOMMY LLOYD: I honestly don't even know what bracket they're in and where they would cross with us. So no. I

don't even know if we win tomorrow who the potential opponents are. I mean, we didn't even -- and he and I have been together too long. We know how hard this is that I don't think we ever look past the game in front of us.

**Q. This is kind of a broader, big-picture question. With all the reviews, with out of bounds calls, fouls, do you think there should be more latitude for coaches to be able to challenge like they do in the NBA?**

TOMMY LLOYD: Listen, I think we've got to be open to that thing. At the end of the day, the number one deal is get the calls right. Maybe what you're talking about is the last two minutes where the refs can review everything. Should you put the onus on the coaches? If you want a review, you need to basically request one.

I think that's something interesting to look at, but right now the way it's set is better than it used to be because the calls at the end of the games are getting right.

The only issue I had yesterday was there was a couple shot clock issues that were random, and then those ended up in reviews. They get on the clock and basically, I think, one time we were on defense so the other team at the end of the half got an extended time-out to put something in the last six seconds. Normally they wouldn't have.

Those things get annoying, but that's just the breaks of the game.

**Q. You mentioned the net. They were working on them throughout the day yesterday. Was it an issue for you guys? Did it slow you down? Or do you expect it to be, if they haven't changed, to be an issue tomorrow?**

TOMMY LLOYD: I don't think it's hard to find nets where the ball goes through. So go up to the University of Utah, take the nets off the basket, because they're probably not stopping there, and bring them here. It's not complicated.

I hope they have the wherewithal to make that change. I mean, I don't know. If they stretch them and can stretch them good enough and prove to themselves they're not going to stick, that's fine.

The other problem is the ball. I mean, and we've been dealing with this forever. These are brand-new basketballs. And I know they'll probably throw, well, the shooting percentages don't change. There were more mishandles for both teams in our game yesterday. The basketball is brand-new, inflated a little different, different than what the guys are comfortable with every day.

It begs the question in college basketball, how do we not have a standardized basketball? How can you play with an Adidas ball one game, Nike ball the next game, the Rock in the next tournament, a Spalding in the next tournament? If you're Hall of Fame Classic, you're playing with a Spalding. If you're in the NCAA Tournament, you're playing with Wilson.

Come on. I think we can standardize the game a little bit. I think it's common sense. But, hey, I know it's also a business. I'm just a coach; so I'm going to get back in my lane.

**Q. Tommy, Keshad was really big in that 15-0 run you guys had over the two halves to kind of take control of the game. Showed a little bit of everything, had the nice move underneath, step-back three, got an alley-oop dunk in transition. In terms of his three-point shooting, did you think he could be that, considering he'd never really taken a lot of threes at San Diego State? When did you kind of realize that might be an element he'd be able to add to your offense?**

TOMMY LLOYD: Well, it's something he and I talked about in recruiting. Obviously, we watched a little film on his shooting technique. It looked fine. So we talked. I told him that's one thing that we would like to add is maybe a little more shooting from our four position.

He's done a great job. He gets all the credit. He's really worked hard at his shooting and gotten to the point where I'm really comfortable. Like every 3-point shot he lines up I feel like is going in.

I don't have the stats in front of me to know exactly what he's shooting, but I know it's made a really positive impact on our offense overall, is his ability to step out and shoot threes, especially in those corners.

**Q. Are there common denominators that are happening offensively in some of the games where we've seen you guys be able to make double-digit threes as a team?**

TOMMY LLOYD: You're probably starting -- the common denominator is how we're being defended. I knew, once I took a deep dive into Long Beach State's analytics, the percentage of three-point attempts by their opponents was pretty high, based on shot attempts.

So I had a feeling they were going to pack it in, obviously, zone us like they did. Yeah, sometimes to beat that you've got to play over the top. And 35 threes is probably not a number that I would dial up as we start a game plan. But, you know, that's kind of what the game called for, and most

of them were really good shots.

For us to make -- I think we were 13 for 35. Probably at one point, before we took a couple late in the game, 13 for 32, and if you're shooting that percentage, that's going to allow you to play efficient basketball.

**Q. Tommy, historically, Arizona's backcourt has been very strong to get them deep into the tournament, even a national title. You don't just have two. You have four. How important is that? And they're interchangeable?**

TOMMY LLOYD: It's something we really value. We really value having guards that can share the workload. We're not dependent on one point guard to initiate offense for 40 minutes.

Yeah, so, you know, I mean, that's something we're comfortable with. Other teams are comfortable having one guy that they really settle in with and trust him with all the decisions. So it's really valuable for Arizona to have the guards we have.

We spend a lot of time trying to develop all those guys to have all-around skills to be able to initiate offense, to be able to read the ball screen game, to be able to figure out what coverages other teams are in and find advantages.

So I'm really proud of those guys. It's something we take a lot of pride in as a program, is helping those guys develop, and I think they've really come along nicely.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach, appreciate your time. Good luck tomorrow.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports