

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

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Salt Lake City, Utah, USA

Delta Center

Dayton Flyers

Coach Anthony Grant

DaRon Holmes II

Koby Brea

Media Conference

THE MODERATOR: We're now beginning the Dayton portion of today's press conferences. Joining us is junior guard Koby Brea and junior forward DaRon Holmes II.

We'll open up for questions.

Q. DaRon, you're playing a very talented Arizona team, specifically down low, playing against one of the best centers in the country in Oumar Ballo. How are you preparing for the match-up? What parts of the game are you focused on the most heading into tomorrow?

DARON HOLMES II: That's a good one. Very great player. Very good team. It's going to come down to listening to the scouting report. Yeah, just executing the scouting report. He's an insane level of physicality. So going to have to stay strong, stay locked in, and do what we do. I think we'll be okay.

Q. DaRon, did you follow Arizona basketball when you were growing up? It was one of your final four or something, right? Talk about your connection with Arizona.

DARON HOLMES II: Yeah, it was one of my final four. I was there following them when Sean Miller was the coach a little while back. So I went to McKale Center a couple times, have been on campus, familiar with the team and everything.

So, yeah, I was a big fan when I was in high school as well. So yeah, I know a lot about Arizona. So it's going to be exciting.



Q. DaRon, Koby, this question is for both of you guys. What's the transition been like coming off that comeback over Nevada and trying to turn around this quickly to play against a really good team like Arizona? What's the turnaround been for you guys coming off that win?

KOBY BREA: That's what March is all about. Move on to the next one. Can't stay stuck on the last game too long. We've just been focused on Arizona now. I feel like our coaches do a really good job of making sure that they do everything possible to put us in the best position possible.

So we've got to follow what they say, and I think we'll be all right.

DARON HOLMES II: Yeah, that's right. It was great to get the win against Nevada. We had to flush it and get ready for Arizona. Both very good teams. Every team is great so you have to be able to lock in and be ready for what's next.

Q. Koby, you said at the seven-minute mark when they had the time-out and Bennett tells you to start shooting, and you said your mindset changed and you became more aggressive. How did they actually do that? You've been playing the whole game. What did you do in pressure moments to step it up?

KOBY BREA: I think just hunting the shots a little bit more. Kind of was more opportunistic and trying to look for my shot a little bit more. Throughout the game I was kind of just following the game plan, going -- kind of not -- I wouldn't say cruising, but letting the game come to me.

At those moments, I just tried to look for more in my teammates. They were super confident in me. They started looking for me more as well. And the rest is history.

Q. Just what impresses you about Arizona? They like to play with pace. They like to shoot the threes. They have a complete type of team when things are going well for them.

DARON HOLMES II: Yeah, very great team. They play very well in transition, like you said. All the guys have a



good bench as well. So it's going to be us having to execute and focus. We've played great teams before, and we just know this is another great team. So we're excited to be able to play against them.

KOBY BREA: Like both of you said, they thrive off turnovers and missed shots. They try to get in transition and push it, play fast. I think we've got to try to limit that as much as possible.

They have a lot of size, a lot of physicality. So we'll have to bring it on our end as well.

Q. To both of you, have you seen and/or heard any of the reaction back home back in Dayton, and then back home for both of you guys, from the win yesterday?

KOBY BREA: Definitely a lot of noise back in Dayton. That's something, the support they've shown us throughout the entire year. To see all the reactions makes us happy because we're making them proud, and that's what it's all about.

DARON HOLMES II: Yeah, just going back and seeing, especially on social media, you can see, like, all of Dayton's happy. You see classes are being cancelled. So it's a big deal. Back home, I know all the students are happy. So very happy to see that.

Q. A follow-up to that question, has it been hard for you guys to block out the noise from that game and get focused on Arizona a little bit?

DARON HOLMES II: I would say a little, but not too hard. We were in the Charleston Classic earlier this year. So similar situation. We played LSU, won off a buzzer beater. We had fun that night. But after that, you've got to flush it and get ready for the next game, something the team is capable of doing, being able to flush it and move on. That's part of what we do, you know.

KOBY BREA: I think what helps a lot with that, we have a lot of experienced guys, in my opinion, on our team. A couple of transfers, a couple of people who have been in this program for a while. So we kind of know what to expect. We know there's going to be big games that are going to come through. We won this one, but it's time to move on to the next.

This is the tournament. It's all about survival and advancing. So we've got to do just that.

Q. Do you guys like playing during the day, morning, and do you feel like you're on the Eastern Time Zone body clock still?

DARON HOLMES II: It doesn't really matter to us, for the most part. It would be like a couple of hours ahead of times anyways, so it would be around 12:00 when we play in Dayton.

So we're used to it. We haven't traveled out west, so, I mean, the time usually is in our favor, so it's not that big of a deal.

KOBY BREA: I love playing basketball all the time. I don't think the time affects us too much. Our group is super competitive. We're basketball heads. We would play the game 24/7 if we could. We're excited to get another opportunity to do it.

Q. So you've got to be double heroes, right? You won the game and gave them a reason to celebrate last night, then you got classes canceled today?

DARON HOLMES II: I don't know if they canceled it today, but maybe some -- I don't know how the professors are doing back there. I know usually on game days, the professors might cancel it because they understand how big of a deal it is for the school. You see that. If they don't cancel it, make it asynchronous. So they do a pretty good job of that.

THE MODERATOR: With that, we'll excuse our student-athletes. DaRon, Koby, best of luck tomorrow.

We're joined on the dais by Dayton head coach Anthony Grant, and we'll begin with questions for the coach.

Q. Coach, congratulations on the win yesterday. My question to you is -- I asked the two players, DaRon and Koby, about this earlier; I'll ask you the same question -- how difficult is it to turn around this quickly from such an emotional comeback win like you had yesterday against Nevada?

ANTHONY GRANT: Well, I think obviously for the players, new environment. Obviously, the altitude was a question we got a couple days ago. I think the guys adjusted well.

We've had tournament situations earlier in the year where we had a similar situation where we either played back-to-back days or one day off in between and had to do it. I think our guys are experienced with this process, and both teams are in the same situation.

Q. Coach, as head coach of Dayton, you've never faced Arizona. You've never faced Tommy Lloyd in his tenure as a head coach. What do you respect most about Coach Lloyd, and what do you immediately

notice scouting this Arizona team?

ANTHONY GRANT: I don't know Tommy. I met him today. He's a great guy and has done a terrific job with this team. From his days at Gonzaga, he's obviously been around great coaches, been around great players, and he's done a great job of putting his stamp on the Arizona program.

You look at the success they've had not only this year but since he took over, he's done a terrific job. So got a lot of respect for what he's done.

Q. Coach, how did the preconference schedule set you up for tomorrow, having played some pretty tough teams?

ANTHONY GRANT: We feel like we've been tested throughout the non-conference, throughout the conference, as a matter of fact. I think we've played high-level competition. Our guys, I think, are experienced in terms of they've gone through stuff together, the prosperity, the adversity, the hard-fought wins, tough losses.

So I think this time of year, everybody has been through a lot. This tournament is the goal, what you play the whole year for to try to achieve.

I think our guys are excited and ready for the challenge.

Q. Coach, the exempt events, like Maui and this year Charleston, in addition to helping you get the résumé to have an at-large bid, the opportunity to play quality opponents that you're unfamiliar with in a short amount of time, does that in any way help in preparation for the NCAA Tournament?

ANTHONY GRANT: I think it does. I think, obviously, that's more of a question for the players. I think, like I said, I think the experience that you go through, through a season, whether it's the teams that we played in the non-conference or the A-10 was a gauntlet, you know?

Not enough can be said about how challenging that was. So many different styles of play. Some very talented players, high-level coaches throughout the season.

Certainly, what we try to do at Dayton is put ourselves in a position where we're playing very challenging opponents in the non-conference to try to put ourselves in position where, if we're able to have success, we can be in the conversation for an at-large bid, which is obviously what happened this year.

We put ourselves in that position, and so, yeah, we think

the experiences over the course of the season have prepared us for this opportunity.

Q. Coach, you shoot the three very, very well, shoot it a lot of times. Address your philosophy with it and your success this year with it.

ANTHONY GRANT: Well, we've got good players. We try to have our guys play to their strengths and try to help their teammates play to their strengths. That's a part of the identity we try to establish.

So our guys have done a good job of being able to share the basketball and being able to understand how to play to that identity, whether it's a three-point shot, a rim shot, or getting to the free-throw line.

But we just try to be efficient. So our guys have done a pretty good job of being efficient.

Q. Coach, I was just serious about DaRon Holmes, the story of you getting him -- or coming from Arizona and how you guys -- he was saying he really liked the culture there, and seemed like it's gone pretty well for him. What's your take on him?

ANTHONY GRANT: Well, you know, he's been in our program for three years. I think DaRon comes from a great family. I think DaRon was able to see the team we had back in '19, '20, see how we played.

I think he felt like his skill set, his talent would fit well in the system. Then once we got a chance to know each other, I think he felt very comfortable with our staff, with the things that we kind of shared with him about what we were about and how we could help him.

I think he's been true to his process all the way through. He's a very hardworking young man. He's a high-character young man. He's been able to just continue to develop mentally, physically, spiritually all the way through. It's a credit to him and his family.

Q. Arizona is a pretty balanced team. Love kind of scores a little bit more than others. I wanted to get your philosophy or your thoughts on Pelle Larsson, who kind of does it all.

ANTHONY GRANT: They've got a really talented group of guys. I couldn't begin to tell you that within the 24-hour period I'm as familiar with all of their personnel. Larsson's a heck of a talent. Just watching him from last night throughout parts of today, they've got a really good unit.

What's impressive about them is you look at their assist



numbers. You look at their ability to take care of the basketball, the pace they play at, high-scoring team. So they've got a variety of very, very talented players that play well together.

Q. Coach, you guys made 13 of 15 free throws yesterday. The best free-throw shooting team by percentage you've had in seven years. How much pride do you take in the performance the guys have had at the line?

ANTHONY GRANT: It was needed. We've had games where we haven't been able to be as successful from the free-throw line. So that was big yesterday. As big was our ability to keep them off the free-throw line. They've been one of the best -- they had been one of the best teams in the country at being able to get to the free-throw line. So I thought both of those things were huge.

Q. I have a question that kind of follows up on that. I was wondering about DaRon is one of the leaders in fouls drawn per 40, and you guys, on the other hand, don't foul a lot. Has that been a big emphasis, the fouling game both ways, the way you coach these guys?

ANTHONY GRANT: I wouldn't say it's an emphasis. I think it's a product of our system in terms of what we try to do offensively and defensively. Some games you're more successful at it than others. So you try to put together a situation where, again, like I said earlier, you play the strengths that your team has. You try to limit the strength of your opponent.

Q. Coach, you talked about how you guys have been in tournament situations a lot, where you guys have played games on consecutive days, games with only one or two -- with a day off in between.

You guys also -- but so you guys have probably needed to lean on your leadership a lot. Can you talk about how huge the leadership of guys like Koby and DaRon have been, especially how that leadership showed up last night in the win over Nevada?

ANTHONY GRANT: Yeah. My thing with our team is we have a saying that the sum is greater than the individual parts. We all gain strength from each other. So that's been a theme for our guys all year.

When we're at our best, it's by committee. We've got a team that, I think, leads that way as well in different areas. Some guys more vocal than others. Some guys lead with what they do in terms of taking care of their teammates. Some guys lead with their play. They breed a level of

confidence into other guys with their talent.

So I think it's a variety of different ways, but this team has been able to do it by committee all year.

Q. Anthony, you may have talked about this already, but just Koby Brea as a pure shooter, was he like that as you got him, or you've seen it develop? What is it about him that he can do this?

ANTHONY GRANT: Since I've known him, he's always been a guy that his shot has been one of the purest that I've seen. He's got a gift, and I think, obviously, over the course of his time, he's grown in a variety of different ways.

You're talking about a young man who has had to overcome adversity in injuries and different challenges that he's had. I'm proud of the growth he's had not only as a player and figuring out how to be great at what he's good at and mastering his skill set, but just overcoming just the adversity that he's had to go through on a personal level from the injuries and setbacks and different things like that.

Q. DaRon, he didn't shoot a three practically at all his first year. How has he developed in that area? What was the key to that?

ANTHONY GRANT: I think that's a part of the process that I was talking about. I think when he walked in the door, we needed him as a freshman to be able to have a major impact on our team, and I think he grew from the first game to, whatever, the 31st, 32nd game, however many games we played that year, understanding what he needed to do to impact college basketball.

I thought he really grew a lot over the course of that year, understanding the physicality of the game, figuring out what he was good at and how he could impact the game.

And then as a sophomore, he became a focal point for a lot of other teams and he had to add some things to his game there. Based on that growth, he just continues to get better as a player. Obviously, he took a few of them as a sophomore, and he's taken more this year. I think his best basketball is ahead of him. I don't think he's anywhere close to reaching how good he'll be. I think he's still growing, still learning.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach Grant. Best of luck tomorrow.

ANTHONY GRANT: Thank you.

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