

# NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Round - UC San Diego vs Michigan

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Ball Arena

## Michigan Wolverines Coach Dusty May Danny Wolf Tre Donaldson Vladislav Goldin

Media Conference

**Q. You're kind of a popular pick to go down in the 5-12 game. Do you see that?**

DANNY WOLF: Yeah, of course. I think that -- I've been on the other side of this, so obviously last year with Yale when I was a 13 seed, obviously going into that game with a chip on your shoulder, so I understand their perspective.

But from our perspective we know what we're capable of, we know how good we are. These last few weeks we've tried to block out all the outside noise and we're going to try to do the same tomorrow. We know who's in our locker room, who's been with us the last 10 months, so that's what we're going to focus on, and that's all we care about.

**Q. All of you guys have had previous NCAA Tournament experience with your previous teams, so how does your approach differ or stay the same coming in with a new program in Michigan?**

VLADISLAV GOLDIN: We all try to emphasize that it's the biggest event in basketball, so it's like, just take one game at a time and don't try to overlook anything. Just enjoy the moment, play one game, and what's going to happen happen.

TRE DONALDSON: Not just trying to focus on too much outside of our locker room, just controlling what we can control, and that's our energy and effort. And if we can bring that every night we're going to give ourselves a chance. So I think that's the biggest thing, focusing on us and Michigan basketball.



DANNY WOLF: These guys hit it on the nail. We've all been in this position before, a lot of success in the locker room, the coaches, multiple Final Fours from players. We all know what it takes to win games in this environment, and if we just stay locked in on that and key in on the little things, you'll put yourself in a good place.

**Q. I know UC San Diego forces a lot of turnovers, especially steals. What have you seen from that aspect of their defense? I know it's been a focal point for you guys all season. What did you like last weekend in a couple of those games where you guys did have lower turnover rates that you can apply to this matchup?**

DANNY WOLF: Yeah, obviously UC San Diego is a great defensive team and their turnover percentage is I think top in the country and I think it's top two in the field this year. They do a really good job at off-ball steals and forcing turnovers.

I think we did a much better job protecting the ball throughout the Big Ten Tournament. I know in the first game against Purdue we had six and then against Maryland we had a lot.

But these last few days in practice we've really just been focusing on ball security. We're capable of it, and it's not having the unforced turnovers. Yeah, UC San Diego is a well-coached team. Defensively they have great instincts and we know what we're going up against. We just got to focus on ourselves in terms of that.

TRE DONALDSON: I would say just the flow of our offense, being able to catch the ball we want and get the ball we want and being able to dictate offensively, I think that's a big thing for us being able to take care of the ball, not letting them run through passes, meeting passes.

Just little things offensively that will keep us from turning the ball over against their defense.

VLADISLAV GOLDIN: Just try and make a simple decision and not try to overcomplicate things.

**Q. Can you speak to Nimari and Will's impact on this**



**season? You're guys are all in your first year. You've known winning here, but they went through last season. How have they helped you three and the rest of the team get to this point?**

TRE DONALDSON: I would say what it means to play at the University of Michigan. I feel like those two guys have embodied what it means to play at Michigan, and just being able to show us that and how to walk in that light when embodying this, I feel like that's the biggest thing they've brought to our team. It's a pride playing for Michigan, so just having that pride gives us that push and that urge to win and play for each other.

VLADISLAV GOLDIN: An example like them is helping a lot because they show us how we deal with that.

**Q. Danny, have you stayed in contact with former teammates, coaching staff at Yale? What's it like potentially playing them in the second round, and what's been your impression of the Yale team this year?**

DANNY WOLF: Yeah, first of all, I have nothing but amazing things to say about Yale, my teammates, my coaches. I had an unbelievable two years there.

Obviously could not be happier with their success this year. I was cheering along when they beat Princeton and Cornell in the tournament. When I was walking in here today I ran into a few of the coaches and support staff and then I saw a few of my teammates who I keep in contact with.

It put a big smile on my face to see all those guys because we had a really special year last year and the year before.

Obviously I'm not looking past UC San Diego because that's all we're focusing on right now, and if the opportunity presents itself to play Yale, we're going to go at it head on and I'm going to put all that stuff aside and see them as another team. I have a lot of love for those guys, super proud of all of them, and yeah.

**Q. Danny, another semi-Yale question, but is there anything that, say, Yale and Michigan have in common as far as winning, figuring out how to win basketball games at such different kinds of schools?**

DANNY WOLF: I mean, yeah. It's two very storied basketball programs. Coach Jones, all he does is win. The last few years are examples of that.

They've gone to the tournament these last few years and we beat Auburn last year, and it was a pretty special

moment for our team.

At Michigan, obviously last year didn't go as anyone would have liked from a fan perspective, from a team perspective, and when we came into that year we knew what we had to do to kind of flip that page and bring Michigan back to success.

We're one step closer to that, and we have a few big weeks ahead to kind of cement ourselves in Michigan basketball history. But Yale is a winning program. Michigan is a winning program, and it has been.

Simple answer is yes.

**Q. Dusty said that you were one of the reasons you got your swagger back in the tournament, and you said that he had a sit-down or talk with you about your confidence and why he brought you here. Can you describe how that went and what he said to you?**

TRE DONALDSON: It wasn't necessarily what he said to me, it was just it wasn't a long conversation, it was a quick conversation. It's just to be Tre. That's something I've lived by for a long time but I just got away from it. He wanted me to get back to it.

For this team to be at its best I have to play with confidence and play with my swagger. That's when we are at our best. I get everybody going. And just continuing to do that, being that energy guy for this team. I feel like that's the biggest thing that I was bringing.

No matter if it's scoring the ball, defending, no matter what it is, I just have to bring that energy and that swagger, because that's what I need to win. That's what this team wants to do and that's what this staff wants to do.

**Q. For any of you guys, how do you feel like you're translating the momentum and success you had in the Big Ten Tournament, whether it be tempering those emotions or trying to build on what you did there or kind of a mix in between?**

TRE DONALDSON: I feel like the biggest thing is the Big Ten Tournament, being able to win it was great, but not getting too high, not getting too low.

Coming into the Big Ten Tournament we were coming off three tough losses, but our momentum and our energy coming into the Big Ten Tournament was big because we could have came in low, but we decided not to. Came in even keeled, neutral like Coach likes to say.

And after winning it and coming in now to play in the NCAA



Tournament, we can't be too high. We've just got to enjoy the Big Ten Tournament Championship at the end of the year, but right now we have to take care of business. So I can't really look back on that. We just have to focus on the task at hand.

**Q. Danny, you mentioned the Auburn win last year. You've kind of been on the other side of this. I was at that game. I saw the way they looked at you when they came on the floor. Maybe didn't take you guys as seriously as they should have, and then you showed them how well you can play basketball. What lessons from that did you learn that you can apply this time? Because when you walk on the floor and see a bunch of guys 6'4" to 6'7" that don't look like basketball players --**

DANNY WOLF: First of all, they look like basketball players. They're all one hell of a basketball player. I'm not discrediting UCSD at all. I made this a point to my teammates when we were watching film first against UC San Diego and I was trying to give them the other side of the -- just our perspective was going into the tournament, and obviously we were the underdog and a very clear underdog, and Auburn just came off an SEC Tournament Championship.

So we knew that it was us against everyone, and we really just had to play with -- we had to leave everything out there. We looked at Auburn and realized that the only thing that's stopping us from beating is ourselves. We kind of went in with that mindset, and I'm sure that UC San Diego is coming with that same mindset.

I know that a lot of my teammates have won games in March Madness, some as underdogs, some as favorites. When you get to March, everyone is a really, really good basketball player. UC San Diego is one of six teams that's won 30 games this year, so they're doing something right. All they're doing is winning right now.

We've just got to go into it knowing what we're capable of and knowing if we play our best brand of basketball that we like our five, and just need to block out all that outside noise and give UC San Diego the credit that they deserve.

**Q. Vlad you and Coach May enjoyed that ride with Florida Atlantic a couple years ago. How is it different this time not being the underdog and kind of being the hunted?**

VLADISLAV GOLDIN: We tried to think that there is no underdog or any favorite, because as soon as you start thinking who's underdog, who's the favorite, you're losing that reality, because everybody deserves to be here and

it's going to be a hell of a game no matter who plays who.

That's how it was. March Madness has shown us so many good stories. Just to stay focused and don't overthink who's underdog, who's favorite.

**Q. Danny, what was your experience like the first time that you got to the tournament? Was it overwhelming? How long did it take you to get used to that environment while you were playing? How much of an advantage can it be for you guys in that Dusty and all you players have tournament experience?**

DANNY WOLF: Yeah, I was talking with someone yesterday and they asked how it felt being here. I think the first thing that came to mind was just last year when we came to March Madness, it felt like a kid in a candy store. It was what you dreamed of, what we dreamt of our whole childhood, and we had buzzer beater to come to March Madness.

We were playing with house money. No one expected anything from us. They say the lights are brighter. When we walked into that gym the lights were bright and just the experience of it was our first time chartering as a team and all that went into it just made it a really special experience.

I think on the flipside this year it feels more like a business trip for us than it did last year at least, and we have really high expectations. We want to go to San Antonio. We know that we're capable of doing that, and we've got to go one game at a time.

We've got a really good opponent coming up tomorrow night and I speak for the entire locker room at just how excited we are to be here. Not many teams get to be in March Madness and it's a once in a lifetime experience. For us, we're grateful that we get it a few times, and the second part of that, I think it just kind of helps us. We've been here before.

All the main guys have won games in the tournament or they've won major impactful games. We know what it takes. We know how every possession matters, what you should and shouldn't do, the dos and the don'ts, and we've really got to focus on ourselves and try to block out all that outside noise.

We're really excited to be here to say the least.

**Q. Last weekend statistically all three games were a little bit different in terms of what you guys needed to do to win, but to go 3-0 and a couple days removed from it, what do you think you guys found or captured or recaptured as a team that allowed you guys to flip**

## **the script on the last couple weeks?**

TRE DONALDSON: I would say our togetherness. It was just, like I said, coming into the Big Ten Tournament after three tough losses we were desperate for a win. Just getting our team camaraderie back, just being able to go and win big games like that, the Big Ten has prepared us for moments like this with different types of games, wins, losses, blowouts, close games, all that.

So I feel like it's just prepared us for this time, and I feel like we have a very seasoned group that'll be ready for anything that's thrown at us come tomorrow night.

## **Q. Everybody asks Danny about last year's game. What are your thoughts on Auburn and Yale and your memories of that?**

TRE DONALDSON: I'm not going to really speak on it. It was a good game. Danny came out with the dub. But it's all love for Auburn, but it is what it is. I can't really share all my comments because people are entitled to their own opinion.

## **Q. Dusty, you have a lot of prior experience in this tournament and success in this tournament and a lot of the players do, as well. How do you channel that past experience and change your approach, whether it be differ that approach, keep it the same, and kind of collect that together into this team that's Michigan this year?**

DUSTY MAY: Well, every team is different and we've been so focused on our preparation and getting our guys prepared for our opponent that we haven't talked about all the extra stuff yet, and it's came at us quickly, too. We played and got back late Sunday night.

The one thing we've done differently is Danny started it by talking about the perspective of the underdog or the team that has nothing to lose. As a group we talked about how we're going to still be aggressive, we're still going to play the way we play, but at no point during that 40 minutes are we going to play with any fear of failure.

If they go on a run, and obviously the crowds typically go for the lower seed, smaller teams, that's not going to affect the way we play or the way we move forward.

We're just going to keep plugging away, keep fighting, and there's going to be absolutely no fear of failure with our group here hopefully the next couple days.

## **Q. UC San Diego's defense, they force a lot of turnovers, they get a lot of steals. What stands out**

## **about what they do defensively and then also as a team that's been focused on minimizing live ball turnovers all year. What's the key to succeeding?**

DUSTY MAY: Well, two ways to look at it. Number one, it's obviously terrifying when you have -- every team has flaws, we have a weakness and they have something that could really expose that weakness because it's their strength.

But the one thing it does also, it heightens the awareness of what they're doing because we know that we've struggled with this and we know how important it is to them.

So I do think there could be a reversal of we're so cautious and our awareness and senses are so heightened that it could be a good thing.

But going back to the first point, the way they play the ball, it's impressive. Their hand activity, their physicalities, their anticipation. They've got guys that have a really, really good level of what you're trying to do offensively and then how to counter it.

It's been impressive. There's a reason they won 30 games and they're sitting here in the NCAA Tournament. They have really, really good players and a system and a well-coached team.

## **Q. Obviously a couple years ago you took an underdog all the way to the Final Four and now you're with this program. How is it different, the perspective of leading a team like Florida Atlantic and now leading a school like Michigan?**

DUSTY MAY: You know, at Florida Atlantic when we made the tournament, it was almost like mission accomplished. Then we realized, you know what, we've got a much higher ceiling than just making a tournament.

And so when we got past, I guess, the ecstasy of being the second team to ever make the tournament from FAU and a group had never been together and a first time head coach, then we just thought, you know what, we can actually do some damage.

The one thing that I felt and the staff, we talked about it after the fact, was when we played the Power Five teams and the higher seeds, the lower seeds, whatever way you want to look at it. We felt like when it got late in the game and the game slowed down that they played -- I don't want to say they played tight, but we played looser and we played with more confidence.

So we want to make sure just because we're that Power Five team or whatever you want to call it, that we don't fall into that trap. It's March Madness; everyone is going to love the Cinderella. This is a very, very popular upset pick for a reason: Because they're really, really good.

Our guys have certainly heard that all week, but that's not what matters. How we execute for 40 minutes, how connected we stay, and how we respond when they do make runs is going to ultimately going to determine whether we come back here on Saturday or not.

**Q. You've said this was a team you were going to study anyway before you found out you were going to play them. Their offense is something that they sort of developed in Division II because they didn't have scholarships, they didn't have a lot of athleticism. Their defense was a matchup that they took from a Division II team that --**

DUSTY MAY: Do you know which D-II team that was?

**Q. Pomona.**

DUSTY MAY: Pomona, okay.

**Q. Yeah. When you look at things that were developed in D-II, can those really work at the highest levels of Division I, and why would you look at something like that where they basically put those things in because they have less athleticism and size?**

DUSTY MAY: Well, number one, they have to play differently. Obviously, when you're going in and you have established programs like Irvine and Santa Barbara and teams like that in your league, you can't just move up in and do the exact same thing they're doing.

We had the same game plan when we came to Michigan. It's one of the reasons we have two seven-footers when everyone thought we were crazy. We were just determined not to just follow -- look at whoever is in first or whoever is in second or whoever has the most tradition and try to do that and mimic it, because I'm not a Hall of Fame coach and we don't have the evidence of doing it that way of it working.

So we simply wanted to be different, do something you're not going to see every day in practice and your habits don't naturally align with. That's what they've done.

As far as it working, we have a saying that everything works somewhere and nothing works everywhere. So you don't have to have the best plan. You just have to have a plan that the players and staff are all committed to and

bought into, and they obviously have that.

But the style of play they're playing with could work anywhere in the world, as long as they have that buy-in and the players, it fits their, I guess, skill sets and qualities.

But we're definitely going to take some of the way they play defense and implement it into our own way.

**Q. Wondering what the pros are and the cons if there are any cons of having your son Charlie on the team.**

DUSTY MAY: Well, the pro is obviously you get to see your son every day. In this business we travel a lot. We're on the road recruiting. We spend a lot more time with other people's kids than we do our own typically, and it's a labor of love.

But just to be able to share this experience and to see him grow -- and also it's another level of accountability where you -- I think all of us parents know our kids become -- they change based on who they're around every day.

So just putting him in our locker room with our guys and my youngest son Eli is a manager, and him being around our managers as a freshman in college is something that I look at and I feel very, very fortunate that I'm at a place like Michigan where they're around high-achieving, ambitious, driven young men.

And so that's ultimately what you want your kids to be around every single day. There's a lot of layers to it, but when we're at the facility, he's not Charlie May, he's No. 12 and he's got a job to do. That's to serve his teammates as a walk-on.

**Q. It looked like Roddy got banged up a little bit last game. Can you talk about his health? You guys come into this tournament not as deep as probably what you thought you were going to be. With the altitude do you have to shorten shifts or adjust substitutions or anything like that?**

DUSTY MAY: Yeah, a little bit. I think early in the game we'll probably have to sub a little bit. Vlad normally three and a half minutes in he's rim running, he's banging. We'll probably go a little bit earlier.

But also there will be times when I'll probably have to manage the game a little bit more than just trying to squeeze out more and more possessions.

We were in a pickle against Wisconsin. Neither team was shooting it well. The game was getting up-and-down and it was a little bit ragged. But we're sitting there on the

sidelines and I'm thinking, man, they've played four in four days and we've played three in three. Let's see if we can keep things going up and down and see if it'll pay dividends later.

As far as this game, they don't play fast tempo so I don't think we are going to have to substitute that much. Defensively because they're so good teams don't shoot it very fast because they can't. They can't generate a quality shot quick enough.

So we're going to play our game. We probably will have to sub a little bit more frequently.

Fortunately thought our bench has played well. The emergence of LJ; obviously Will Tschetter and Roddy coming off the bench. Roddy practiced today. He looked good. And then Phat Phat Brooks. We have a lot of confidence in Phat Phat, so that gives us nine guys that are all versatile, can play multiple positions.

Fortunately we're not playing a team that's out here acclimated to the altitude, so they're at the same disadvantage that we are.

**Q. Can you talk a little bit about Mike Boynton, Jr., and how he's led the defense pretty much all season and had a lot of success with that.**

DUSTY MAY: Well, he's helped us on so many levels. He was a head coach at this level for a number of years, so he's been an unbelievable resource and sounding board for me.

Tactically, the extra stuff that comes with the job, the recruitment at this level is different. The circles around the players are different.

We still had a very, very Ma and Pa operation at FAU where we had guys that didn't have anyone around them. We were their circles.

Just getting aligned with the people that want the same thing for the players that you do, there's just a lot more time spent on other things, and obviously he's done a great job coaching basketball.

Our players respect, trust and are bought into all that he's done and the rest of the staff has done.

That's been a big part of our success, finding a former head coach that's done it at a level, and he's also not set in his ways. He's like the rest of the staff; he's trying to learn, grow, get better every single day, and that's the beautiful thing about our group, that we're all just trying to help and

serve our players and improve along the way.

**Q. The numbers would say you won three games in three different ways in Indianapolis. I'm curious what common threads you saw from your team leading to that breakthrough that maybe you can bottle or try to replicate this week.**

DUSTY MAY: Well, the first game against Purdue, we took care of the basketball, and usually every media time-out I'm weighing our turnovers and I think, gosh, these games all run together.

We managed the turnovers really, really well in Game 1, and we put probably 75 percent of our practice time the last five or ten practices on certain things that we thought would help with that issue.

So we thought, man, did we fix it, is this problem solved. Then obviously the next night we came and I think we had probably five in the first four minutes and it was obvious that the problem wasn't solved.

But we're dominant on the glass that game against Maryland. We out-rebounded them 47-18. I just think this team -- like I said, every team has its flaws. Some teams have great play making, some have great shooting, some have great size.

The turnovers are a product of, number one, maybe we don't have enough play making, individual play making where we don't have to generate something that just one guy can create an advantage and we play off that advantage.

But then the third game we went back and really took care of the basketball well. Again, we didn't make shots, and our defense I thought was the best it's been all season.

We've just taken a lot of pride, and we don't know what it's going to look like tomorrow. We have no idea how we're going to win this game but we believe that we're going to, and we're going to figure it out during the game, whatever the game is going to -- the game is going to tell us something and we're equipped because of our league, because of our pre-conference schedule to figure out a way to win that game.

**Q. With the way they play defense, forcing teams baseline and high turnover numbers and things like that, how much can you with your offense draw from the principles you've instilled all season, and how much will you add some new stuff just for this game?**

DUSTY MAY: Well, we've faced teams like this before,

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

and we've done well at times and not so well at times. But basketball is a game of opposites. What did you say they want us to do, go baseline? So we're going to try not to go baseline. What else did you say? Yeah, they're going to try to speed us up so we're going to try not to get sped up.

Our guys have seen it before. I don't think they've seen it at this level. These guys are really, really good at what they do and they have an older group.

We're going to show up. I think we're going to have a good plan. I think our guys are bought into the plan, and it's going to come down to who executes, who makes the plays in extremely tense, intense and stressful situations.

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