

# NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Round - Yale vs Texas A&M

Thursday, March 20, 2025

Denver, Colorado, USA

Ball Arena

**Texas A&M Aggies**  
**Coach Buzz Williams**

**Jace Carter**

**Wade Taylor IV**

**Pharrel Payne**

Media Conference

Texas A&M 80, Yale 71

THE MODERATOR: We're ready to start with Texas A&M.

We're going to go right to questions for the student-athletes, per coach's request.

**Q. Seems like as soon as you got into the game, you were able to make an impact. What was your mindset going into this matchup particularly? What was working so well for you today on offense so particularly?**

PHARREL PAYNE: I would my mindset before was just to be aggressive. My inside game was working for me all night.

**Q. Wade, can you talk about Pharrel, not just tonight but going back to when he joined the team, what y'all were expecting from him, if you got more than you ever expected.**

WADE TAYLOR IV: Pharrel is phenomenal. I remember when he got in the portal. Man, he's really good. I remember sitting in coach's office, watching some of these clips. I sent him a text immediately: We need you.

Ever since he's been on campus, he's been outstanding, on and off the floor. I'm proud to say he's my big man. That's just a testament to what he's done all year. He's been consistent all year. We're really, really excited he's on our team.



**Q. It was at one point they were out-rebounding you. You ended up having an eight-rebound advantage. What changed in the last time? Was it your athleticism or effort?**

JACE CARTER: I think it was just our habits. We do that every day, so it was bound to come out sooner or later. We rep on it all the time. We talk about it. Everybody talks about it. Teams, they get tired in the second half. We don't stop.

We knew we had to keep going. I feel like we did a good job the second half.

**Q. Jace, can you talk through the run, the three-pointer. What was going through your mind?**

JACE CARTER: I feel like my teammates always hold me to a high standard. Opportunities always present themselves. That's kind of what I've been preaching to myself. My teammates have preached to me, even my mentors, just stay ready.

I'm happy I was able to make an impact on the team. I'm glad we got the win. I can't do any of it without my Lord and savior Jesus Christ, and just the strength He gives me every day to keep going and to be myself no matter what the circumstances are, whether shots go in or not.

**Q. Pharrel, what led to your decision to transfer from Minnesota? How much of an asset have you been to this team since you did?**

PHARREL PAYNE: Ultimately, I was looking for a change. When I got in the portal, I got a lot of from Wade, Manny, all those guys. I heard what Buzz had to say. It seemed like that was going to be my new home.

**Q. Wade, we asked Yale about you yesterday. They said they would probably be able to handle you.**

WADE TAYLOR IV: Who?

**Q. No. 2. Defensive Player of the Year for the Ivy League. Did you have a feeling you were going to have to take that personally?**

WADE TAYLOR IV: No. No, sir. I was just making sure I was locked in on the things that we needed to do to win, make sure I hold my team accountable. Take the right shots, make the right plays. Ultimately it leads to the win.

**Q. I'm sure when you went to the transfer portal you had other options. What was it that ultimately sold you on Texas A&M?**

PHARREL PAYNE: I would say the first day was open, the first morning, coaches were able to come out and see players. Coach Buzz was the first person to come see me.

When he told me what they were doing over there at Texas A&M, I wanted to join.

**Q. How did you feel y'all handled No. 4 today, especially the season he's been having?**

JACE CARTER: I feel like we did a good job. He's an elite-level scorer. I feel like we harped on him a lot, defend defense, 23 points. He's an elite-level scorer. I feel like we did a good job on him. I'm glad we got the win.

**Q. Wade, first half do you feel that was one of your better offensive performances at half this season? What was working so well on the offensive end?**

WADE TAYLOR IV: I think sometimes it get -- some people get confused on what we consider a good offensive half. We've had a lot of great offensive halves this year, how we want to play.

No, we played pretty well in the first half. We still had a couple things we could have cleaned up, which we tried to do in the second half. Ultimately we played to the game plan, and I think we executed it pretty well.

THE MODERATOR: We'll dismiss the student-athletes at this time.

JACE CARTER: God bless you.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Coach Williams.

**Q. Buzz, they got within six in the second half. You called a timeout, then you were able to go on a run. What was said at that timeout? Why do you think you were able to respond well?**

BUZZ WILLIAMS: Yeah, I think a lot of the things we've been saying since Monday morning have been the same. I think our staff did a really good job of preparing our guys for how they play.

I also think that we practiced the adjustments. I don't think that you can give 2, 42 and 4 the same diet over and over. The words that we used on Monday, the words that we used on Tuesday, there was just a little bit more depth, a little bit more film to prove what we were trying to accomplish.

I thought we continued to get better. Wednesday probably even more depth. Rarely do you have three days to prepare for a team. For the most part the things we talk about at the timeouts are the same specific to the opponent and specific to us. I do think that our response was great. I think up until that point, to be transparent, I thought we had done a really good job of playing to the scouting report on what we wanted to try to accomplish on both ends of the floor.

**Q. You talked about not giving them the same diet. Looked like a zone trap kind of thing. Was that new? A tweak?**

BUZZ WILLIAMS: No, sir. We started it before we moved to College Station. We've changed some of the temperatures of it, whether there's a trap, what the first line is doing, what the second line is doing.

Their press attack somewhat dictates how we change the temperature. Also our roster management dictates who is where.

You can't leave 4 alone. You can't leave 11 alone. And No. 2 is tremendous downhill.

I thought in the first half the metrics that we use to quantify the effectiveness of what we call triangle, we were excellent. We talk about those things at halftime.

I thought there in the middle of the second half we turned it off, and we turned it off because they were behind double-digits and they were going a lot faster. This is the fastest analytically they have played all year.

A portion of that is since November the 16th they haven't been behind in a game by more than three possessions. So their transition volume rate was much faster, so we turned it off. We turned it back on.

I think there was a timeout at 4:29, maybe it was 4:01 or 0-2, I can't remember. We turned it back on. We're trying to win time of possession even when we don't have the ball. That's been a big part of our defensive philosophy.

**Q. Some of those Yale runs it seems like they were able to bring the crowd into it, had the momentum.**

**What did it take for y'all to really lock in and turn that momentum on its head?**

BUZZ WILLIAMS: Yeah, I'm familiar with the runs. I honestly can't tell you about the crowd or the noise.

I think they're a good team. They're one of the six teams in the country that has only lost one game in 2025. I like their roster in regards to not only how they play but how they utilize their roster.

They make you make decisions on the weak side. But before you have to make decisions on the weak side, you better figure out how to guard 42 at the rim. Both of those things are correlated. 42 can beat you at the rim and 4 can beat you on the weak side.

We've studied their team specific to this year. Their team was a little different last year. But how they played was the exact same. 42 played 10 minutes a game last year, and kind of took a completely different role. 4 has continued to rise in his ability to make tough shots. 2 has been three-time Defensive Player of the Year and MVP of the Ivy League.

They have a lot of components, so you have to determine how you're going to guard the rim, and you have to determine how you're going to guard the weak side. Depending on who was in the game for them dictated what we were doing.

**Q. Buzz, regarding Pharrel, I assume that y'all felt like he would be kind of the missing piece. Could you have envisioned the kind of performance he had tonight? Did you see things in the planning for the game that led you to believe he would be able to have such a big game?**

BUZZ WILLIAMS: We were the first Power Four school to offer Gochi a scholarship. I remember watching him in an auxiliary gym at 8:00 in the morning in a non-shoe-company-sponsored team.

I love the spirit. I don't know that I've ever been around a player that's as extroverted as he is that's also so pure in how he processes life.

A lot of new content in how we go about things. A different pace than what he was accustomed to. To his credit, since the day after Labor Day, he's never backed up one step. He's been accountable. He's continued to make strides in how we want to play.

I do think getting 10, who is a Texas kid, who I love his motor and the impact he's had at Yale, I do think that

getting him in foul trouble helped us. I think that changes how coach was utilizing their roster.

I thought Lyle did a great job, as did our team, to put Gochi in positions to be successful.

**Q. There's not a lot of advantages of being as old as I am, but I did cover the '03 team that you took to the Dance.**

BUZZ WILLIAMS: Kristi Watson was associate A.D. at Colorado State in 2003. I haven't seen her since then. She's behind you. She's younger than you, but she's here.

**Q. Dale said college basketball can be a transactional business. What about the two of you have allowed you to work together so long, so well?**

BUZZ WILLIAMS: Coach hired his two college roommates when he got the job at Colorado State. I was the fifth person he interviewed. He didn't know me. Multiple people in the south had recommended me. I did not know coach. I had never been to Colorado.

He was exhausted when he hired me. I was over the top in trying to express how much I wanted to work for him. Very unique scenario. He hired me 18 days before I married my wife. 60 days later his best friend, who was on his staff, their daughter was killed when we were on a foreign tour.

There's a lot of things that have transpired that were never in the print media or on social media.

I hired coach when I got the job at Marquette in 2008. I should have never got the job at Marquette. You could argue that coach probably shouldn't have got the job at Colorado State.

There's never been an ego problem between either of us, regardless of whose title was what.

Coach left after Marquette after one year and became the head coach at Liberty. By the time I got to Virginia Tech, we played one another. At the end of that year that we played against one another, coach got fired.

He may be the best human being that's been a college coach that I've ever known. My problem that I had with our players and the problem that I have with our staff, there's 110 years of experience with me wherever we've lived. Devin Johnson is our associate head coach. He was a manager when I was hired at UNO. My problem is I'm too loyal.

I love people that have an edge. I love people that have

went about it the wrong way, the hard way, and have fought through adversity. They're probably not receiving the attention that they're due, players and coaches. But that unspoken bond of loyalty and love and trust is very difficult for me to articulate.

Coach is 67. This is his 43rd year in college basketball. He's been a head coach longer than I've been a head coach. He's worked for me for eight years. When he hired me in 2000, nobody could have ever explained this story.

When he speaks to me, I don't move and I listen with both eyes because he's only going to say something that impacts winning.

Thanks for asking.

**Q. I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about the impact that Jace had in nine minutes, made an impact on both ends of the court.**

BUZZ WILLIAMS: He is an example of many our guys in regards to his ability to overcome, his belief in who we were, his belief in what we're about, his willingness to fight regardless of what the stats say, the belief that our group has in him regardless of his percentage from the free-throw line or from three.

I'm so happy for his family, who believed in us when literally there was no reason to believe in us. For him to impact the game the way that he did today, after some of the ups and downs that he's been through thus far this season, I was in real-time telling him how happy I was for him and how proud I was of him.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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