

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

Thursday, March 20, 2025

Denver, Colorado, USA

Ball Arena

Michigan Wolverines Coach Dusty May Tre Donaldson Roddy Gayle Jr. Vladislav Goldin

Media Conference

Michigan 68, UCSD 65

THE MODERATOR: We're ready to begin with Michigan.

Coach, we'll start with some thoughts about tonight's game.

DUSTY MAY: First of all, I want to congratulate UC San Diego not only on the year they had, but the way they carried themselves, the way they play the game. They're fun to compete against. Sometimes when you're scouting, it's tough to watch as much tape as we do. Watching them was actually fun, to see those guys playing with the joy, the togetherness. When you win 30 games in a league like theirs, it shows they've got some real substance.

A lot like our guys, they've been in close games earlier in the year, found ways to win. Lately they've been able to pull away and separate. A great college basketball game. Once again, very grateful that these guys are on our team and they elevate their play when it means the most. Ultimately that's what it came down to again.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the student-athletes.

Q. Tre, after what you went through last year in the first round, you're down two, get the chance to put your team up, you hit the three-pointer. What was the feeling like?

TRE DONALDSON: I mean, it's not necessarily anything about last year, it's about what this means to my teammates and I. We're desperate to win. We want to



continue to play. We don't want our season to be over.

When it's time to make big plays, when the opportunity presents itself, I just want to attack it as best as possible if it's presenting itself to me. I want my teammates to do the same thing.

We're just trying to win. That's what it comes down to. Last year is last year. We now have to worry about be in the moment, be where our feet are.

Q. Can you talk about the pressure that their defense put on you, the traps at the top of the key.

RODDY GAYLE JR.: It's just something unique, something we haven't really seen much this year. I'm impressed how our guys were able to handle that. The run and jump, we kind of just felt like just to get it to the opposite side and force long closeouts, drive good spacing, we were going to be able to find our teammates. I think that's where we thrived.

TRE DONALDSON: Their defense is not necessarily like pressure. It's like chaos, I would say. It's about taking care of the ball, ball faking, trying to give them the run and jump. That's what they're trying to do. When they're running around, gambling, they want to speed you up. That's something we tried to focus on, continue to take care of the ball as a team.

Q. How do you mentally approach the last five minutes or so when the crowd gets loud for them?

VLADISLAV GOLDIN: Obviously we have a lot of guys who had, like, some experience in March Madness before. That's something we talk before we start playing, that if something going to go wrong, like everybody cheer for the lower seed. We expected, so...

We knew it's coming, and we just played with that.

Q. Vlad, you had three really big rebounds in traffic. Were you a little extra motivated?

VLADISLAV GOLDIN: Yeah, 100%. I did not want to go home, so you got to do what you got to do (smiling).

DUSTY MAY: Well said, Vlad (smiling).

Q. Tre, after such a dominant first half, everything seems to be going their way in the second half. How do you keep your composure? Did you feel it was inevitable they were going to take the lead?

TRE DONALDSON: I wouldn't necessarily say we thought they were going to take the lead. We were just trying to, like I said, stay in the moment. Whatever the game threw at us, just being able to respond the right way. That's our biggest thing. Not worry about the last play or two plays before that. Just focusing on the next play.

I feel like that's a good team. They won 30 games. We knew it was going to be a dogfight no matter what, they came in, took the lead. No matter what.

Our togetherness those last five minutes when the crowd got crazy, like you said, that's what helps us stay calm. We have a veteran group of guys that can stay even-keeled and stay neutral. Just coming together, that's the biggest thing.

This tournament throws so many things at you. These games are going to be all lopsided. They might be tight like we were today. You never know. We've been in games like that all year through the Big Ten. We just find a way to win. That's the biggest thing in this tournament.

DUSTY MAY: 17, to be exact.

Q. Did you watch the McNeese State game? Were you aware of that? Bad omen?

TRE DONALDSON: McNeese State played today. Nothing against McNeese State. Us Michigan guys, we were focusing on us, the task we had at hand. Like I said, that's a team that won 30 games. We weren't sure how we were going to have to win it, but we knew we had our hands full. We were really focused on ourselves. We didn't get to look at the McNeese State game. I can't answer that question because I didn't get to watch it.

THE MODERATOR: We'll dismiss the student-athletes at this time. Questions for Coach May.

Q. You talked yesterday about when you were at Florida Atlantic, when you got it tight late in the game, you got really loose. Is that kind of what happened today?

DUSTY MAY: We take pride in that. Yeah, absolutely. We've been in these and you feel it. It got loud in there tonight. I was impressed with how many people were

pulling against us. We are the lower seed tomorrow -- I mean on Saturday. We'll welcome all the in-between fans as the 5 seed going against Texas A&M. We'll welcome those guys.

Yeah, we knew they were going to make a run. I thought for a short prep time our guys did a really good job on UCSD. They just keep coming at you, keep coming at you. They believe, as well. They have older guys. Man, they put on a performance in the second half.

But like the rebounds of Vlad, I thought Rubin Jones had two monster rebounds as well. Those aren't rebounds that land in your hands. He got one big tip-out which allowed us to call a timeout. Late he finished it up at the very, very end with another rebound. Those hustle plays, especially by Vlad, Rubin, and Danny, didn't have one of his better games offensively, but he was a monster on the glass, five offensive rebounds. Tre Donaldson, big shots, Roddy Gayle getting downhill. We needed all those paint points.

Q. What do they do on defense?

DUSTY MAY: Essentially they were double-teaming Vlad before he had the ball. We threw it to him, and he was essentially triple teamed. He padded it back out. It created a closeout.

He generates a lot of attention. I don't think we did a great job of taking what the game was giving us. We wanted to cause that overreaction, swing it, drive a long closeout. The ball was sticking up top.

Part of the reason is they get in the passing lanes. They're very, very disciplined. When they do get behind the ball, it's impressive how fast they are to get back and make plays with back tips or scrambling and rotating.

Fortunately we were in South Florida and there's a coach named Jim Crutchfield at Nova Southeastern. We wanted to play them the year we went to the Final Four because we thought we might see a souped-up version of that. They press in the passing lanes. It felt a little bit like that where you simply can't run your stuff. Every timeout they're running and jumping us, forced us to play basketball.

With our case, we don't see that very often when you're able to go against a scrambling defense. But they do it well. It's their togetherness and how they're connected which makes it ultimately work as well as it does.

Q. Final defensive possession in the game, Danny gets switched out onto an island. What stood about his ability to challenge that shot?

DUSTY MAY: First and foremost, they're calling the play Luka. I looked at the staff. What actually they may be running that looks like the Mavericks? It was an isolation three straight times from No. 13. He made incredible plays. We changed our coverage the next timeout. On that last possession, I thought they would go quick. We thought they would try to get a quick two with 19 seconds.

When we got the switch, it got to about seven or eight, I was trying to signal Danny to foul. But I lost my voice. He forced a tough shot and Rubin finished it with a big-time rebound.

Q. Can you talk about how your team reacted in the final two minutes, all the chaos, the big offensive rebounds.

DUSTY MAY: Yeah, I've spent a lot of time. During the year you don't have a lot of time to reflect and study the data with the film and whatever. I've spent a lot of time the last three or four weeks trying to figure out why we're so good in late games. 'Cause we miss free throws, front ends. We didn't finish well around the rim.

Usually those things are the recipe, right? When I think about it, I look at our guys, in the last five minutes of games, their awareness, their intensity, their determination is heightened at another level. I guess that was my hypothesis a couple weeks ago. I watched it even closer because it seems like we're in these games every single game.

No way Vlad should have gotten those rebounds. His determination to win in crunch time is impressive. Like Tre Donaldson's big shot. They're not afraid of the moment.

Obviously good players make good plays. I think the fearlessness and I think a lot of failure comes with simply being afraid of the results. We're never afraid of the results. We weren't scared to go home today. We were going to come in here and hoop and play our game and trust it's enough to get to Saturday. If not, we were going to tip or cap to these guys and root like hell for them.

Q. You mentioned being forced to just play basketball in the last couple minutes. What about this team made you feel like they were prepared for that?

DUSTY MAY: Our team?

Q. Yes.

DUSTY MAY: We have good players. We got downhill, got in the paint. We have good basketball players. When

they force you to play basketball, you need to be able to make some plays. Credit our guys, they did that. When it got organized, we were pretty good. When we were unorganized, they found a way to get downhill and break down the defense enough times.

The 11 for 20 from the free-throw line, at least two or three were front ends. We didn't convert some shots around the rim we typically do. If you have those back, maybe you have a little bit of margin. Every night is different for us. We kind of figure it out.

Q. You mentioned some weird shots that didn't fall. When this was going their way in the second half, were you happy with the adjustments you made?

DUSTY MAY: I wasn't happy with our execution. We did some things that we went into this game that we're not going to do. We didn't say we're not going to do this. This is how we're going to attack I we got away from that. Then the wheels start turning.

L.J. Cason had two wide-open threes without a guy within 10 feet of him. They didn't go in. Those are the shots we want to get.

Defensively we lost our edge when the shots weren't going in. I think that's a little bit of human nature as well. Credit them, they made good adjustments. They forced us to continue to make plays. We didn't convert on any of our three-on-twos. It's a reason because they do it better than most, because they never quit on a play. You think you have a three-on-two, but that is gone in about a millisecond because of their effort.

Yeah, no, I wasn't happy with our adjustments. But I also wasn't happy with the attention to detail compared to how it was in the first half.

Q. Sometimes you foul up pretty late, and sometimes you don't. It looked like you were calling for it late in that game. What was your view of the last shot?

DUSTY MAY: They had it with 19 seconds. It's not our call. I thought they were going to try to get a quick strike obviously because they're down. That didn't happen. When we got to switch late, I was trying to get Danny to call it. I don't have my voice. He couldn't see me. He was locked into playing defense. He actually forced them inside the line, popped back out. I thought Danny stayed in the space fairly well.

Q. You started the game pushing the ball. Was that a point of emphasis or more of taking what their defense gave you?

DUSTY MAY: No, it was sort of like point of emphasis. We were really good at it. Just a combination of not getting as many stops. When they're getting the second and third shot, getting to the free-throw line, things like that, we just don't have the same flow when we're at our best.

Our defense has been really, really sound. To be honest, other than our few turnovers, most of their 38 points in the second half were hard-earned, tough baskets. We tried to force them to play one-on-one and stay at home on the shooters, and they were able to. Fortunately for us Tait-Jones played in foul trouble most of the night. I thought we did a nice job of defending him one-on-one. I think our size helped in that regard.

Overall we want to play fast and we wanted to try to get to their legs. We thought that would affect the three-point shooters.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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