

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: Second Round - BYU vs Wisconsin

Friday, March 21, 2025

Denver, Colorado, USA

Ball Arena

Wisconsin Badgers
Coach Greg Gard
Carter Gilmore
John Blackwell
Nolan Winter
Media Conference



THE MODERATOR: We're ready to begin with Wisconsin student-athletes.

We'll now take questions.

Q. Obviously now you know something about BYU. Could you speak on what stands out to you about what you've learned about this team so far.

NOLAN WINTER: Yeah, I mean, a very tough team, well-coached. Shoot the three at a very high level. It's going to be a point of emphasis tomorrow to limit those.

No, they're really good in transition, too. It's going to be a good game for us and a good test for us, for sure.

JOHN BLACKWELL: Like Nolan said, they're really talented, well-coached. They won 10 of their last 11. Around this time, that's really good. They're hot right now, all the confidence in the world. It's our job to shut that off, go out there and give it our all.

CARTER GILMORE: Piggybacking off them, they're well-coached, deep team as well that has a lot of options, a lot of guys that can do a lot of different things. Shooting the three ball, they do a great job on.

Great team that's hot right now. Well-coached. We're excited for the matchup.

Q. John, with one day to prepare, what do you want to know specifically about your opponent to help you get

ready for a game like that?

JOHN BLACKWELL: Are you talking about in general?

Q. Just in general when you have one day to prepare.

JOHN BLACKWELL: Probably just their sets and how they guard. I think that's the main thing. Effort and energy, that's all on us. We got to bring that every single game. As a matchup with one day ahead of a team, you look over the sets, what's made them good, what got them going, what do they do good.

Defensive-wise, how they play. Do they get after you? What kind of coverages do they show? So yeah...

Q. Nolan, a lot was made of the altitude thing. BYU being accustomed to it. After being here three or four days, have you noticed is that a thing, in your game the other day?

NOLAN WINTER: Maybe a little bit. But obviously we came from a Big Ten tournament where we played four games in four days. We knew we were going to have to recover no matter where we were going.

I think with our strength coach, the whole team as a unit, we did a really good job of recovering, staying hydrated. Doing all the little things.

When the game came around, we all felt pretty good out there. It maybe kind of shocked us a little bit at first, the altitude, but I think we adapted to it pretty well. We practiced yesterday, Monday, Tuesday, whenever it was we got here. I think we're pretty accustomed to it now.

Q. What are the advantages of playing first? You can watch all the other games. Did you watch games yesterday?

JOHN BLACKWELL: Yeah, that was fire to watch. Especially when you win, you get to watch all the rest of the games, see who you potentially could be playing and stuff like that, so...

Get to chill out the rest of the day, so yeah.



CARTER GILMORE: Yeah, I think it's pretty cool. Let it set in a little bit more, too, after the Big Ten championship, quick turnaround.

We spent a lot of time recovering, practicing, getting ready for the last game. It was nice to get that win, settle in, really let March Madness sink in. It's always been a dream of ours to be here. Definitely cool and fun to watch other games as well. Can't wait to go watch more after this.

THE MODERATOR: We'll dismiss the student-athletes at this time. Thank you, fellas.

We have Wisconsin coach Greg Gard. We'll now take questions for the coach.

Q. Any viable comparisons among Big Ten teams to BYU from what you've seen?

GREG GARD: Ourselves, for one (smiling).

No, they're impressive. I've seen a little bit of 'em throughout the year. Obviously sometimes it's later night in the Midwest, a little different time zone.

Illinois a little bit. Illinois shoots a lot of threes. Jakucionis, their point guard, is very similar to Demin. Big, really good in the ball screens. I think BYU may even have more shooters than Illinois.

There's different traits or pieces as we go throughout our league. The thrust and pace they play with is similar to Michigan State.

Obviously for a team, any team that's playing right now, is really good. There's a lot of comparisons of teams that we played against.

Q. You have built a very strong brand of basketball success for basically a generation now. In this time of upheaval or chaos in college basketball, is the brand more important, less important? Is it more important to know what you stand for and how you go about your business, or it's more important to adapt and change with the times?

GREG GARD: All the above.

Yeah, no, I think that's a great question. I could go on for hours about how we've tried to evolve and embrace. I always say run to it, don't run from it.

We've had to evolve. We've evolved off the court. Obviously everything has changed with the portal and NIL and everything. We've also evolved on the court. We've

shifted and changed how we play.

At the same time not forgetting and nor de-emphasizing the pillars of success that we've had over the years. Being fundamentally sound, being tough, being good defensively. I think those are the keys for, first of all, trying to win in the Big Ten consistently year in, year out, then evolving as the game has changed.

It's become more of a three-point, transition, analytic-driven game. Some of the things in pro basketball, NBA or Europe, have trickled down to college. You see it with BYU, with us, with other teams in our league.

You have to continue to evolve and continue to adapt and continue to grow. At the same time, we know what works at the University of Wisconsin. Probably more importantly we know what won't work at Wisconsin. That's on the court, off the court, classroom. All those things are still important. They don't get less emphasized. They just add a few more wagons to the train, so to speak.

Q. (No microphone.)

GREG GARD: Yeah, I think understanding who we are, knowing who we are, knowing what makes us successful.

Wisconsin is a really good academic school. It's one of the best in the world. Getting your college degree is still important. But I don't hear that talked about. When was the last time you heard APR, graduation rates? You don't hear it.

But we still talk about it because, for these guys, there may be a handful of them that get to play after college and get paid to do so. For most of them, even the guys that play after college, they won't probably play long if you look at the data behind it. What are you going to do for the next 60 years of your life?

Trying to give them a perspective. What helps me is I have my own son on the team. I can look through it at that lens as a father and what would I want a coach telling my son in terms of setting him up for life and preparing for what's going to happen once the air goes out of the ball, so to speak.

Q. Do you like coaching as much now as you did five to seven years ago?

GREG GARD: I do, yes. I don't do as much of it because there's a lot of other things that go into the other hats I wear. Obviously around the evolution of NIL and how that's grown, how our staff has really taken a fundraising approach to it and tried to really communicate the

importance of it to our donors and our supporters, really kind of educate them, so to speak, on it.

Yeah, it definitely has changed. You become more of a CEO than a coach. I probably do spend less time on out-of-bounds plays than 10 years ago.

Going back to his question, you have to evolve and embrace the change. I think we've done a really good job of staying in our own way on the cutting edge.

Q. Have you crossed paths much throughout your coaching career with BYU at all?

GREG GARD: We played BYU 2011 in Chicago, right, in a tournament. It was after Jimmer, right? Jimmer had graduated or gone on. I'm trying to think of who was coaching BYU.

Q. (No microphone.)

GREG GARD: Dave Rose? Okay, yeah. I was an assistant at that time. That's the only time. I've never crossed paths with Kevin Young. He had a different track in his career through the NBA and G League. Obviously you can definitely tell he's worked his way to where he is. He's put a lot of time in unpopular places. He hasn't had the complete in terms of where he's coached and what he's had to do.

So yeah, that's the last time we crossed paths with BYU, is 14 years ago.

Q. In boxing they say contrasting styles make great fights. In basketball you mentioned BYU and yourselves are pretty similar. What kind of game are we going to see tomorrow in that respect?

GREG GARD: Probably be 50 to 48, one of those (smiling).

No, I mean, basketball, the game, it's not overcomplicated. Let's not overcomplicate the game. It's still about trying to get high-quality shots. If you can get the good ones early, great. If not, they do a good job of spreading the floor, running a lot of middle ball screens with Demin and with Hall, obviously Saunders and -- drawing a blank on the other guard. You have a roster for me? Here we go. Knell, right? Did I say it right? Anyway, he's a good player no matter what his last name is (smiling).

Then obviously Khadim inside, Traore, the others. We're going to have to guard them well. They'll hopefully guard us well, or maybe they -- hopefully they don't guard us well.

They change some defenses a little bit, do a little three-quarter court pressure. But it's still, at the end of the day, not overcomplicating the game. I think the game is at times over-coached and under-taught. For us it's always about keeping it simple, being fundamentally sound on both ends.

That can still be the case even if you play with a little more tempo and faster pace. You can still be fundamentally sound. We're going to need to be tomorrow.

Q. Your offense gets a lot of attention. Now you're top 25 in defensive efficiency also. You said you've gotten your defensive bite back. What does that mean?

GREG GARD: I think the bite means are we alert. I actually have added bark to it, bark and bite, meaning we're loud, we talk, we communicate. Just how physical we are with ball screens, how physical we are with following our rules within the defensive system and concepts that we have, how physical we are on the glass, defensive rebounding, how good we are in transition defensively. All the things that we always try to do.

But when the bite comes back and when the bite's the best, they're at an intensity level and consistency level that's a notch or two higher. This time of year you have to have it if you want to keep playing. You're going to have to have your bark and your bite.

Really throughout the whole Big Ten tournament we did. Thought we did pretty well yesterday. We had it. Our guys understand. We've grown a lot defensively in the last 60 days because we were not top 25, we were hovering in probably the 60s and 70s in December and January.

Q. Big picture, revenue sharing is probably coming to college sports. Your athletic department has made clear you're going to invest a lot into it. At the same time mid-major programs might see a little bit more restriction. Do you sense revenue sharing in the future might help level the playing field a little bit in collegiate basketball or exacerbate and change with these matchups and upsets?

GREG GARD: Yeah, I mean, that's a great question to a long, complicated equation of how this all comes together.

I've seen it. I coached at the mid-major level at Wisconsin Milwaukee for a couple years. Obviously before we have come to this day with rev share, NIL and everything that's coming.

I do feel for the lower levels. I think it's going to be harder. It's already been hard. There's been a degree of

separation. There is some of the haves and have nots.

My fear is if this doesn't continue on this path of rev share and trying to have parity across the board, we're going to continue to -- the have and have nots are going to go even more. You may even see it not just with, quote/unquote, high major, mid-major, low major, you may see it within leagues. We're all working out of a different playbook, quite frankly. It's all come at us so fast.

I don't know where this all goes. Hopefully the powers that be have a plan in place beyond rev share of how we're going to continue to walk down the road of where we're going to need to be in three to four to five years.

I don't think rev share is the complete and final answer. We're going to have to continue walking down the -- that's a piece of it, and that's important. I'm all for players getting compensated. But I think in order to have parity, we're going to have to have some type of systematic approach across the board because we don't have that right now.

Q. In these tournament situations, when it comes to scouting your opponent, do you want it condensed? Is it the same scout that the guys are getting during the regular season when you have two days to prepare? In this situation is it maybe a little bit different?

GREG GARD: The only thing that's really different is we don't have multiple days to prepare. When you have a quick 48-hour turnaround, this time of year we played, whatever, 36 games, 38 with the exhibitions already.

The on-court physical contact time is basically eliminated. You're doing more of the mental and the visual approach to it. The recovery and the rest is more important than the physical contact on the floor.

The actual report itself and the film that we see is the same, but the actual reps that we go through, that typically if you had two or three days of preparation or, for example, four or five days like we had for Montana, you'd have more actual on-court time in live action.

We're far enough down the road now where that isn't applicable and necessary at this time. But film-wise we've already gone through some, and we'll do more again tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you for your time, coach.

GREG GARD: Thank you.

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