

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

Friday, March 21, 2025

Denver, Colorado, USA

Ball Arena

BYU Cougars

Coach Kevin Young

Trey Stewart

Dawson Baker

Dallin Hall

Media Conference

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

We'll now take questions.

Q. Whole new coaching staff basically this year. What kind of role do the grad assistants play, specifically someone like Charles Abouo who has 14 years' experience playing professionally?

DAWSON BAKER: I mean, it's great to have people experienced in the program. They're kind of like a coach sometimes, which is great. Great looks for us on scout teams, and to be able to play against someone like Charles is great for us players, helps us out a lot.

TREY STEWART: It's been cool having conversations with him and Kyle. Kyle played at Georgia Tech. Their experience is totally valuable in circumstances like this. It's very important.

DALLIN HALL: Yeah, just second what they said. Guys that have been in this tournament before, guys that know what it takes to win at a high level. Super good to have in our corner. We trust them a lot. Just the whole staff top to bottom is very high level.

Q. Dallin, you have the kind of depth where you could do hockey line changes, five in, five out. Can you speak to the versatility, the depth to have almost two different units, what that's meant to the success of the team?



DALLIN HALL: Yeah, I think a huge piece of how we try to approach the game is playing for one another. On any given night, somebody else could step up and have a huge performance.

We really don't care who it is, as long as we get the W at the end of the day. That's why you see us able to mesh so well with one another, because we play for the guy next to us, try to make the right play. Ultimately we feel like that's the best brand of basketball.

Q. Trey and Dallin, when you were in the old WCC days, if you were facing a program such as Wisconsin, you may have been a little in awe. How much now has changed since you played through the Big 12? Are you still in awe of a program like Wisconsin?

TREY STEWART: I mean, you give them their flowers, their respect as a program. At the end of the day, it's just a basketball game. We obviously respect all our opponents.

One of our biggest things that bugged us when we were going into the Big 12, they were like, How do you think you'll do against Kansas? We went and smacked them at their place.

At the end of the day, we go with our brand of basketball. I'm definitely grateful that we get to play such high-level programs, but we're not going to put them on a pedestal. We're going to play them just as another opponent.

DALLIN HALL: Yeah, second what Trey said. Same approach every game. Doesn't matter who the opponent is. We want to play our kind of basketball and execute the game plan against them. I think that's what it comes down to.

Q. Wisconsin is similar to you guys. Shoot a lot of threes. You've won shootout-type games. Do those wins add to your confidence, or is it a different mindset?

TREY STEWART: Shot-maker over here (smiling).

DAWSON BAKER: Obviously, big wins like that in hostile environments add to our confidence as a group, showing



that we can do it no matter who it is and where we're at. It obviously gives us some confidence.

We also know in March, being in the second round now, we have to have that sense of urgency going into this game, no matter what it is.

But yeah, I mean, this whole season has just built us for this moment. So we're a completely different team from when we started. We're going to take everything that we learned in the process and use it in March.

Q. Trey, what is the process, playing your best in March, what was the process to get there?

TREY STEWART: Yeah, just kind of dialing in our recipe, dialing in kind of our pregame routine. It's kind of evolved a little bit. Once we started getting on that winning streak, like what Dallin said earlier, we play for our brothers. That is kind of a huge thing. Coach always says play harder than the guy across the lines from you on every slide.

Really in a few words, we really got our recipe down. We figured it out with coaches. We're humble, changed things. And now we just have a really good system where it's like, okay, here's our prep day, do this, this, this, go look at the film. Next day we come up, we have our coverages and everything that we listed pregame and, yeah, we're going to be ready.

Q. Whoever is going to give the most detailed answer, what did you do after the win? What took place last night after the win?

DALLIN HALL: I guess I'll give the most detail (smiling).

We went back, had a good dinner as a team. Some of the guys went with their families. We took the time to spend time with people who came out and supported us. Coach is awesome that way. He appreciates family and the importance of that.

But then we all just told each other, like, This is great, but we have more work here to do. So we quickly flipped the page, and we understood there's more for us to do in this tournament. Everyone has been pretty focused on Wisconsin since that night.

TREY STEWART: Dallin left out a key detail. We went to the pool right after, got a recovery (smiling). Yeah...

DAWSON BAKER: I spent some of the night in the Jacuzzi with some of the band. Kind of interesting.

TREY STEWART: Fun.

DALLIN HALL: Dawson had the most detail.

DAWSON BAKER: Conversation was great. They were going to go to the zoo today.

TREY STEWART: There's a zoo?

DAWSON BAKER: There's a zoo somewhere. Talked about the zoo, our first time being here, advancing, how long it's been, kind of enjoyed the moment together in the hot tub. It was great (smiling).

TREY STEWART: It's a blessing, man. It's a blessing (laughter).

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

We'll take questions for BYU head coach Kevin Young.

Q. I asked Coach Gard the same thing about contrasting styles make good fights in boxing, but looks like you and Wisconsin play a similar style. What kind of game are we going to see tomorrow?

KEVIN YOUNG: Yeah, I mean, they're a super well-oiled machine offensively. They're a little bit more continuity based than we are.

Just on sheer numbers, they get up a lot of threes kind of like we do as well. I'd imagine it would be probably a high-scoring game. Obviously we don't want it to be. We're locked in defensively on how we want to guard these guys. But they're impressive offensively. We've had some nights where we've been able to score as well.

Probably that's where it's headed.

Q. You built a coaching staff from scratch. What role did you see for the grad assistants, and specifically someone like Charles Abou who's got 14 years' experience playing pro ball?

KEVIN YOUNG: No, Charles, I mean, he's probably one of if not the best GA in the entire country just given his experience as a player professionally, but also super unique because he played at BYU. He's played in this tournament. He was on a really good team. Just the way he's able to talk to the players.

But specifically to the roles of the GAs, when I was in the NBA, we had quite a few what we call coaching associates where they're basically ex-players that were basically practice players that wanted to get into coaching, would



use their playing experience to get their foot in the door. We'd teach them the video equipment, stuff like that, and then they were able to spend time with the players along with the player development staff.

In college you have so many different rules about who can be on the court, who can't, all this other kind of stuff. The GAs have a little more flexibility with how much they can be on the floor with the players. And so getting guys with experience, like Charles -- and we have a tremendous GA staff, I will say, led by Charles. That's kind of their main focus, those things.

Q. We've talked a lot about you moving from the pro game to this game. A lot of your decision was based around faith and family. Most coaches go from the college game to the pro game. Why did you decide to take this chance or what intrigued you about it?

KEVIN YOUNG: Yeah, outside of the stuff you mentioned, I think BYU had a ton to do with it. I wasn't looking to make the move, honestly. BYU was the only college I'd ever even considered making the move for. Really unique university. I didn't go there, but I have a lot of family that's gone there. My wife was a student there. A lot of ties to the state of Utah.

As I started to kind of look at it just from a sheer professional standpoint, I thought it was a place that was set up to succeed. There's a lot of people that really care about BYU that want to see it do well.

Once I started really, really to think about it, kind of relished the thought of being able to take a program that's been really good for pretty much its entire existence and try to move the needle to places it's never been to, whether that's winning at the highest level, recruiting. Obviously that stuff is tied together. Thought it would be a really good challenge.

When you are in the NBA, I was in the pro side for 17 years, there's so many darn games in the NBA, man, you can kind of get in cruise control mode. You almost kind of know what to expect.

Making this 180, it's been a fun challenge, honestly, to learn something new at this stage in my career, do something totally different.

I've always been intrigued with the CEO nature of being a head coach. That's something I learned a lot about working for good head coaches in the league. When you're a college head coach, you're almost the CEO times 10 compared to what you are in the NBA. That part intrigued me, as well.

There was a lot of things that I thought, man, this would be a fun challenge.

Q. Through the first couple of days, any takeaway moment, something that you consider pretty special so far?

KEVIN YOUNG: I don't know if I would just point to one moment. I mean, for me, like, after we win, just seeing my wife and my two sons, my daughter, she had enough basketball at the Big 12 tournament, so she ditched us and stayed at home. To see my boys courtside after a big win, especially in this type of environment, is special. The rest of my family, as well.

Honestly, man, just the overall experience. This is as big-time as it gets in all of basketball, specific to college obviously. I always get amazed at how many people reach out to me after a marquee win.

I've talked about this a lot before, but how much basketball and sports keep relationships tight. That's been cool for the last couple days, getting a lot of congratulatory text messages kind of from the who's who of the basketball world.

Q. Coaches always talk about recruiting. Do you have a retention plan to keep who you have that goes beyond the NIL component?

KEVIN YOUNG: Yeah, I think that is part of recruiting. You got to recruit your own guys, especially in today's era. I wish they all had, like, Tater Tot stories like Richie so we could dive into that with each one of them.

It's something we talked about as a staff as the season has gone on. That's actually impacted some of my decisions as it relates to which coaches work with which players. Early on it was kind of we had guys, coaches, bucketed up with certain players.

I kind of decided to just open that up a little bit more so the players can get relationships with the entire staff. Maybe they connect with someone more than somebody else. Maybe that aids in their decision to come back and so forth.

Yeah, man, I don't know if anyone -- clearly I don't because I'm new to this thing, but I don't know if anyone has a clear science on how to do it.

The thing that I try to do to the best of my ability, and this is how we've designed our program, is to make it all about player development. Whether a guy's playing a ton of

minutes or playing not a ton of minutes, the one thing they can all say is we pour everything we have into helping these guys get better.

If you look at our entire roster, I think we've been able to do that for the most part.

Q. You have a player from Russia, two from Mali, one from Australia, Serbia. What is it like having so much international flavor on this team?

KEVIN YOUNG: It's really cool. That's another thing I love about basketball, it brings so many people together that you would otherwise maybe not be connected to. I've always loved that part about sports.

Yeah, it's cool. A lot of different experiences because of the backgrounds our guys come from. I'm one of the few coaches and players on the staff that only speaks one language. That's pretty cool.

I think it makes our locker room unique and mature.

Q. When the guys were up here, they were pretty lighthearted. Didn't look like the moment was getting to them. Is that how you would describe what it's been like since you won the game yesterday?

KEVIN YOUNG: Yeah, I mean, I think our group does a good job of just balancing, being serious-minded but not to the point where they get too tight.

Yeah, I think it speaks to their experience. A lot of these guys have been here before. It is a balancing act, for sure. I think it's important to not take things too serious.

Q. Coming off an emotional win heading into the second round, does your messaging to the team change at all? Are you trying to keep it consistent from round one?

KEVIN YOUNG: Yeah, I mean, one thing I try to do as a coach, this is just based off of experience, I try to address the elephant in the room as much as I possibly can.

What was on my mind this morning, I was thinking about what I would say to the guys before we really got going, was you obviously are excited about getting a win in a tournament, but you can't let your guard down. The urgency and the focus has to even go up another notch as opposed to letting it come down.

The guys probably get so sick of me talking about my previous experience, but it's all I have to reference. So for me, when we were in the NBA Finals, we went up 2-0

against Milwaukee. We're like two wins away from winning an NBA championship. I think the guard got let down a little bit.

So I just talked to them about that. You can't let your guard down. If anything, you have to ratchet up the intensity and the focus.

Urgency and focus were two words we talked about a lot coming into this tournament. We talked a lot this morning about having those things get turned up even more so, there is no letdown.

Q. Playing off of your experience in the NBA, how has the NBA helped you and your staff as you prepare for these quick turnarounds?

KEVIN YOUNG: Yeah, I mean, I was just talking about this earlier with somebody.

I mean, in the NBA, if you're on a good team, you're putting together over a hundred game plans a season. Seven straight years we made it to the Playoffs, most of those were at least second round or past.

I rely on my experience of just putting game plans together to stop the best players in the world. There's tons of reference points. I always think, We tried this against Jayson Tatum, we tried this against Luka, whatever the case may be. I draw on that quite a bit actually.

There are certain things that are different obviously, but for me, that gives me a lot of I think just comfort. I think it gives our players comfort. Not just me either. We have a coach that's coached in two Olympic Games. I have a coach that's coached six years in the Euro league. These are cutthroat leagues these guys have come from, not to mention a handful of college coaches too.

I think our guys appreciate our coaching staffs' experience. I think it's allowed us to gain their trust no matter what the game plan is.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, coach.

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