

# NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: Second Round - Texas A&M vs Michigan

Friday, March 21, 2025

Denver, Colorado, USA

Ball Arena

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

**Wade Taylor IV**

**Andersson Garcia**

**Manny Obaseki**

Media Conference

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Texas A&M student-athletes.

We'll take questions for the student-athletes.

**Q. Michigan has two really tall guys. You have played your fair share of tall players this season. How do you feel like you have fared against the taller guys? What have you seen from this duo particularly for Michigan?**

ANDERSSON GARCIA: I feel like we had a good plan coming from this game. We have to follow whatever the coach telling us to do. I feel like we're going to do a good job playing against those talented players.

**Q. Michigan, offensively, they have statistically a lot of turnovers. Y'all are a strong defensive team. What do you think y'all can capitalize off of that?**

MANNY OBASEKI: I think, talking from a defensive standpoint, Dev has done a really good job with what we plan on doing. We know they turn the ball over a lot. We plan to capitalize off that.

I think it's just about our foundation, staying true to what we do, being ourselves, staying disciplined, and being really good at shrinking the floor. I think we do those things, we'll be just fine.

**Q. Wade, obviously Coach Williams, big on continuity, rhythm. The first one done, how does it feel to keep that momentum going again?**



WADE TAYLOR IV: Yeah, going to knock the dust off pretty much. Got the first one under our belt. We're just trying to capitalize on getting that first win. We got that first win under the belt. Got the game flow under our belt. We have to make sure we come out here tomorrow and follow the game plan and stay true to the foundation, come out with a win.

**Q. Wade, last year you came so close in the second round, how much has that fueled y'all this year?**

WADE TAYLOR IV: I would say it's a new team, so different ballgame. We have a lot of different stories, a lot of different things that have transpired this year based off last year.

But you are right, we was in the position last year. I mean, if it's not talked about, it's crossed our minds. I feel like tomorrow is a different opponent, different game, playing for different things now.

But I think a win tomorrow would help a lot of us.

**Q. How prepared do y'all feel going into this game?**

MANNY OBASEKI: I mean, I'm really confident. I've always been confident in this team. We have a lot of great guys, a lot of really good players. I feel like no matter who we play against on any given night, we're ready to compete and we have a good chance of winning.

It's really important that we execute on both ends better than them, kind of stay even leveled throughout the game. You know what I'm saying? One more game to the Sweet 16. Emotions are going to be high. There's a lot of things we want to do. They want to do as well.

If we just stay true to us, continue to do what we've been doing, same mentality, we'll be right where we want to be.

**Q. Wade, you guys have quite a few common opponents this season. Even though it's been a short amount of time to prepare for Michigan, have y'all looked at the common teams y'all have played this season?**

WADE TAYLOR IV: What do you mean by that?

**Q. (No microphone.)**

WADE TAYLOR IV: Hmm... I think our coaching staff does a little bit of that. They have a pretty good plan that we plan on executing. Yeah, we play a couple opponents, same as they have.

Kind of take bits and pieces of what we think would help us be successful to make sure that we kind of give them a rough day.

**Q. Wade, for all that you've accomplished individually, I'm curious what continues to motivate you.**

WADE TAYLOR IV: I would say these guys I'm sitting with up here. We've been through a lot. The team that's established right now, the coaching staff. We haven't had any changes. The coaches have been the same. We have a lot of the same players.

We've been through a lot, the ups, the downs, the good, the bad, the ugly. We've heard it all. We've been underdogs, supposedly pretty good. We're just trying to continue to be the best we can be. I'm thankful to be a part of this team. We have some special things that I still feel like we have to accomplish, things to do.

**Q. Wade, you mentioned you have had to overcome a lot. What is the biggest thing this team has had to overcome?**

WADE TAYLOR IV: I would just say failing the same test. We've had a couple games this year where we lost because we didn't follow the recipe. We knew what the recipe was, and we just didn't execute it the way we needed to.

I think that's probably the biggest thing, just sticking to our foundation, doing the things we know translates to winning. We know and we have evidence when we do those things, we come out victorious.

**Q. Manny, Zhuric started for most of the year, came off the bench. Can you talk about the depth, 10 deep, how you benefit from that?**

MANNY OBASEKI: First of all, Zhuric is an All-Conference player. He's done a tremendous job of leading this team, along with Wade, throughout this whole year.

I'm super happy for him. I'm happy that he's part of this team. I'm glad that we got him. He's a really good friend of mine, as well.

It's been a joy watching him play. I mean, that goes to show you how talented we are as players. First the work that we put in each and every single day when nobody's watching, when people are watching. Also the type of people we are. You know what I'm saying?

Zhuric could start and play X amount of minutes, and I'm going to be happy for him no matter what the outcome is. He'll do the same thing with me. Same with Wade, same with Andy. Henry is a really good player. I think he's the all-time leading offensive rebounder in school history.

Payne just had a career night last night. You know what I'm saying? You never know who is going to come out, show out, do their thing. That's what makes us so dangerous.

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

Texas A&M, we have head coach Buzz Williams. We'll open it up for questions for the coach.

**Q. It's clearly a quick turnaround. Initial thoughts on Michigan, matchup problems that you may present for them and they for you?**

BUZZ WILLIAMS: Yeah, we've enjoyed studying them. Most of us stayed up to watch the game. When we all got back to the hotel, I didn't realize that we had played six common opponents. So we kind of split some of that up just to kind of have some context on which would be the right way to begin to digest some of it.

They've only played one team that plays our style defensively, so we probably spent some more time on that since early this morning.

I think the information we gave our team thus far today before practice was right. We'll get together again this evening. I've really enjoyed watching them play. I didn't realize they played as fast as they do.

Somewhat familiar with their personnel. We played Florida Atlantic last year. I remember 50. We played Auburn last year, so I remember 3.

In studying Yale, I remember No. 1. Obviously he was in a different uniform, as were the other two.

Then No. 11, we played Ohio State last year.

There was a little bit of a commonality in opponent. Specific to their personnel, a lot of our returning players

kind of knew bits and pieces of some of their stuff.

Obviously coach is a genius. He's had an unbelievable start to what will end up being a Hall of Fame career. He represents all that's right about college athletics.

The notoriety he's deserving of, I think a lot of it comes from what they do offensively. Just from studying him prior to Florida Atlantic, then listening to all the podcasts he does, things of that nature, you can tell there's a lot of uniqueness in how they play. There's some FIBA, some European sort of stuff. How he has comprised his first roster at Michigan, you can see the influence of how he would like to play.

Obviously I think they've done a great job thus far.

**Q. Playing Florida Atlantic last year, anything from that matchup you're taking away?**

BUZZ WILLIAMS: Yeah, I haven't finished that to be able to answer it conclusively. Every team we play I have a notebook on with all of the things we do in prep. I have that notebook in the hotel.

I don't know how much of it will translate. I remember the game. I went to the hospital with Boots immediately after the game. Obviously Henry got hurt. Didn't play the next day. So I remember the game. Obviously there's players on that team that are in the SEC, so I remember parts of it.

I can't say if what they did at Florida Atlantic is what they're doing now. Obviously 50 was there. I do think that how they utilize 50 is the same, but I don't know that it's their exact style on either end.

I'll be able to know a little bit tomorrow. I kind of have saved that for this evening to see how much it correlates.

**Q. Jace was pretty open last night about some of the criticism he has faced this season. How have you seen him persevere this season, the way he's been able to move forward and have a game like he did last night?**

BUZZ WILLIAMS: Yeah, it's been a topic that has been more prevalent than ever in my career. I didn't know he said it. But I have spent more time with our players on their reaction of others than I ever have.

I think that's probably what comes with this now, the opinion of others seems to influence so much of decision-making. Similar to what I said yesterday, I want to make sure that what I do behind closed doors matters for their life. I want to make sure what I do publicly is also

appropriate, but not turn into an emotional diatribe.

I've tried to handle that right with Jace's dad, Jace's mom. Just so that you don't think that it's Jace, that conversation has happened with multiple players within our organization multiple times.

Similar to the question from before from two days ago, I think that's part of the skill set required now. That's why I've kind of quit social media, just because of the things that were coming towards me. It's just dangerous.

I think when you're 22 and you've grown up with a screen, you can't tell 'em, Don't look. But you have to try to find ways to educate them on how to handle it.

I think the thing that bothers our group, and all groups, is when it's coming from what they think are on the inside, I think that's where their heart posture changes, like, I thought they were cheering for us.

Like, I've had two conversations about it today on what happened last night. I think because we've tried to handle it in a very open way, our guys feel comfortable talking to me about it. I just transparently in the conversation try to discern what I believe is right, if my children were saying it to me. It's just part of it.

**Q. What makes you say he's a future Hall of Famer?**

BUZZ WILLIAMS: I love studying coaches, not just basketball coaches, any coaches.

I think last night was coach's fifth NCAA tournament win. Obviously he won at Florida Atlantic. His fifth one was last night.

I'm familiar with his time at Louisiana Tech as an assistant with Coach Wyatt, obviously an assistant for Coach White at Florida. I just love coaches.

I think at his age, for him to have a brand-premier job like Michigan, I think it sets you up, particularly in the industry the way that it is now, to have that level of job at that age with those level of resources.

I also think that he has the skill set and the appropriate demeanor to be able to handle all of the ever-changing things that the industry has brought.

He's young enough in his career and has the energy on those things he can't control. I also think from a tactical standpoint, his style of play is so unique that they'll be able to create a roster on an annual basis that will be able to play in a way, just like he had this year, success. 14-6 in

the Big Ten is really, really good. I don't use those words flippantly.

**Q. On or off the court, what has been your favorite thing of having a guy like Wade in your program for four years?**

BUZZ WILLIAMS: First of all, I'd say he's been in the program for four years (smiling). I said this to our local group a lot.

I think what has happened with our group, I understand the numbers behind it, what's happened with our group, I don't know that it will happen anymore. To have such a large contingent of experience returning year after year after year.

I think the relationship depth with his father, with his mother, with both aunts, with both grandmothers, with his sister, a part of that is just from the tenure that we've been together. Not necessarily from his success.

Henry, Andy, IV, H, I think tomorrow H will have played in more games than any player in the history of Texas A&M. When you look at historically individually what many of our guys have done, Henry is the all-time offensive rebound leader. H has played in more games. IV has broken nearly every record that has to do with scoring, including being the leading scorer in school history and SEC tournament history.

This is the first time in 15 years that Texas A&M has won back-to-back games in the NCAA tournament. It's only the second time in 113 years that Texas A&M has played in at least three consecutive NCAA tournaments.

I think IV is a part of a lot of the records. But I think the duration of his time and the depth of the relationship with his teammates, with his staff. I think in IV's tenure here, we've had one staff change. One of our administrative assistants is now an associate A.D. at the University of Tulsa. He's actually here just because he feels so connected.

I think the continuity of the staff and the team, with IV being at the beginning of that, along with Mo, that recruiting class, I think it's a rarity.

**Q. We spoke to Zhuric last night about coming off the bench. He started all year. You said who starts doesn't really matter. Can you talk about the willingness and checking the ego of some of these players who are willing to come out of the bench? How valuable to the program to have a Phelps or a Solo to come off the bench and be so good for you**

**guys?**

BUZZ WILLIAMS: I don't think it's ever impacted Solo. I think Solo doesn't get the credit for the IQ that he has.

I had a hard decision. I visited with our team two days before we played Auburn on a Tuesday. That was after a quick turnaround on a Saturday after a loss, which was our fourth in a row. Two days before was that Sunday after church.

I said, Guys, I'm going to think about this, but I'm open to what thoughts you have. We have eight seniors on the team who no matter what they can't play in college, they can't enter the portal again or for the first time.

I would like to think through what's the best approach on who we should start. We can't start eight. We sent in a waiver, and the NCAA denied it.

We decided that the five players that would start would be the five players that had the most experience with us. So Zhu did absolutely nothing wrong. He started every game except UCF. Obviously he didn't play that game. Then we beat Auburn. That was the first time in school history we ever beat a No. 1 team. Not everybody is superstitious within the program, but we have some level of that. Then we won at LSU starting that same group. So the superstition increased.

We just stuck with it.

Zhu has done nothing wrong. Gochi started a lot of games. Solo has started a lot of games. Jace has started a lot of games. H has started a lot of games. That's kind of how it happened.

But we were very open. I never said it to you guys just because starters really don't matter. We're going to play 10 guys double-figure minutes. They all know that.

I think the acceptance, specifically to Zhu, he didn't have a problem. He wanted to honor those guys, as well.

**Q. Ten players who average more than 10 minutes a game. How much of an advantage you feel like that it is with a quick turnaround at elevation?**

BUZZ WILLIAMS: Maybe. I think this will be Michigan's fifth game in nine days. This will be our second game in nine days. Does that play a part? I don't know. Is elevation, once you've been somewhere 72 hours of altitude, does that still affect the oxygen to your blood from a scientific standpoint? I'm not sure.

I think some of the elements that you could potentially apply in regular season, I think some of that goes away. Everybody understands when you get to this point that if you don't win, it's over.

I think that the resiliency and the resolve, that's why it's March Madness. I do think we've tried to have a roster -- as our tenure at Texas A&M has unfolded after the pandemic, rebounding has changed for us. It's created a niche for us.

There's multiple teams in the SEC that are going to play eight guys that don't have 13 guys on scholarship. Obviously going forward, there's going to be 15 scholarships, so every coach kind of has to make a decision from roster management, NIL resources, how are you going to do that.

We've just kind of felt like if we could ever get to the point where we could play more than eight, it potentially could help us handle injuries. We've had some injury problems.

We had problems last year. Our starting center, who was maybe the third or fourth best post player in the SEC, was suspended and never played as a senior. So our fifth post player ended up starting every game. We just didn't want to be in that position going into this year. It's just kind of unfolded like that.

A part of that is we have two guys, three guys still using their COVID eligibility. Obviously a year from now that's gone for everybody.

**Q. You touched on the House settlement yesterday, revenue sharing obviously probably coming to collegiate athletics. You also know the mid-major world well, coached at Colorado State, they just won --**

BUZZ WILLIAMS: Go Rams (smiling).

**Q. Do you sense the revenue sharing with kind of the budgetary constraints that mid-major schools often are under as compared to Power programs, do you sense it being able to level the playing field with what's going on in collegiate basketball right now, or will it exacerbate some of the gaps between teams?**

BUZZ WILLIAMS: Great question. I have a lot of thoughts. I've studied it some.

What I would say is I think it will continue to create a wider gap. Then I also think what most people are not saying thus far is in that group that you're talking about, you'll even find more of a separation.

You're starting to see coaches over the last three days that are probably explaining their situation a little bit more and more. What ends up happening is there has always been NIL. Before you were born there was NIL. They just didn't call it NIL.

Now NIL is legal. So you're going to see programs that win. You go, How did they do that? Some of the programs that have always had success, who don't achieve that level of success, there will be a lot of pointing fingers on, What happened?

It's because a lot of things that are happening are not public. All of us have some level of ego. We want to try to explain what's happening. But I think you'll continue to see separation even in the group that you don't think that you're going to see separation in. And I'm not sure where the leaders in all of this are going to decide.

I don't know that what we think this is about to be, I'm not sure that that is what it's going to be even five years from now. I think it's going to continue to separate.

That's based only on what I know, and that's just the opinion of the smart people that I listen to. But not all of those smart people have a vote at the table on how this is going to play out.

**Q. You mentioned the common opponents earlier. With such a short turnaround, how much does it help to have that as a starting point?**

BUZZ WILLIAMS: Yeah, Coach May hasn't slept since they played. No coach has slept.

I think I was caught off guard when I got back to the hotel. I knew we played a lot of Big Ten opponents, but I didn't know they had also played SEC opponents. I didn't know it was going to be six teams.

I thought it was the right place to start just to have a foundation. Their style of play is very unique. Not just the pace, not just the volume of threes, but how they score.

The two tallest guys on the team shoot over 50% of their free throws. You rarely ever see that. They have three guys that in the last five games have shot over 50% of their balls.

Like, there's a lot of things that you're trying to digest to try to see if there's trends, not only in the common opponents but in the last five games, in league play.

I thought it was the best place to start. But a lot of those games were early. I would say we spent three hours on

that, then we're trying to get to the next thing because we've got to make sure what we give our guys is appropriate.

We're going to meet with our guys again at 7:00 on what we call one day before. This morning we did two days before. We have a little bit more work to do to make sure we're giving them the right information tonight.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you for your time, coach.

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