

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

Saturday, March 22, 2025

Denver, Colorado, USA

Ball Arena

Michigan Wolverines

Coach Dusty May

Roddy Gayle Jr.

Vladislav Goldin

L.J. Cason

Media Conference



Michigan 91, Texas A&M 79

DUSTY MAY: I want to begin by congratulating Texas A&M on an amazing season. They went through a gauntlet just like we did. The SEC and Big Ten this year were -- every single night were games like this.

So I want to congratulate them on their season. And then I want to talk about the most difficult thing now in this new era is the transfer portal. We as coaches, as evaluators, it's hard to know what's inside guys. We can watch them on film, we can look at their percentages, we can break down their analytics, but you never know what's inside of them.

And we didn't know what this season would look like, but we knew we had some special guys with big hearts and big brains. So it's a choppy part of the year, but this group stayed together and did it together the entire way. What a cohesive group, what a resilient group. Like I said yesterday, I'm just proud to be on their team.

Q. Roddy, can you describe your emotion when you got the fans chanting your name after the game and your teammates bobbing you like that?

RODDY GAYLE JR.: It's an amazing feeling, especially all that we've been through. I feel like we're clicking at the right time, especially how we were able to finish the Big Ten Tournament. I just feel like we have a great team chemistry right now. The kind of energy that my teammates give me, I just feed off of it.

Q. Vlad, Payne was having a really good game, and you guys held him without a made field goal for the final 10 minutes. What was it about that stretch when you were able to come back and get the lead that you were able to shut him down on the offensive end?

VLADISLAV GOLDIN: It's hard to shut someone down completely, but he's obviously a great player. And we just decided we would have to make him finish tough shots, we would have to put (indiscernible) on him every single time and basically hope he's going to miss because sometimes that's all you can do.

We were able to lock in on our side, so it happened. We kept him a little bit less score.

Q. Vlad, they were the No. 1 offensive rebounding team in the nation, fourth or fifth overall in total rebounds, but you guys both them in both categories. How were you able to win that battle on the glass?

VLADISLAV GOLDIN: Coach has given us a great understanding who they are and what they do well. We played a game before against one of the best stealing two teams, now we play against one of the best offensive rebound teams.

Just a mindset. If we know what they do, we will have to adjust it and have the same physicality as they are.

Q. Vlad, you've played under Dusty at FAU, you've made the trip to Michigan to be with him. What does it mean to play under him?

VLADISLAV GOLDIN: I think it's great. That's why I'm here. I've said this the whole season long. I chose to be here because of the relationship we built together, and that's something that I personally take pride of, that we were able to build that type of relationship, and I'm happy to be his player.

Q. L.J., your mindset when you get into the game, looks like you always want to be aggressive by it looked like you were in attack mode?

L.J. CASON: Yeah, most definitely. Every time I check in,



the staff, including Coach May, they encourage me and tell me to be me every time I check in. So I feel like that's what I did, and that's how it came out.

Q. Coach, what does it mean to beat this A&M team, I know people have touched on it, that's so good at rebounding? What does it mean to beat them at the things that they're good at, at the things they pride themselves on? What does it mean to dominate a game that way?

DUSTY MAY: First of all, when we narrow our focus and we have a real team, I guess, initiative on something we want to get done together, it shows what we're capable of. Sometimes -- I said this on the radio a minute ago, sometimes when you start a program new, you want to implement everything. You want your culture, you want your processes, you want your environment.

You're constantly trying to get things the way you want them. And if it's not going well, sometimes you're kind of inching it there.

Sometimes maybe we've done too much. I don't know, I just know when this group is locked in on something together, then they're going to figure out a way to do it.

Q. Wade Taylor hit a three to go up 70-66, then A&M went almost six minutes without a made field goal. What was it about that stretch that you were able to lock in so well defensively and help pull away?

DUSTY MAY: We were able to rebound the ball. We know they rely on the offensive rebounding, and so I just thought we were getting good hits, our guards were digging basketballs out.

And then I thought we got aggressive against their three-quarter court press. We have good play makers, and that's -- one of the time-outs I simply reminded them that we don't know what defense they're going to be in, but when I look at this group of five, I see four play makers and who I think is the best big in the country.

So there's no reason for us to stop, let them get organized. Let's break the press and get into concepts. And I think that helped us. I thought that loosened the game up. And then I don't think there's any team in the country when they're scoring their defensive energy and intensity isn't elevated. I think that was part of it.

Q. Coach, John Beilein always used to talk about the outliers this time of year. Talk about what L.J. brought and how happy you are for Roddy?

DUSTY MAY: Yeah, I thought L.J. ignited this run. We were flat. I didn't realize until I listened to Coach Williams' press conference that we played five in nine days. We played five games, this fifth game in nine days. So I start thinking, man, do we have enough in the tank?

So we wanted to get to our bench. We trust those guys. We know how good they are. When they don't play, we're going with somebody that's probably a little bit older and done it before.

But his energy, ability to get in the paint, decision-making was great. And that started the run. And then when the starters came back in, and then obviously Roddy is a starter that just happens to not have his name called, those guys got downhill and made plays, they were poised.

In the first half, five or eight looks -- we loved them at halftime. We went in and said, man, why isn't that dropping? We generated a point-blank shot, it didn't go in, and then we some great looks from three that didn't go in.

We felt good about the way we were playing despite being down four. And then the last three and a half minutes of the half we were disappointed. We thought we played really well and gave up a lead.

Q. You talked about not exactly knowing what you were going to get out of guys in the transfer portal. I assume that wasn't the case with Vlad. But what made you so confident that he would be able to thrive at the heightened level?

DUSTY MAY: If you watched our games versus -- I say Power Five. I don't know what all the stuff is called now, but we'll just call it the Power Five, the high-major basketball conferences. He performed at a high, high level, and he was out there with our Power Four, who was 6'3", our 3 man was 6'3". So he was out there without much size. He's battling in the paint with just a bunch of small pit bulls. But he always did well.

I mean, it's still more about his work ethic and his character, and we went through a really, really, I guess, wild year coming off the Final Four where I think he might have been the only guy in the program, including myself, that didn't seem to change at all. Just stayed to the core with who he is, his love for his teammates and the loyalty to everyone around him.

That's where I wanted to start this program. If he wasn't going to be in the NBA, I thought this place would be really good for him with the resources and banging against Big Ten bodies every time would be good for his long-term career.

And that's important to us, too. We want to win games, but we hand in hand want to help our guys prepare for their futures, as well.

Q. Dusty, I think you said the other night after the San Diego game that you were surprised maybe the fan reactions from the neutral fans, how they were supporting them. I'm curious how you would compare the experience of being an underdog to some extent in this tournament compared to what you guys are doing now and the run you're having and how it feels?

DUSTY MAY: Yeah, I felt UCSD was very underseeded. I thought A&M and us were two heavy weights that it was going to be a prize fight. Actually, to all the Wisconsin fans behind our bench before the game, I bartered with them and said: I promise you that if cheer for us and give us a little jolt, we'll rally the troops across the way and be Badger fans in Game 2.

And we want the Big Ten to do well. I think we're 10-0 right now, and all the coaches and players in our league knew that this was a capability because we did it every night. We battled tooth and nail -- there's no nights off.

The teams that are in the tournament are just the ones that close games a little bit better than the ones that aren't playing still.

Q. A lot has been made of Texas A&M's offensive rebounding, but they also play very aggressive, very physical defense. What kind of challenges did that present you, and how were you able to find -- if not take advantage, find advantages particularly in the second half?

DUSTY MAY: Well, I thought we did a nice job of attacking before they had their defense set. We were getting to the spots we wanted to get to where we had open avenues and windows. And I thought Vlad wasn't on the perimeter as much. And when he's down around the basket, whether it's diving off the pick-and-roll or ducking in or we're running sets for him, he generates a lot of attention. And overreactions is what we call them.

So he made some big, big baskets, but he also caused some enormous overreactions, which helped his teammates get downhill and find some space. Because when you're as big and strong as Texas A&M, it's not easy to find space on that court.

Q. I don't think you play until Friday now in Atlanta. How much do you need that rest? And the last time you had that much of a layoff, you looked like a

different against Purdue.

DUSTY MAY: Yeah, that's going to be the challenge that -- this is the tough part. This is I think the sixth consecutive time Michigan has been in the Sweet 16. So this is just kind of -- when you get here, this is what you do.

So we have to be careful when we get back and figure out who we play, we've got to cleanse this and we've got to be mature about it and turn all of our focus and energy toward the preparation of Auburn or Creighton, two incredible basketball teams and programs.

That's the challenge this time of year, to block out the extra noise, to stay in that foxhole with your teammates and staff and sports staff and everyone else. And you work since June really as a group to put yourself in position to do something enormous, and so there's -- we don't have any regrets because we are content being at this point.

We'll enjoy it. We'll get back to the practice court. We'll address some things that need to be fixed, and without a doubt, our guys, they're so oriented, they'll be ready to work.

Q. How critical are the free throws in the second half, and how did you feel like you guys were able to get to the line so well and so much?

DUSTY MAY: Well, I thought we came up with some loose basketballs, some 50/50 balls we were quicker to. To beat Texas A&M, you have to find -- but also with L.J. getting in the paint and Roddy getting downhill and Rubin getting downhill, and Tre when he came back in, that breaks the defense down. And we do have two seven-footers. So we were able to keep some basketballs live.

I thought Rubin Jones, once again, a couple huge possessions. He tips it out, we get -- start scratch. And so obviously you look at the box score, and 2-for-6 and seven points and four assists doesn't jump out. That's a good stat line.

But I thought he made a lot of invisible plays that helped us win. And then the guys, Tre, he didn't look like himself, and he came in and closed. He looked like game-time Tre again.

And just a complete team effort. Very happy for Ian and Harrison and Charlie to step on the floor in an NCAA Tournament game. Those guys, they've been awesome in scout team and getting our players ready, along with Phat Phat and Oscar Goodman.

So happy for those guys to step on the court, shows those

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

jerseys off in front of their friends and family and whatnot.
Just proud of the group's resiliency more than anything
else.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

