

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Round - Troy vs Kentucky

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Fiserv Forum

Kentucky Wildcats

Amari Williams

Andrew Carr

Lamont Butler

Otega Oweh

Koby Brea

Media Conference



great year. We've got six more games to show what we can do.

Q. Lamont, you've had the most success individually in the NCAA Tournament. What kind of message or what kind of -- how do you relay to the rest of the guys who either haven't played in a tournament before, never really had much success? What's kind of the message going into these games?

LAMONT BUTLER: Just have fun with it. It's a blessing just to be on this stage, to have this opportunity. So really just have fun and play free. Everybody has dreamed of this moment, and to seize this moment, we've got to be ourselves, do what we've been doing this whole year to get here, and do it at a high rate.

We need everybody to be special in their roles and I think it's going to be a successful year for us.

Q. This question is for Andrew, but I'm hoping the rest of you will chime in also. A lot has changed for every one of you this past year. I was wondering what you were doing this time last year and, specifically, if you remember watching the Kentucky/Oakland game.

ANDREW CARR: Yeah, I think last year, we were on the wrong side of the bubble at Wake Forest. Probably would have been getting ready to play an NIT game, second round of the NIT. But, yeah, definitely watched that Kentucky/Oakland game, and we probably wouldn't be here if that outcome wasn't the way it was.

So I think for all of us, we're super excited to be here in the tournament and to show what we can do.

Amari, what were you doing?

AMARI WILLIAMS: This time last year, I was in the transfer portal. So just wanted to see what schools would reach out. Same as AC, seeing that game and wishing you were in a position like that.

Otega, what were you doing last year?

OTEGA OWEH: This time last year, I was at home, watching the games. We didn't make the tournament. I

Q. Just first, Lamont, how's your shoulder feeling?

LAMONT BUTLER: It's feeling better. It's feeling better.

Q. So this is kind of for all of you. I know Coach Pope said you had a team outing, like a team bonding thing before you left Lexington. Can you tell us about it and what it's like to go through this together?

LAMONT BUTLER: Tuesday night, we had a team dinner thing where it was just all of us at Jeff Ruby's. They catered the food for us. We were in there and watched a movie. We watched Remember the Titans. It was a good movie, motivational movie for us. Another chance for us to get together and bond as a team. Could be our last moments, but hopefully not. Gave us a lot of motivation going into the next tournament.

Q. You and a lot of your teammates are having your best school seasons of college basketball. Why do you think that is?

LAMONT BUTLER: I think everybody is hungry this year. I feel like a lot of us came from smaller schools or different places and we were able to compete at one of the best schools ever. We all wanted to be remembered here.

I think everybody has been playing their heart out, playing their butts off. I think the confidence that Coach Pope puts in us every day, we're able to go out there and have a



was just wishing, eventually I would be here. So I'm just glad and thankful that I'm here now.

You?

KOBY BREA: I was in Utah getting ready to play in the first round of the March Madness tournament. I do remember watching the game. It shows how teams show up, playing against Kentucky. It's good being in this position and being on this side of their shoes and seeing what other teams will bring against us and understanding that we've got to be able to bring the best versions of ourselves. And that's something that we will do.

LAMONT BUTLER: I was in Spokane. We were playing the Trouble board game in the hotel, just watching the game. That was a crazy game and we were just surprised of how it went, how Gohlke was hitting every 3. But definitely glad to be here and hope that doesn't happen to us.

Q. Each of you, as was noted, none of you all were part of that game last year. When you're around campus or around town, do people still bring it up to you? Or do they bring it up at all?

OTEGA OWEH: I would say people don't bring it up. It's a new time. Like you said, we weren't there last year so we've got to be where our feet are and focus on what we're doing this year and what we've got ahead of us.

Obviously, everybody knows what happened last year. But I think we're hungry to go out there and just play. Regardless of what all the outside noise is saying about what happened, I think we're just excited to go out there and play, really.

Q. Lamont got the last question about his experience, buzzer beater with San Diego State. I saw Andrew, Otega, and Koby kind of laugh. Have you been talking this week about Lamont is going to get all the questions. He's the most experienced. He has the most notable moment in the tournament. What's the conversation been like?

ANDREW CARR: It's LaMarch. That's what we call him.

Q. Guys, you were in the portal either this week or very soon after. This year's been up and down, exciting, lots of injuries. Now you're all here. When you came to Kentucky, is this what you thought this year would be like? If not, how was it different? I guess I'll start with Koby and you can go down.

KOBY BREA: I feel like it's definitely surpassed my

expectations just being able to see what it's really like to be a Wildcat and be embraced by the great fans and be part of something special. I feel like we've done a lot of special things this year.

To be here is rewarding, the effort and everything that we did this whole year to end up here now. We know that there's a lot more to do. So that's ahead of us so we're excited for it.

OTEGA OWEH: I'd say the same thing as Koby. I mean, it's probably been the most fun that I've had playing basketball in a long time. So just it being at Kentucky and playing with the guys that are up here, and, I mean, everyone that's on the team. It's been fun. Definitely has surpassed my expectations in the sense of what we've done and, like, we still have so much more to do.

Kind of like what I said earlier, I'm just blessed and thankful to be on this stage and be able to play in the game tomorrow.

LAMONT BUTLER: I'll say it's really been a great year for us. Every team, every year brings its ups and downs. We've had a roller coaster of a year, but it brought us together even closer, everything that's went on this year. We're excited to go out and really just show what we can do, prove people wrong.

I kind of expected us to be in a good position from the summer to go win a National Championship. That's on our mind. That's what we're going to do.

ANDREW CARR: It's, for sure, surpassed my expectations. I think Kentucky has just been amazing from the time I stepped foot on campus in the summer for sure.

We all know how good of a team we are and so this year has been able to prove that time and time again and, you know, we're excited to be able to prove that again here in the tournament.

AMARI WILLIAMS: I'll say the same as Lamont and Andrew, just how together we've been. We're all in a group. The games we've been able to pull out this year have been tough and we've been able to do it. That's the kind of team we are. Thankful for that.

Q. Otega, with all of the injuries that you've had, defensive chemistry feels up and down. When you're whole, how good defensively do think you can be with you, Andrew, Lamont, and Amari on the floor together?

OTEGA OWEH: When we have everybody, we're one of the better defensive teams in the country. Even when we

don't have everybody, you still have all the pieces. I think it's more of a mentality thing. When we lock in and decide we're going to play defense and take other teams out of what they're doing, I think we're one of the better teams out there.

A lot of it, for us, is just locking in and doing those things, and we're going to continue to do that as we keep on playing. We have all the tools to really be that good defensive team.

Q. Lamont, obviously, you know what it takes to get to the National Championship game. You've done it before. You said this team has the material to do it. What do you see in the team that makes you confident that it has the ability to make a deep run?

LAMONT BUTLER: I think seeing throughout the year the resilience we play with. And in the tournament, things are going to go wrong. I feel like we've done a great job of bouncing back really quick from, say, we lost a game or we had a bad half. Like the next thing that we do is just great.

We've had a lot of great second halves, a lot of great bounce-back games. I think that's going to carry over into this tournament. We've got guys that love each other, play for each other, and know what the Kentucky brand means to them.

Kentucky is a winning program, and we want to continue to win for it.

Q. I know that self-scout is a big part of you-all's process and has been this week. What was one thing you really noticed when you look back at the film of Alabama and Oklahoma?

ANDREW CARR: For us, trying to learn more. We talk about defensively. I don't know exactly what the numbers are, but feel like even in the last month, two months, almost since the Ole Miss game, I feel like we've really tried to see growth individually defensively. That's added to the team growth defensively.

So, specifically, in those type of games, definitely had some lapses in ball screen coverage. And so we've continued to get better, a whole lot better the last couple months in it. But that was something specifically that we looked at.

And in March, a lot of teams will turn to just high ball screens, and trying to be able to defend that is an important part of winning and getting far in March.

THE MODERATOR: Guys, thank you. Good luck

tomorrow night.

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