

# NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Round - Xavier vs Illinois

Thursday, March 20, 2025

Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA

Fiserv Forum

## Illinois Fightin' Illini

## Kylan Boswell

## Kasparas Jakucionis

## Tomislav Ivusic

### Media Conference



**the opportunity to go back and practice for a few days when things aren't necessarily going great is the best thing for his teams. What happened, you know, during practices, getting to have a few in a row? Did something seem to click? Did a switch seem to flip back on? What was your point of view?**

TOMISLAV IVISIC: Yeah, in the beginning, the start of the season, when we were healthy, we were playing really good. I think we started to build team chemistry between everyone.

We had some unfortunate sicknesses, injuries, and that just moves you away from the court. You can't focus on the game and practices. It was a tough, tough, hard time. But recently, we've been full, everyone was at practices. We had a lot of time to prepare and getting back to the chemistry we started building preseason. And we're still improving, working on it a lot.

I would say that it's growing day by day, and we're in a way better situation than we were.

KYLAN BOSWELL: To touch on that, I mean, after the Duke game, and then Maryland, it's good sometimes to go back to the lab and just reset for all of us. We watched the film of that game. It was things that we all know we can control. Effort, energy, simple things like that.

For us, it's making sure we go back to the lab, put all out of our focus into our reset.

**Q. For KJ and Tomislav, neither of you guys have played in the NCAA Tournament. How much did you watch it overseas and how familiar are you with how things go in the event?**

KASPARAS JAKUCIONIS: Me personally, I didn't watch any of college basketball when I was younger. I started watching like two years ago, and March Madness was the only, only games that I was watching.

So you can see that every detail matters in the game, every little detail. Every possession. Every rebound matters. And you win or go home. So that's the thing, the beauty of it.

THE MODERATOR: Welcome to the stage, the Illinois student-athletes, Kasparas Jakucionis, Tomislav Ivusic, and Kylan Boswell.

**Q. How do you guys prepare for a team? I know it's on short notice coming out of the conference tournament season and all that. When you don't know your opponent until last minute, does that create preparation problems for you?**

KYLAN BOSWELL: Not really. We were watching the game. Tuned in. Today, we went over the scout a lot. That's the biggest thing going into the tournaments. For us young guys, being sure we're locked in on the scout. That's the biggest thing.

KASPARAS JAKUCIONIS: During the week, when we didn't know the opponent yet, we just focused on us, on our team and what we can do better.

**Q. Kylan, when you watch Ryan Conwell, what stands out about him? How much are you looking forward to the challenge? What does he do schematically that makes him different?**

KYLAN BOSWELL: I've been watching him. He's one of the best guards I'm going to go against for sure. Elite shooter off the bounce, he's a great playmaker for his team. For me, I like those challenges. Always tests me as an individual and as a player. I've been watching a lot of film on him and will be ready for the game.

**Q. I'd like to invite you all to answer. Brad has said many times, not just this year but over the years, that**

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TOMISLAV IVISIC: When I was younger, it was hard to find channels. It's a different time, always in the middle of the night, so it's hard to watch games. Last year's March Madness was the only thing I watched. Especially last year, my brother was here, and I was watching the games, noticed the different intensity.

Everyone comes here to win. Everyone wants to win. Huge stakes. And it's just amazing to be part of that this year.

**Q. Obviously, this event is known for crazy shots, big upsets. Having watched it for the last couple of years, do you have one of those that really sticks out to you that you remember?**

KASPARAS JAKUCIONIS: I don't know to be honest. I remember highlights from Jordan Poole hit that game-winning 3. So that was really amazing for me.

TOMISLAV IVISIC: I don't remember a lot, but I remember Jack Gohlke from last year.

**Q. I want to stay in the same vein of you guys have watched the last few years. Was there a team or a player or a specific game that, for either of you, just really gave you a feeling of, man, I want to be on that stage and I can see it, and I want to go get it.**

KASPARAS JAKUCIONIS: To be honest, not really for me. Like not a special player gave me some more motivation. But I think the team feeling and how teams were happy after every win, even if it was first game, second game, or going to Sweet 16, Elite Eight. So I think the team celebrations was the most what I wanted to experience. What I want to experience.

**Q. Kylan, Coach talked about the fact that he was going to be depending on you for leadership. I just want to know, what were some of the messages you gave the team heading into this weekend?**

KYLAN BOSWELL: Like first off, just forgetting about the Maryland game. Not worrying about that. Then going into this, scout, the details, and your effort matter. Especially playing against Xavier, who is an older team. We're really young. Having mistakes or missed shots can't affect your energy. They'll capitalize on that. They won't make those mistakes with effort and energy. For us, my focal point was making sure the effort and energy is in the right mindset going into this game.

**Q. KJ, you've had great games. You've had games that weren't as great. I mean, you yourself, individually, how much responsibility do you feel as**

**the point guard, as a big name, and all that for how this team performs and how far it goes. How much of it is on you?**

KASPARAS JAKUCIONIS: I don't know. I think that to win and to win in especially these games, we need everybody. We need everyone to be involved, every possession. Everyone needs to do their job on the defensive end and the offensive end. I think one player cannot do anything in this type of competition.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks, guys. Good luck.

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