

# NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Round - Texas A&M vs Nebraska

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FedExForum

## Texas A&M Aggies Coach Buzz Williams Wade Taylor IV Manny Obaseki

Media Conference

**Q. You played against Memphis this year and last year in this building. Is there a level of familiarity with this building, do you think that gives you a little bit of an advantage, or is it just a chance maybe to exercise some demons here in Memphis?**

MANNY OBASEKI: I would say, it's a little familiar to me. I don't know. I can't say the same for my guys but we're excited to be here and we're ready to have media practice and get a feel for the rim, for the court, and I think that will help us for tomorrow.

WADE TAYLOR IV: I would say it's more familiar for our fans. Like, it's closer to Texas than some of the other destinations. Like Manny said, we're happy to be here. Excited to play in this wonderful arena again. Hope to come out with a win -- a couple of them.

TYRECE RADFORD: For me, yeah, it's kind of familiar, but I'm looking at everything this year as, like, we've been here before but still treat it as if it's kind of new because it's a new season.

**Q. Anything that you all can take from being in this experience last year that you can draw from to maybe help you or make you more comfortable this season in the tournament?**

TYRECE RADFORD: Just acting like we've been here before. Did a lot of celebrating and got that out of our system. Now it's time to really lock in, take it a game at a time and be where our feet are at.

**Q. Obviously the SEC is one of the toughest leagues**



**in the country. So with eight teams getting in this year, what did that schedule do you for you guys to prepare you for this moment?**

WADE TAYLOR IV: I think it did a lot. Shout-out to the SEC for getting eight teams in. I think it prepared us for this moment. I feel we played 18 NCAA Tournament games, at home, on the road, neutral site, in the SEC Tournament. The physicality we play with, it's like no other.

Playing those 18 games, playing those different caliber teams -- fast, slow, big, small -- gets you ready for the tournament as you're playing different teams night in, night out.

**Q. Piggyback off of that, the Southeastern Conference, talk about who Nebraska reminds you of in the Southeastern Conference and the game plan coming into this from a physical SEC tournament last week?**

TYRECE RADFORD: From watching film, I see that they kind of live by the 3, die by the 3. They shoot the 3 ball really well.

For us, all we've got to do, to be honest, is stick to our roots, be physical, be more physical. Make the open shots and just play together as a team.

MANNY OBASEKI: According to the SEC, they would be the fifth fastest team. Really good players. They run really good sets, effective sets. But I think the game plan for us is to be aggressive on both sides of the ball, reaching with high hands because they're really good at shooting on the catch and off the bounce. And rebound the ball, finish the possession with a rebound. If we do that, we'll be fine.

WADE TAYLOR IV: To your question, they kind of remind me of Alabama. They're fast. They have great shooters. All five positions can shoot, just like Alabama. They kind of run the NBA offense -- pin-downs, screen, things like that. But like Manny said, just stay focussed, greet them with a high hand and try to be physical.



**Q. Wade, it's been six years since this program has won an NCAA Tournament game. What would it mean for y'all to get a victory in the NCAA postseason?**

WADE TAYLOR IV: It would mean a lot just for this team that heard their name called this year. We've been through a lot this year. A lot of people didn't think we would be here today. We just to continue to keep working, and we want to thank God for putting us in the position.

We want to win it for our fans back home, our families. They have a lot to do with this because they raised us. We are just happy to be here. We're going to go out there, play as hard as we can, and hopefully come out with a win.

**Q. Wade, you said that these guys live and die by the 3. So did Penn State last year. We don't have to go into that. But what can you guys take from that game and maybe playing some other good 3-point shooting teams this season to kind of defend how they operate?**

WADE TAYLOR IV: I would say that Penn State game plan and the Nebraska game plan are totally different. Penn State, they did this thing called Mellow. They shot 3s from the post. They had one guy kind of orchestrating everything.

With Nebraska they have a lot of good players. They shoot better off the dribble than they do off the catch. They're getting a lot of 3s in transition. They have plays ran to make 3s. I feel we're just going to go out there make sure we holler at all times.

**Q. Particularly for you, Wade, because I'm thinking you might end up guarding him, Tominaga is great 3-point shooter. What makes him so good and what's the challenge particularly on dealing with him? They're live streaming that game back in Japan because he's so popular back home?**

WADE TAYLOR IV: He's a terrific player from what I've watched. I'm excited for the match-up. I'm going to do whatever I can do for the team to make sure we win. We'll try to contain him.

He's a great player. You just can't shut him down. He's going to make shots. We have to make sure we stay focused and continue the game plan.

**Q. Wade, most of the year, as a team, you all struggled from the 3-point line, but the last six games you guys have shot over 40 percent. Anything you can point to that's the reason you all have been able to make such a dramatic improvement?**

WADE TAYLOR IV: Just believing in our work and believing in each other.

**Q. Mo, this one's for you. Most of the season you were getting very limited playing time. You came out, had a good game against South Carolina. Got in the starting lineup, and obviously things have really moved from there. What changed for you midseason to go from really struggling with your shot to putting up a lot of points in a hurry?**

MANNY OBASEKI: First of all, I just want to thank God for being in this position. And secondly, I want to thank these two dudes to the right and left of me for sticking with it with me.

They know I work every day. They know how hard I go. They know how much I care. And through it all, they always made sure I was okay and that I just keep going, that I never stop.

I have a great coaching staff and other great teammates in that locker room that believe in me and that supports me and loves me. If it wasn't for that, I wouldn't be able to do what I'm doing.

**Q. You're around Buzz Williams every day. What's life like around him, not just when he's talking basketball, but just when he's talking about life and everything that's going on? Any stories you guys have about him?**

TYRECE RADFORD: I've probably been around him the longest out of all of us. Coach Buzz Williams is the most consistent person I've ever met with everything he do. Just being a dad, a coach. And that plays a big role in my life.

Makes me want to be consistent with I do on the court and off the court. He's a very passionate person about everything he does. And that plays a part in why we're so close, and just why he bonds so much with the team and why we click.

It's just something about Coach Buzz that makes him so special. You can't pinpoint one thing. It's a lot of things.

MANNY OBASEKI: An amazing leader. He's not like any other leader, though. He's someone that really walks in faith. Studies like every day, you know what I'm saying? And that stuff comes to life. The words that he uses, how much energy and passion he puts into his words when he really speaks to us, not just us, anybody, it really touches you and it really motivates you to be a better person on and off the floor. And I love Buzz. I'm glad he's my coach.

WADE TAYLOR IV: He's the type of coach that you would run through a wall for. He just always knows what to say at the right moments. He has his own kids. He always tells us he spends more time with us than his own kids. I really appreciate that because I'm not with my father all the time.

I look at the coaching staff and Coach Buzz, father figure all the time. And like everybody else said, I'm just glad he's my coach.

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by head coach Buzz Williams.

**Q. Obviously being in the league for five years and winning the SEC Coach of the Year, that league, eight teams are playing in the postseason now. What did that schedule do for you all to prepare you for this March?**

BUZZ WILLIAMS: It's the first time we've done the schedule that we've done in the non-conference to add it to what the SEC has become over the last five years. I think we've played 14 games this season against teams that are in the NCAA Tournament. So we've had practice.

We haven't always done well, but the league continues to improve and the margin continues to shrink. Whether it's eight teams or -- every coach in every league will say they need more. But hopefully the league will do well over the next few weeks, and that's probably what speaks the loudest.

**Q. What would it mean for your program to get a win in the NCAA postseason?**

BUZZ WILLIAMS: We would be grateful. We're thankful to be here after all that's transpired, as you know, over the last month or so. And selfishly, I'd just like it to keep going to be able to continue to hang around these guys.

It's been remarkable, the lessons that we've learned, the resiliency that they've shown, the togetherness, the connectivity. We'll have our hands full against Nebraska. Unique opponent, very well-coached, with really, really skilled players.

But for a multitude of reasons, like every other coach, we'd like to keep playing.

**Q. What has Eli meant to this team? I think you mentioned it in one of your last ones, what he's done off the court, on the bench with that?**

BUZZ WILLIAMS: I just admire him so much. To be honest with you, I think there has been a crescendo within

the program for the respect that we have towards him. Played a lot of minutes. Shot a lot of balls. Had a lot of success throughout his college career. And then for the most part hasn't played.

He's shooting 6 percent from 3. And he may be the most respected player that I've ever coached who knows he's not going to play, and the players know he's not going to play. And he sat in my seat as much as I have over the last two weeks.

I was telling his dad -- his dad called me yesterday -- and I said, we'll have time to discuss later and he can go play somewhere because he has such an ability to score, but his calling is coaching because his ability to have an impact -- normally when you think of leaders, you think of the guys that are maybe the best players, sometimes the oldest players.

And then in our program we don't ever beam captains. I've never done that. I'm not saying that's right or wrong. But he's only been with us nine months. Doesn't know anything about what we're doing, committed on Zoom. Never took an official visit. And he just has great belief in who we are.

And his ability to inspire, knowing that he's not going to be able to participate, I think that's really hard to do as a competitor, and I think he's going to have a very successful coaching career whenever he's done.

**Q. Does it surprise you all that he was able to find a talent like Keisei across the globe for Nebraska?**

BUZZ WILLIAMS: They run a pretty offense. I can't pronounce all their names, I know their numbers. Obviously when Coach was at Iowa State I was at Marquette. And he coached Jimmy when he was with the Bulls. So I'm familiar with the savant that he is offensively.

And just watching them you don't want to play against them, but just watching them, there's for sure envy as a coach, like I wish I could do that. I wish I could get our players to read and react the way they do.

Very unique style of play. 51's their point guard and leads their team in assists. 50 percent of their shots are from 3. They're fun to watch. And obviously they cause the opposition a lot of stress because of how they play.

And he was probably at the forefront of the transfer portal before it was the transfer portal, but a lot of their success at Iowa State, way back when -- that was an eternity ago, it seems -- were kids that sat out and then finished their eligibility there.

But I think a lot of his style of play and what they do in transition, what they do in secondary, they were doing some of that at Iowa State. They were for sure doing some of that with the Bulls. And I think it's just continued to evolve with the skill set of the guys that he has this year.

**Q. Maybe you touched on this a little bit in your previous answer, Buzz, but Wade compared -- he said that Nebraska kind of reminds him of Alabama. I wonder if you think that's a good comparison, or any other teams that you all played that fits more of what you all have seen or what you've seen in Nebraska?**

BUZZ WILLIAMS: There is some residue of how Alabama plays. They're fast. They're not as fast as Alabama. But percentage of shots from 3, eerily similar to Alabama.

I don't know, to be honest with you, if we've played a team that combines the pace at which they prefer to play along with the flow or the prettiness or the style. And for sure we haven't played anyone whose roster is built the way theirs is.

**Q. Your players were just up there and they talked extensively about their relationship with you. Tyrece talked about wanting to be as consistent as you in life. Boots had great things to say about how much time you spend with them, sacrificing time with your family. What does your relationship with this group of guys in particular mean to you off the basketball court?**

BUZZ WILLIAMS: Everything. This is the wrong thing to say on this platform, basketball has very little if anything to do with it. It's just kind of what brought us together. Time will multiply whatever you feed it and that's specific to ball but I think that's specific to life. And I for sure think that's what applies to relationships.

So for Boots to say that, I appreciate it. I don't ask any of our guys those sorts of questions when I spend time with them. Just talking to them about them.

I hope that what I model may help their life. I think good habits with time, it becomes your ally. So I just try to give them as much time of my time as I can.

I coach less than I ever have. But I spend more time with the people within the organization, the young adults and the old adults. And in this model of college athletics, it's the one thing that is refreshing to me. It's nourishing to me.

I think there is some lasting power to that. I don't know who was up here or what they said, but those are my guys and I love them. And it's not dependent upon if they make

a shot or if we win tomorrow.

**Q. The transfer portal opened just before the NCAA Tournament. What are your thoughts on that? What does it do for you and your staff having to balance those two things?**

BUZZ WILLIAMS: Closed mouths don't catch flies, so I've got to be careful what I say. The timing is hard. I'm not critiquing it. All the smart people make all the decisions. I'm not in that group, nor should I be.

But it is a delicate deal. You go to Selection Sunday and then you wake up early Monday morning to keep studying and you need to send texts and you need to make calls. And I'm, like, is there any way we could try to win on Friday?

And it's somewhat -- I don't want to critique it because there's kids that are here that came from the transfer portal, but there probably needs to be a group of smart people that try to figure out a better calendar.

We're still following some archaic rules in a different model that probably are not congruent with where we're at in 2024.

**Q. You have said more than once that you want to run an offense that kind of mucks things up. And you said that Nebraska has a pretty offense. Lately you guys have run a pretty offense. It's been a lot more tempo. What changed? Has that just been something that you have consciously decided that you guys want to run, or has it just been something that's worked out?**

BUZZ WILLIAMS: Maybe a little bit of both. I think over the course of our tenure at A&M and elsewhere, I think we've tried to adapt to whatever gives our guys the best chance. And I think that that takes time for me to figure out.

And sometimes I'm a little too slow in figuring it out, but I also think it takes time for the guys to have comfort in it.

I think we've done a much better job defensively, which has led to us being able to play with more pace at the beginning of the shot clock, which has, to some degree, led to us getting fouled more often, which, for us, if we can get fouled more often and the possession starts from a dead ball, defensively we're able to muck it up.

We're probably better mucking it up defensively than we are offensively, but we for sure need our offense to help our defense.

But I think over the last three weeks, in some respects, our defense has helped our offense. And that would be what I would contribute it to the most.

**Q. How has your relationship with Henry Coleman developed over the years, and how has he developed on the court?**

BUZZ WILLIAMS: He's special. I know his name is Henry, but I think he's Barack Obama. I think God has an anointing on his life that is far superior to ball.

He's the only two-time men's basketball committee member Commissioner Sankey has ever appointed in any sport. Obviously he's the only men's basketball representative in NCAA, among all Division I schools.

He's progressed as a player, but I think the playing part is just a small ingredient. Obviously my relationship goes back with we and his family as long as I've known you.

We stopped recruiting him at Virginia Tech and I told Henry that long before I ever came here. Mr. Coleman played for Coach, as you know. Ms. Coleman graduated from UVA law school.

And I remember one morning I was at Trinity and Coach Williams was with me. He was like, Buzz, I'm wasting my time up here. This is Coach. I said, Coach, you're not wasting your time. He goes, why are you saying that? He's going to go with you.

I said Coach he's not coming to Virginia Tech because as soon as you leave I'm going to tell him we're not recruiting him anymore. He goes, what? I said, Coach, he's either going to go with you or he's going to go to Duke. He said, why? Because that kid is special, and he's never going to choose sides between his mom and his dad.

He's never going to tell his mom he's going to play at Tech, and he's never going to tell his dad he's going to UVA. So I'm the one wasting time. So if you'd hurry up and finish with him or let me go first I'll tell him. And then your conversation will go better.

So obviously the pandemic was brutal for us at Texas A&M -- men's basketball, pardon me if I didn't clarify that the right way. So when he went in the portal, his mom called. And I said, Ms. Coleman, we cannot waste time. I just had my second losing record in the history of my career in conference play. I can't waste time.

So I'm not calling Henry. You're calling Henry. And if you want to have a Zoom, he has to commit. And then we'll just handle it like that. Good talking to you. I don't expect

to hear from you again.

His family is ultra, ultra close. And, of course, I know all of them. And, like, his impact for us in year number one -- and I know you don't know our team -- but there's four guys that came at the same time following the pandemic, and you can argue that it has been ultra successful. And Henry's for sure at the beginning of that list.

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