

# NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Round - Mississippi State vs Baylor

Friday, March 21, 2025

Raleigh, North Carolina, USA

Lenovo Center

**Baylor Bears**

**Scott Drew**

**Rob Wright**

**Norchard Omier**

Media Conference

Baylor - 75, Mississippi State - 72

THE MODERATOR: Once again, welcome to the Baylor press conferences. Coach, congratulations. Could you please make an opening statement.

SCOTT DREW: First and foremost, I want to thank God for an opportunity to coach in the NCAA Tournament. Really blessed. Not everybody gets a chance to do that.

Second of all, really proud of how we competed. We knew coming in Mississippi State's a very physical team, extremely well coached, and I thought our guys really competed on the glass, did a great job.

I don't have final stats as stats went down in the second half, but from my recollection, I think we did a pretty good job on the glass.

As far as these guys go, this tournament, is going to be a lot of one, two-possession games, and the beauty of playing in the Big 12 and having a lot of those, at least they had the experience, and they've been in them. So I think they'll see most of what we can expect.

**Q. For either of you, I know it's very quick, the process of the NCAA Tournament. You have to play one game, get ready for the next. You could have to go up against the Number 1 seed in Duke. Do you like the fact that you guys had to play the first game so you can now kind of get into a mental reset and just focus on them, on whoever's going to win that game and prepare for them and watch them versus having to play a later game?**



ROB WRIGHT: Yeah, we're coming in, in the Big 12 tournament, we had a tough game versus Texas Tech, so coming in here and playing another tough team, I think it definitely gets us ready for a 1 seed and able to go out there and compete.

**Q. Rob, you were sitting there nodding as Coach was talking. How much did the experience of going through the Big 12, the close games you played in the Big 12 tournament, help in a game like today where, I mean, I think you all had an 11-point lead, they got it down to one a couple of times.**

ROB WRIGHT: It helps a lot. Playing teams like Houston, we had them with a one-point game, playing a bunch of Big 12 tough teams, it's a one-point game.

Already being in those situations, VJ hit them two big free throws, so we kind of knew from there the game was pretty over.

**Q. Rob, to your Montverde teammates here in Raleigh with you, have you had a chance to talk to them before the bracket was revealed, and have you had a chance to see them since you got down here to Raleigh?**

ROB WRIGHT: When we left practice yesterday, I saw Cooper and them, and I talked to Liam before the tournament. I've seen those guys, but we could possibly play one of them, so we're not really talking.

SCOTT DREW: I think they got their group text stuff.

**Q. For both guys, you talked about the close games down the stretch. Did this help prepare you -- do those games help prepare you for how this game ended?**

THE MODERATOR: Norchard, could you go first, please.

NORCHARD OMIER: Like Rob said, Rob said pretty much everything. Playing in the Big 12, you just have a lot of close games, and coming in here, we know that in March a lot of stuff happens. We got an 11-point lead. They came back and make it to one point. Thank God, how he said, VJ hit both free throws, and we call it a game.



It's March. Anything can happen. We've got to be ready for every game to be a close game.

**Q. Nationally everybody talks about how tough the SEC is and that they were getting all that tough game experience. I imagine you guys feel the same way about -- it sounds like you feel the same way about the Big 12 may be overlooked.**

ROB WRIGHT: Yeah, the Big 12 is definitely the toughest conference in the country. The SEC had an okay year, a good year, but I think we have the toughest conference.

NORCHAD OMIER: He said it.

**Q. Norchad, for you, you were with Miami making that run into the Final Four and everything. Kind of what's your message to the team here as you move forward from round to round in the NCAA Tournament?**

NORCHAD OMIER: I keep it simple today. Before the game start, I told the guys it's either win or go home. I know everybody want to win. I know everybody put the work in. I know everybody going to trust their work.

So that's been the message, win and survive.

THE MODERATOR: Gentlemen, you're excused. Thank you very much and congratulations.

**Q. Coach, kind of the same thing I asked the players. You have a player that spent a lot of his time in Durham. The fact that he might have to go up against his former team, how much does that help you with Jeremy Roach, having him, knowing that he could help you guys if Duke does advance?**

SCOTT DREW: I'm sure we're going to pick his brain. At the end of the day, though, I know he loves Duke and had a great experience. I know from like when our past assistants that we coach against, it's bittersweet. You love to talk about them and brag about them, but it really stinks whoever loses because you know the season's over.

We'll definitely, though, pick his brain and try to find out. I know they have a lot of different players, but I know there will be some things that he can help us with hopefully.

**Q. You've talked about how at this time of year you don't have to say much to motivate them. The active hands that you all had today, a lot of steals, some blocks, forced some turnovers, did you like the energy that you guys showed?**

SCOTT DREW: We had to have that because Mississippi

State has a tremendous offense, scoring a lot of points. If you let them get a bunch of shots, they're making a good percentage. So we tried to do our work early and tried to make it as hard as possible.

This March, everyone's going to play really hard. Everyone's going to compete. You pray you make your free throws, knock down shots, and you execute.

**Q. It's the second straight year Mississippi State was a No. 8 seed and lost to No. 9. Maybe it's just a coincidence? What is it about an 8-9 seed that makes it a tough matchup?**

SCOTT DREW: It's closest to the bracket to begin with. The second thing is I think you can throw those numbers out. I know we're the only team coming into the tournament that was a top three seed four years in a row.

The reason nobody has a perfect bracket after the first weekend is because those numbers give some false impressions to March. What I mean by that is it's March Madness for a reason. It's not the best of seven, like the NBA, where the best team wins. It's who's the best for that 40 minutes.

What we love about college basketball is the parity, and when you've got 18 to 23-year-olds, you never know really what's going to happen. It's great for fans, and it makes coaches lose hair.

**Q. Advancing into the NCAA Tournament, round of 32 coming up, the transfer portal opens up on Monday. How do you kind of juggle between the two situations happening simultaneously?**

SCOTT DREW: I'll be honest, I wish there was a way you could open up after the tournament so everybody could just focus on their teams and not have that distraction. I know us coaches are all going through a transition period, trying to figure out what's best for everybody because there's 364 schools.

But at the end of the day, you have multiple people on your staff and you delegate stuff, but I'll be honest, it's not easy. This time of year you want to reward teams that are still playing. You want to give them their attention. I feel if there was ever in the next couple of years, we can figure better ways to do things, I know we'll land there. But I know right now we'd much rather have that distraction problem in the other way.

**Q. VJ's slowish start in the first half, what did you see him do to settle in, and why do you keep going to him down the stretch?**

SCOTT DREW: I think first and foremost VJ, because he's so highly rated on the draft boards, people just assume that that's a score. VJ doesn't have to score to impact a game. VJ is an all around player.

He gets comparisons to Dwyane Wade, Russell Westbrook, and the thing that those guys did is their athleticism and their ability to assist, defend. It affects the game. So if he's scoring or not, he's helping us.

I know people might think, well, he got off to a sluggish start. He just missed some good shots, and at some point he's going to make them, but he's always affecting the game because he's a great teammate and he's a winner, so he makes winning plays.

Really, to be honest, that's refreshing as a coach and a player that doesn't rely on a guy that the only thing he can do is make the shot, and if he's not making it, he can't help you. Anyway, it's a joy coaching him because he affects every part of the game, and it's not about I, it's about team.

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