

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: Regional Semifinal - Purdue vs Houston

Thursday, March 27, 2025

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Lucas Oil Stadium

Houston Cougars

Coach Kelvin Sampson

Sweet 16 Pregame Media Conference

KELVIN SAMPSON: Proud of our team, staff for being in a position to keep playing. When you have a great team, great kids, you want the ride to last as long as you can.

This team has really good player leadership. Very competitive, hard-nosed kids that play the game the right way.

We came out of a tough conference, as did all these teams that are still playing. So it's been a fun group to work with.

Q. For you just to be back in the Hoosier state, here in Indiana, what's it like for you personally?

KELVIN SAMPSON: Doesn't mean anything to me. I'm just looking forward to playing Purdue Friday night.

Q. You've coached against Matt Painter before. What will it be like to coach against him?

KELVIN SAMPSON: I really don't look at it like that. I don't coach against Matt Painter. We coach against Matt Painter's team. And his team is good enough to beat just about anybody.

Braden Smith, Kaufman-Renn, Loyer, they're all winners. They've been to a level that proves what a great program Purdue is. They got to the championship game last year.

I remember coaching against Purdue when Coach Keady was there. Purdue has always been one of the great programs, not just good teams, but great programs in our game. So it's an honor to be able to play against a great program like Purdue.

Q. Wonder if you take any issue with the fact that usually when you're a No. 1 seed you get a geographical advantage, yet you're the furthest school



from Indiana and you're playing Purdue; Purdue basically has a home game. Do you take any issue with how that all played out at all?

KELVIN SAMPSON: No. I didn't hear what you said.

Q. Late tip, obviously. You guys are sort of used to it with the Central time zone. How do you prepare your team to do this hard fought battle at 10:09 p.m. Eastern time tip?

KELVIN SAMPSON: I'm more concerned about my grandkids. I let my grandkids go to the game. One is 4 and one is 7. There's just so much "Dino Ranch" you can put on the iPads. And you have the little tube of the "Little Dinos," that, around 10, 10:30, it's just tough.

We had a late game in Wichita against Gonzaga. I don't remember what time that game started, but I know that riding the bus back to the plane, my grandson was laying on one leg asleep and my granddaughter was up against my shoulder asleep. So, when I saw the time come out, my first thought was them.

Q. What have you seen from Trey Kaufman-Renn, one of the most improved players in the country, I think it's fair to say?

KELVIN SAMPSON: The usage rate with Braden Smith and Kaufman-Renn -- and I think this speaks to how good Purdue is on offense -- is they get him the ball where he's able to get to his strength, which is either his left shoulder or his right hand.

And if he can get your shoulder turned where he's got an angle, he's so -- it's not his length as much as it is his thickness. He really knows how to use his body to create an advantage for himself. And Smith is such a really good passer, but he's not afraid to make the tough pass.

I don't remember what year, but I was the head coach of a USA team, and my point guard was Chris Paul. And we were in the Halifax, Nova Scotia. And we were playing in the gold medal game against Puerto Rico. And their point guard was José Juan Barea. Played in the NBA a long time.

Those two point guards were just elite at being nasty, a good kind of dirty and tough and just wreaked of being winners. Braden Smith reminds me a lot of that.

Q. You faced West Virginia twice this season. Obviously West Virginia's coach, Darian DeVries, was just hired at Indiana. Your impressions of him as a coach as someone who has had to prepare for his teams, essentially?

KELVIN SAMPSON: West Virginia was -- they were good. Coach DeVries is a really, really good coach. Big 12 is full of great coaches. But I was really impressed with him.

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