

# NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: Regional Semifinal - BYU vs Alabama

Wednesday, March 26, 2025

Newark, New Jersey, USA

Prudential Center

**Alabama Crimson Tide**  
**Mouhamed Dioubate**  
**Aiden Sherrell**  
**Mark Sears**

Sweet 16 Pregame Media Conference

**Q. Mark, you're shooting a career low from field goal percentage, three-point percentage. Overall, though, you aren't being more of a play maker this year. Can you explain why your numbers have dipped, and is that a concern as the games start ramping up and becoming more difficult?**

MARK SEARS: Yeah, to me, that hasn't been a concern. I'm going to just keep being me. I put in the work, and I'm going to keep shooting, and know my teammates are going to do a great job of finding me when I'm open. But no, no concern here.

**Q. How have you guys been preparing for this big Sweet 16 game, and is there anything specific that you guys are trying to attack in BYU?**

MOUHAMED DIOUBATE: We've had a few practices so far. We've been implementing playing fast in transition, getting a lot of offensive and defensive rebounds and playing physical. That's something that Oats implemented a lot. And we've been watching a lot of film and trying to get our legs rested so we can be ready to go tomorrow.

MARK SEARS: Yeah, they play a lot like us, very fast paced. And it should be a very fun game, but it's going to come down to getting stops.

AIDEN SHERRELL: Yeah, like Mark said, they play a similar style of offense as us, so we have to focus on the defense and rebounding.

**Q. Aiden, being a freshman here, what Coach Oats has built is one of the best building jobs in the sport**



**but it's not easy. What do you remember about your first couple Alabama practices and adjusting to the way you guys do things?**

AIDEN SHERRELL: Yeah, my first Alabama practice was super fast. I had to get adjusted to the speed for sure because we play super fast. And the pace, it was definitely a shock to me. I wouldn't think we had to play that fast.

MOUHAMED DIOUBATE: My first few practices here, it was like a shocker to me, because in high school I come from a team that played very fast. I thought we was playing fast, but it was nothing like when I first got here.

We played very hard and it was very physical. It was a lot of talent, playing against older guys. It was a lot of catching up and learning I had to do when I first got here.

**Q. Was Mark faster than you?**

AIDEN SHERRELL: Yeah, yeah, sure.

**Q. Along those lines, Mark, how do you guys balance playing that fast and being under control?**

MARK SEARS: We've been practicing it since June, so we've been practicing making the reads going 100 percent and going fast, and now it's just making the right reads.

We always play with creating advantages. So when we're playing that fast, we're going to most likely create an advantage within six seconds. And with them, you've just got to make the right read.

**Q. I know Aiden wasn't there last year but you guys were. Last year it seemed like there was a ton of talk before the tournament about your defense, and then it seemed like once the tournament started, you kind of flipped on a switch. Did it feel like that to you last year? Do you feel it happening again this year?**

MARK SEARS: Yeah, for sure. I see that we're still flipping the switch. And just hearing all the big-time outlets saying, we're soft, we're this and that, it's definitely internal motivation. And we've basically got a point that prove that we're not soft, that we're tough, and it's just basically a point to prove on defense.

MOUHAMED DIOUBATE: We've got a point to prove on defense. Being called soft, that's something that you don't want towards your team or your name. Last year, we realized we can't lose. If we lose, we go home. We said we were going to play for Estrada because it was his last season playing college basketball.

And this year we've got a lot of fifth-year guys that's not going to be here, and we realize it's either win or go home, and we want to win, so that's kind of the motto.

**Q. I think there's seven SEC teams in the Sweet 16. How did the SEC schedule, how it's so tough night in and night out, prepare you guys for the tournament, and do you think it'll be a failure if someone from the league or you guys don't win the whole thing, if a non-SEC team wins?**

MOUHAMED DIOUBATE: I think it prepared us very well. We've been playing against the best teams all season long, from January on. And I think it kind of gives us an edge a little bit because we know what it feels like to play against those kind of teams.

No, I don't think it's a failure because the league made history. You can't look at it as a failure.

MARK SEARS: Yeah, to go with what Mo said, our last seven games we've been playing the best teams night in and night out. I'd say that definitely has helped us be battle tested, especially when adversity hit. We haven't seen it before, but we're going to be ready for it and we're going to attack it with a positive mindset.

To go with the other question, yeah, I wouldn't be surprised if a team from the SEC had won it. That's how great the league was this year.

AIDEN SHERRELL: Yeah, like they both said, throughout this league, we've been playing the best of the best. It helps prepare us for this tournament and everything.

Yeah, I wouldn't be surprised if someone from our conference wins for sure. We've been showing that we're the best conference.

**Q. Mark, you mentioned how important getting stops is, and that's going to be how this game is decided. How do you stop a team that's coming off a performance shooting-wise like BYU has, shooting 49 percent from the floor, 46 from three, and you can't foul them because they shot 93 percent from the charity stripe?**

MARK SEARS: Yeah, we've just got to limit their threes as much as possible. We can't give them simple threes. Simple threes is they just shoot a three, rock you to sleep, right in your face. And we've got to do a great job of that and we've got to try to limit rotations as much as possible. Because when they're breaking down a defense, that's giving easy threes to their shooters. And we've just got to do a great job of that.

And we've got to do a great job of transition defense because I've seen they're very, very elite in transition, and we've just got to do a great job of slowing that down.

**Q. Who's been tasked with guarding Richie Saunders, and what have you seen from tape on him?**

MOUHAMED DIOUBATE: Who's starting on him? I think Labaron is starting on Richie.

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