

# NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: Regional Semifinal - Arizona vs Duke

Wednesday, March 26, 2025

Newark, New Jersey, USA

Prudential Center

**Arizona Wildcats**

**Caleb Love**

**KJ Lewis**

**Trey Townsend**

Sweet 16 Pregame Media Conference

**Q. Caleb, you've had a storied career, two big-time programs. To take it back to the beginning at North Carolina and now your fifth season here at Arizona, can you kind of describe the journey for you? What's going through your mind in terms of the journey you've been through now being at this point?**

CALEB LOVE: Yeah, I think it's definitely been a journey. My journey has been a lot of adversity, a lot of ups and downs, and everything in between.

But I think it's made me who I am as a person and a player. I've grown so much over the course of my college career, not only on the court but off the court. I've learned so much, and I wouldn't trade it for anything.

But we are here now, and I thank God for keeping me, and I trust in Him that every situation, He's going to have me covered.

**Q. Coach when he was just up here said a lot about growth throughout the season through wins and losses. For everybody, how do you guys feel like you've grown from early in the season until this point right now?**

TREY TOWNSEND: Yeah, I mean, we've gone through a lot of adversity throughout the season. Had our ups and downs early on, and I think that's helped us learn how to finish games and battle through that. It's easy to kind of fold down when you're expected to win a lot of games right off the beginning of the season. We didn't to that.

We were 4-5 at one point, but we were able to turn that



around once conference play started. And I give a lot of credit to the Big 12 conference for preparing us for this tournament, as well, just the physicality of everything, and we just never lost faith in our guys. Coach never lost faith in us, and we just believed that we were meant to be here.

I think that's been showing end of February into March and hopefully onward.

KJ LEWIS: You know, to piggyback off what Trey said, just going through a bunch of adversity earlier in the year, but nobody in our circle or in our program folded. We kept belief, and we knew what type of team we had, and it was just a matter of time of us putting the pieces together and figuring out what worked for us.

Again, we went into conference play with an 0-0 mindset and ultimately we got better out of it.

**Q. Caleb, what do you remember about that shot that you hit against Duke in 2022 in the Final Four?**

CALEB LOVE: I made the shot (smiling).

I mean, it really has no relevance to this game coming up. I just want to focus on the game plan that we have set. I want my focus to be with this group.

**Q. Basically you played Duke once before, and Caleb, obviously you're familiar with them, not this particular team as much. Your front line has changed, basically, because Veesaar started in that game. But what do you think is going to be the key to winning this game?**

CALEB LOVE: Just executing our game plan. The physicality of the game, being unaffected by any outside sources, whether that's refs or turnovers or anything like that, we've just got to play Arizona basketball to the best of our ability. We've got to play together. Our offense has got to click and things like that.

Then our defense, I think we've grown in that area throughout the whole year, and I think that's going to separate us.

KJ LEWIS: I think just executing the game plan on both sides of the ball. Also being physical and matching their



physicality and their rebounding is going to be a big key for the victory. And then obviously taking care of the ball.

TREY TOWNSEND: Yeah, basketball is a game of runs, and both teams are going to have highs and both teams are going to have lows. Being able to stay in the middle of that, not get too high and not get too low and understand those runs are going to come for both sides, it's whichever team can handle that the best. And also executing the game plan and stuff like that.

Basketball as well as a lot of sports is mainly just a thing of runs and just being able to weather the storm and appreciate the highs and execute the game plan.

**Q. I know you said you're focused on this group, but you have had some big games against Duke in your career. What do you think led to your success against them in the past, and what are the challenges this Duke team presents defensively?**

CALEB LOVE: I just think that me not being afraid of the moment and me trying to impose my will, kind of like St. Louis swagger to the game. Me being from St. Louis, I'm not afraid of anything, anybody. I think just me channeling that, my inner St. Louis in me.

But this Duke team does -- they're physical. They're long. They're athletic and things like that. We've got to play kind of mind games and things like that to create advantages for ourselves on both ends of the floor.

Like Trey said, we've got to match their physicality of the game, and I think we'll have success if we do that.

**Q. Caleb, a lot was made of your postgame interview after your win against Oregon. There was a pause when they asked you about this matchup next round. What was going through your mind? I feel like you kind of held back. You wanted to say a little bit more than what you said in that moment.**

CALEB LOVE: Yeah, I didn't want to give them no fuel or bulletin board material. I just wanted to focus on what this group got to do and not give them anything that they can feed off of.

**Q. Caleb, now that you're about 24 hours away, you look and you see you're playing Duke now for the 10th time in your career. Is it one of those things in your mind you're thinking, Duke again? Do I really have to play Duke again? You've been successful with them, but it's one of those things, are you getting tired of these guys?**

CALEB LOVE: No, not at all. It's the next game. I'm loving the guys that I'm going into battle with. We've been so locked in since we got here, since we found out we've got to play Duke. We're not shying away from anything, and we're not running away from the fact that this is another game and that this is a game that we have to win.

**Q. For Trey, you've kind of been at the forefront of the team over the last week. You spoke for the team on Selection Sunday. You were at this same press conference last week and then today. What's it like for you to be in a position to carry the message for the Wildcats over the course of the last two weeks?**

TREY TOWNSEND: Yeah, it's an honor that my coaching staff and my teammates believe in me as a player, but just as a person, as well. I came in here a fifth-year guy just trying to bring a level of leadership, maturity, just being an older guy, especially being in this tournament.

I was fortunate enough to play in it last year with Oakland, so I was able to learn a lot from that experience. And just trying to bring all that to this journey with these guys, just trying to pass the messages along, just trying to enjoy this opportunity and this moment. Because so many teams play their whole season just to get here and don't even make it.

So the fact we're here, just appreciate it all and appreciate being with this one team because you're only going to be with this one team for this one season. I've been trying to pass that message along and be as much of a leader I can -- you know, whatever I am on the scoring chart or whatever it is, I feel I can bring any sort of leadership and mentorship to the team.

**Q. Obviously a big-time matchup in the program history in the 2011 Sweet 16 between Arizona and Duke, and then more recently the home-and-home series the last two years. Talk about what it means to be facing Duke again in the Sweet 16.**

TREY TOWNSEND: Yeah, I mean, I kind of relate that back to my last answer. Really having an opportunity to play in this tournament, I look at as a special thing. Obviously two historic programs playing at this stage of the tournament is such a special thing. But I look at it as every single game, no matter who you're playing, is such a special opportunity. I'm fortunate for that.

Obviously the lights are going to be bright in the game, but as Caleb was saying, it is just the next game. But we understand it's a special opportunity, and there's a lot of significance to it.

KJ LEWIS: I think Trey hit it right on the head, and Caleb, as well. It's just another game for us in the way to get to our goal. But obviously we're super excited for the opportunity, and what happened in the past stays in the past. We're just looking forward to tomorrow and going out there and playing Arizona basketball.

**Q. There was a lot of talk last week about Tommy going back to the Pacific Northwest. Have you guys had a chance to talk to Tobe and Jaden? They're obviously a lot closer to home, from the East Coast. Have they shared any excitement about being able to play closer to home with you guys?**

CALEB LOVE: Yeah, for sure. We know that's a factor, them being close to home. We want to take care of our brothers. We know they're going to come out with the ultimate energy, the ultimate excitement playing in front of probably a lot of their family. We want to take care of our brothers by giving it our all and making sure that they win in front of their family.

**Q. Caleb, you're not familiar with a lot of the guys on the team but you are familiar with Proctor. Can you talk about some of the battles you've had in past years?**

CALEB LOVE: Yeah, obviously he's been hot from three and he's a great defender. We've just got to handle that with care as far as running him off the line and making him do other things, kind of shifting the ball to other guys that we want with the ball in their hands and things like that. He's a great player. We've obviously had matchup after matchup, and I'm just looking forward to tomorrow.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports