

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

Thursday, March 27, 2025

Newark, New Jersey, USA

Prudential Center

**BYU Cougars**

**Coach Kevin Young**

**Trey Stewart**

**Trevin Knell**

**Fousseyni Traore**

**Mawot Mag**

Sweet 16 Postgame Media Conference



**TREY STEWART:** Me and Trev were talking about how sticking it out really grows your character and it makes the wins even sweeter. We've been through a lot, looking through, like you were saying, like the conference change, everything. A lot of adversity in our careers. But we've stayed the course. We've stayed the course.

Then now how the season went, we just had an immense amount of joy and so much gratitude for how it ended. We just have a lot of gratitude.

**TREVIN KNELL:** Yeah, I'll echo exactly what Trey said. It's been awesome to represent BYU on my chest the last six year. BYU is my family. As soon as I knew Coach was getting the job, I wanted to post it just to let everybody know that I was all in. Like Trey said, it makes the wins a lot sweeter when you're with a program, you stick it out.

There's a lot of roller coasters in a season, but I feel like we're kind of a catalyst to where BYU is going, and I'm excited to see the trajectory of where this program is going.

Again, like super grateful. This family that we have now at BYU is going to last a lifetime. Super grateful to Cougar Nation, to my family, everything. Just a ton of gratitude for the opportunity to be able to play for this program.

**FOUSSEYNI TRAORE:** Yeah, I would say the same thing. I'll always be grateful for BYU. They changed my life forever. Actually it was one of the best things ever to happen to me, so I'll always be a Coug fan.

**Q. What's going through your mind when Mark Sears is hitting those shots and they keep coming and they keep coming?**

**TREVIN KNELL:** Mark Sears is a great player. We had a game plan going in, and he was able to hit a lot of shots. Like it shows their work ethic, shows how good Alabama is as a program, and kind of went their way tonight. It would be awesome to hopefully play them again, but you can't at the end of the season. Hope they have tremendous luck, and congrats on their game today.

**Q. Trey, you had kind of an interesting first three years in the program, didn't get a lot of playing time, and this year really broke out, became a key**

Alabama 113, BYU 88

**KEVIN YOUNG:** All credit goes to Nate Oats, their staff and their players, historic shooting performance. That was hard to overcome for us. We felt like we made a little dent and started going the other way and they just kept it going. I'm not the type of person that just says oh, they shot it unbelievable, nothing we could do. Disappointed in myself and our staff that we couldn't put our players in a better position to find answers, but they made the plays and we didn't.

Kudos goes to those guys.

Now, in terms of our group, just extremely proud of our guys. I just told them in the locker room, which is something we hadn't talked about literally all year until just now. This was a team that was picked ninth in the Big 12 and we're one of the last 16 teams standing. Extremely proud of these guys. Each one of these guys has a remarkable story in their own right, and just really happy that I got a chance to coach not only these four but this entire team.

**Q. Trey, Trev, and Fous, you're seniors, lifers with the program. You're survived a conference transition, a coaching change. What are you feelings as your career comes to an end and are you glad you stuck around for this kind of year at BYU?**



**contributor down the stretch. As you started to play more down the stretch, BYU's season turned. What are your feelings with how you finished the season, and what do you feel like clicked with you down the stretch to contribute more?**

TREY STEWART: I wouldn't say click is a good word because we talk about staying the course. I'm grateful for every single one of my brothers, me and Trevin, me and Fous. I lived with Fous my whole career and Trev has been my brother. Even the new people that came in, Mo. KY, I trusted him immediately. Even when I wasn't playing, tremendous amount of respect because of the way he approached everything. He treated me like a man and I respect that and all my teammates still treated me the same.

So yeah, regardless of the ups and downs -- obviously I'm happy that I got a chance to end my college career playing a little bit more. But yeah, regardless of it all, I have the same relationship with all of them regardless of results because they're all amazing men, they all have amazing character.

**Q. Mo, obviously you played with Rutgers to start your career. Thoughts on BYU and what does it mean to you to have had a season like that that's so memorable to finish your college career?**

MAWOT MAG: It means a lot making it down the stretch. As Coach said, we got picked ninth in the Big 12, and to finish a 3 seed, it's very big. And just credit to everybody, the coaches, players and everybody that came together as one unit and we made it deep in the tournament.

What's the second question you asked?

**Q. With your college career ending at BYU --**

MAWOT MAG: Yeah, it means everything just being a Cougar, just the pride and also just the environment. The fans are always engaged. It means a lot to me. I'm glad I came here and I finished my college career at BYU.

**Q. How did you adjust during the game to what Alabama was doing?**

KEVIN YOUNG: It was a perfect storm for them, just because I think the three-point line can be very paralyzing and we play a similar style. They're more dynamic than we are clearly, but I know Nate and their staff, and I think we share a lot of similar philosophies. So I think we tried to use what teams do against us defensively and have that in mind.

When teams get petrified at the three-point line, you give up the rim a lot. This is a team that leads all power conferences in points in the paint, 40 a night. Tonight they had 16, but then they go bananas from three.

Sears made shots when we went under. We were trying to show a crowd. He was able to punish those crowds early. We felt like it would be hard for them to sustain that, and so that's where you have to give them credit because they did. That's where I'm disappointed at myself for not being able to find a solution. But some nights you're trying everything, and it doesn't seem to work.

But that's a really good basketball team. I mean, it was an all-time night for them. It felt like there was nothing we could do at times. But just proud of the way our guys kept staying with it. We had our chances despite the incredible shot making.

**Q. Coach, I know you're not a believer in expectations you've said at the beginning of the year. Your first season as BYU has come to a close. How do you feel about your results, and looking back as a complete result?**

KEVIN YOUNG: Yeah, I'm just proud, honestly. I'm just proud of the group of guys that we had in our locker room, because we kind of had to get it out of the mud. We had to do it the hard way. We got off to a slow start in the Big 12. And really proud of the way our guys just stayed with it, and they never pouted. We just found a way. We found solutions.

That's kind of something we talked about a lot, and we just begin to, as I say, stack day after day after day. I told them in the locker room, that's something that -- not to get all philosophical -- but that's something they can take with them for the rest of their lives where it really is just a microcosm of how to plow through life. Things aren't always going to go your way and you've just got to figure out ways to get through things.

And that's what this group did this year. And when you have that attitude and do it day after day, really good things can happen. Just happy the way we were able to make it all kind of come together towards the end.

**Q. You've talked about stacking days as the season has gone on. Now kind of turning the page into year two, how important is it for you to stack years, and how important is a year like you just had to spring your process and what you want to accomplish in this operation at BYU going forward?**

KEVIN YOUNG: Yeah, first of all, the future at BYU is

incredibly bright. I think anyone that pays attention to the sport would agree with that. This was obviously kind of a -- just a statement, I think, this season, where it's like, we're a force to be reckoned with in the Big 12 and nationally, led by really good players that we had this year, and we'll continue to try to bring good players in.

But I just think there's a lot of good things going on at BYU, period. Making the move to the Big 12, the football team kind of got that party started in the last couple years, and we tried to carry the torch, as well.

It's exciting to think what we can build for me and our staff being new in this whole thing. We had a lot of learning we had to do and are still learning, obviously. But we feel like foundationally, we've kind of put out a blueprint of, one, how we want to play. I think our identity is clear.

Now we've got to hopefully do a good job to continue to recruit to that identity and continue to try to bring in high-end talent so we can play with the teams who historically have played deep into this tournament. That's our goal.

**Q. First year coaching in college; what has it been like coaching these young men? They're 18 years old versus coaching professionals in the NBA. What have you learned about that?**

KEVIN YOUNG: They're just really eager, very eager to learn.

I think as it relates to Egor and Kanon, they're pretty experienced for being young, especially Egor. He's played at a high level since a young age. Kanon too, with a lot of the Team USA stuff. But I think I learned just the cadence and the pace in which you can coach younger guys. You can't maybe throw as much at them. That was something I had to kind of scale back a little bit.

But I think just the eagerness -- what's similar to NBA players, players are smart at any level. If you show the players that you can help them individually and then help the team win, that's when you get the trust of the group. For the most part, I think we were able to do that with the majority of the team.

**Q. You talked about similarities and systems between you and Nate, and obviously the NBA kind of background for both of you there. How much is Alabama the version of what you want to be, what they did tonight, and why would that be so successful in college basketball going forward?**

KEVIN YOUNG: Well, first of all, I think Nate has done a

good job at Alabama of having sustained success. That's something that we're trying to do. So I have a lot of respect for him. This is hard. What they've done there is really hard. So a lot of respect to him.

In terms of stylistically, Nate and I have talked -- it's funny because I don't know a lot of college coaches. He's probably one of the few coaches I do know pretty well. He came to training camp with the Suns. We kept a relationship going. So we did talk a little bit leading up to the season just about the spacing.

He's one of the, I think, few teams that spaces like we do. Now, obviously, like I said, they have more dynamic guard play than we had. So when you have that kind of spacing and that kind of dynamic guard play, it's really, really difficult to guard. They're obviously heavy into their shot profile and their shot diet. That's something that we've been -- I think them and us kind of had -- I think we were 1 and 2 in efficient shot diets. So there's a lot of similarities.

But I think for me anyway, it just kind of validates that that style of play is really hard to stop, especially if you can recruit to it, which they've done. And all coaches are thieves, man, so I'll just continue to learn from all these really good coaches and try to be better next year and continue to build our program.

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