

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: Regional Semifinal - Michigan vs Auburn

Thursday, March 27, 2025

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

State Farm Arena

Auburn Tigers

Johni Broome

Dylan Cardwell

Miles Kelly

Sweet 16 Pregame Media Conference

THE MODERATOR: Welcome back, everybody. We'll get started with the Auburn student-athletes.

Q. Johni and Miles, just talk about the journey you guys have been on coming from other places and then thriving at Auburn.

JOHNI BROOME: My journey has been amazing. It's been a long, fun ride. I started at Morehead State, Kentucky, a small city right next to Lexington, which I've kind of -- it took two years to kind of find myself and develop my game and become who I am today.

A couple years ago, transferred over with the Auburn Tigers with Bruce Pearl and just kept trying to get better, kept growing my game. Right now I'm sitting at a podium at the Sweet 16 in Atlanta looking to advance.

MILES KELLY: For me, like Johni said, it's been nothing but amazing. Did three years at Georgia Tech, so this is a full circle moment for me to be in March Madness Sweet 16, being able to have an opportunity to come back here to Atlanta and play in front of my family and stuff like that.

Just playing for BP and Auburn has been nothing but great for me. So I'm just super grateful.

Q. Johni, Dusty May said he recruited you hard at FAU. Do you remember that? How close was that to happening? Did you have a relationship with him?

JOHNI BROOME: Yeah, he did recruit me pretty hard.



Somebody committed -- I was going to come on a visit, but somebody committed the weekend before, so nothing ever happened after that. Yeah, they was recruiting me pretty hard, though.

Q. For all three players, what happened before the season that kind of brought this group together and helped you all prepare for what we're seeing now today?

THE MODERATOR: Miles, why don't you start.

MILES KELLY: For me, I can speak for me, I just looked at our roster before coming here. That was the biggest thing for me. I knew Auburn had a lot of great pieces coming back, and I felt like we could do something special like we're doing now.

That was the deciding factor for me coming here. I knew that me coming here would just add another piece to this team and make us even more dangerous.

DYLAN CARDWELL: First and foremost, all glory to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

For me the difference was everyone just buying in off the bat. Bruce's mandatory 9:00 a.m. breakfasts has kind of been our tradition for the past two years. But the difference in this year's team is we have bible study at these breakfasts and just planting seeds for the Lord to have his way into our hearts. Learning sacrifice early on -- sacrificing our time for the Lord, sacrificing our pride for each other, and these guys just bought in.

JOHNI BROOME: Kind of what Dylan said and what Miles said, before this year started, I think everybody kind of took a leap in their faith and kind of that's on the court and off the court. Our brotherhood, our togetherness kind of all plays a hand in our bible study and things like that.

Also, as guys we bought in. We brought our core back last year. We won the SEC Championship. We had a good year, but we lost the first round.

Then we come and bring in guys like Miles, Tahaad, Turtle, Jahki, JP. You bring in good guys like that, and they just all came in looking to do whatever it takes to win, and it's



... when all is said, we're done.®

just paying off.

Q. Miles, obviously you're returning to Atlanta and close to your previous school. How have you changed since leaving Tech, and how has it been adapting to a new role on your team?

MILES KELLY: I wouldn't say I really changed for the most part. I'm still the same guy I was here, hard working, likes to get in the gym and stuff like that.

It's just adapting to my new teammates and stuff like that. I think that's the biggest difference from Georgia Tech and here, just learning how to play with new players and seeing where they're comfortable on the court and stuff like that.

I wouldn't say it was really a change but just learning how to adapt.

Q. Two questions so I don't have to take too much time. One, the first question is what has the impact of NIL been on, not your individual careers, but do you think on college basketball as a whole? And the second question is, Mr. Cardwell and Mr. Broome, both of you brothers mentioned your love of the Lord. I'm seeing that more and more within college basketball, within sports. What do you attest that to?

DYLAN CARDWELL: I'll answer the second one first. I believe that the Lord is just moving in the country. There have always been players that have been outspoken in their faith. I remember the person that kind of planted that seed for me when I was younger was Steph Curry. I wasn't a Steph Curry fan at all, but just seeing him glorify the Lord in how he operates was something I always wanted to do. It helped me grow closer to God when I was a freshman in high school.

I think the country's just learning that we can't live life without him. We can't do without him at all. The Lord allows us to have success, but we're not praising the Lord just because we're successful.

There's just been many times that the Lord has kind of showed his hand. I'm not sure why there's a resurgence in the athlete world. I can't really answer that outside of saying the Lord is moving and having his way and using these athletes to be a vessel just to continue to spread who he is each day.

JOHNI BROOME: I would say kind of the same thing that Dylan said, but I'll add a little bit more. I think it's just more people are speaking out and sharing their beliefs and sharing the Word on the platform we've been given. I think it just opens the door for athletes who may have the same

beliefs to kind of agree or to speak their heart and what's on their their mind as well by seeing other big athletes like Steph Curry and people like that, I believe it just opens the door for everybody to do that.

DYLAN CARDWELL: Then to answer your NIL question, for me it's been life changing. I think it's been beneficial to every single person. Obviously you look at a person like Johni Broome who probably went to the league his first year at Auburn or second year at Auburn, the impact of NIL has allowed players to stay in college for longer, and it's really been that tradeoff of do I want to risk going late first round or second round or do I want to come back to school and work on my game or work on those defects rather than going to the NBA where it's a business, a cutthroat business, where you can't afford that time really just to go in there unready.

So I think NIL is one of the best things that happened in college basketball history. I do think it needs to be a little bit more regulated. Other than that, I'm grateful for the opportunity. I'm grateful to be so blessed to be in a time as this when athletes can really just reap the benefits of the work we put in. So it's rewarding.

Q. This one for Dylan and for Miles, obviously you guys got some roots in the greater Atlanta area. What's it kind of meant, I guess for you two guys to be able to play close to where you all grew up and where you played so much ball?

MILES KELLY: For me, it means everything. When I was coming out of high school, that's the reason why I chose Georgia Tech, to kind of stay close to my family. Then Auburn, coming here -- Georgia, Atlanta, it's only like an hour and a half away from Atlanta. This is a full circle moment for me to be in March Madness, Sweet 16, and come to Atlanta and play and have a chance to go to the Elite Eight in Atlanta and have a chance to go to the Final Four in Atlanta and stuff like that.

It's just a blessing, and I'm super grateful for this opportunity.

DYLAN CARDWELL: I say the same thing. It's a dream come true and full circle moment. I grew up watching the Hawks in Philips Arena. It's real fun to be in Atlanta. Shout out to McEachern High School. I don't know what high school you went to, but McEachern is the best high school in all of Georgia, we got Sharife Cooper, Isaac Okoro.

MILES KELLY: No Dylan Cardwell?

DYLAN CARDWELL: No, I'm a humble guy. We got way

more guys than that I'm just blanking on a few. We're a football school, a basketball school, a track school, we've got everything 7A.

I love being in Atlanta, being in Georgia. It's a great opportunity really just to show how great Georgia is as a state, I think one of the best states in the country.

Q. Johni, I believe the only two players in the history of sport with 2,600 points and 1,500 rebounds are Elvin Hayes and you. I know you can't win games in the tournament without the other players and coaches, but as far as your individual legacy, do you think you're one of the best players in the sport?

JOHNI BROOME: I'll leave it up to everybody else to judge. I can't speak on that. I'm still playing. I'm trying to win a game versus Michigan, and me and my teammates are trying to advance as far as we can and keep making history.

Q. Johni and Dylan, Coach Pearl said that he ran it by the players Saturday night before beginning his post-game with a political statement about the hostages being released. Did it surprise you that he came to you guys with that request, or are you accustomed to him having a political slant? And what interest in stating his political opinion from maybe the recent presidential election and other things?

DYLAN CARDWELL: I think Auburn University does a great job of allowing us to really just live as Americans, the First Amendment, kind of the freedom of speech, Auburn gives us that platform to use our speech to really just show a passion about.

When George Floyd passed, Auburn gave us a platform for Black Lives Matter, and Bruce Pearl allowed the players to go out there and talk about things they're passionate about. In the same way, he has that same right to talk about the things he's passionate about. Obviously he's Jewish, he is Israeli, and he is passionate about Israel.

He does have the right to obviously be an American and speak about what he's passionate about regardless of what our views are. He comes across in a respectful but obviously compassionate way.

JOHNI BROOME: Kind of what Dylan said, you know like he said, he asked us. So he did it in a respectful way. That's the type of guy he is. He has a strong belief in what he loves, but any day he still asked us to see how we felt about it. Like he said, we're behind our coach and what he loves.

Q. For Johni and Dylan, a couple of 7-footers, I don't know how many have ever played that pick-and-roll, pick and pop thing like Michigan does through their 7-footers. How do you deal with that? How difficult is it with two 7-footers and the way they use them?

DYLAN CARDWELL: It's going to be fun. It's going to be interesting and unique. I'm appreciative of going against two great guys, two NBA prospects as well. So just the opportunity to play against the field.

Johni and I play a lot of 2-on-2 in the summer really against A.D., against Chaney, Miles. We play against the whole team, and we didn't lose a single game. We won every series. We've got pretty good chemistry, and we're pretty confident in our skill set and stuff like that. It should be a fun matchup.

We've been playing 2-on-2 all summer to prepare for this moment. Miles Kelly can't stick with us.

JOHNI BROOME: Like Dylan said, it's going to be fun. You have to enjoy the moment. This is Sweet 16. We're going up against two 7-footers. It's going to be fun. Everybody in that locker room is looking forward to the matchup. Our front line is looking forward to the matchup. Yeah.

Q. Dylan, you have two championship rings from your time at Auburn.

DYLAN CARDWELL: Three.

Q. Three. Two regular season championships.

DYLAN CARDWELL: And one SEC Tournament.

Q. You've seen kind of the transformation of Coach Pearl taking advantage of the new rules and bringing in guys built like Johni and Miles and others. How different has that been, and what role have you played as the old man of the bunch and kind of accepted those guys into the fold and making them feel comfortable?

DYLAN CARDWELL: Bruce Pearl has recruited some great guys over the years that I've been here, but he stands on business when it comes to saying that he does recruit guys that are Auburn men, that are just going to come in and be guys that you love.

He's got role guys in here. He's got guys we need for scoring, for defense, for facilitating. The role I play, I try to be the glue. Shout out Gorilla Glue if you want an NIL deal. I'm super glue. I love Elmer's, but I don't know if

Elmer's got a super glue, so Gorilla Glue. I just try to hold it tight. Without that, you can't glue things.

I just try to be the glue guy for this team. You really can't go anywhere without the guy. It's kind of just being here before, sharing my experience, but also trying to keep these guys level headed. We're in the Sweet 16. We're going to the Elite Eight. I haven't been this far before, but I kind of just try to share my experience with them and realize it's just a game, the game we love to play.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports