

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: Regional Final - Purdue vs Arizona

Saturday, March 28, 2026

San Jose, California, USA

SAP Center

Arizona Wildcats

Coach Tommy Lloyd

Koa Peat

Jaden Bradley

Ivan Kharchenkov

Elite 8 Postgame Media Conference

Arizona 79, Purdue 64

TOMMY LLOYD: I'll be brief. I woke up this morning, this is a true story, and I thought, are we in the Sweet 16 or the Elite Eight? The moment I thought that, I knew we were all right, because I knew we weren't making too big of a deal out of this.

I know externally there's a lot of pressure and this or that. To be honest with you, we just wanted to get in the ball game. We wanted to get in the ball game, and these guys have an amazing job of figure it out.

We got off to a good start. Then we didn't play great, but I thought Purdue played really well the second part of that first half. In the locker room at halftime you have long halftimes. We've talked a lot about this with the guys, long halftimes, long time-outs. We can't let that disrupt our rhythm. We have to be the team that comes out with the most effort out of a timeout, in these three-minute time-outs or a 20-minute halftime.

We ran. Murph does our normal routine, shows the guys some clips. I come in when he is kind of done, talk to them kind of, my thoughts and a little overall thoughts of what I think what we need to do in the second half.

Then these dudes have been unbelievable. This is when we're at our best. I said, guys, the coaching staff and I are going to leave right now. You guys got a few minutes to talk amongst yourselves and kind of figure this deal out, and let's go kick their ass in the second half.



All these dudes, I was literally a spectator like you were in that second half. That's what it felt like. So proud of these guys for what they did, for our program, and obviously our community. So thank you.

THE MODERATOR: Let's take questions for the student-athletes.

Q. Coach mentioned you guys led the conversation in the locker room. What was it like? Was there just felt like it was raw emotions? What was going on between the conversation with you guys?

KOA PEAT: Just our leaders leading us, honestly. JB, Tobe, Ivan, Mo, they all talked to us and just told us to keep going. You know, we've been through adversity this season. Can't get too high or too low. Just stay even keeled. And we went out there and played our game and came out victorious. I'm just proud of the guys. We stayed together.

Q. Jaden, it felt like you clamped down on Purdue's guard play in Braden Smith. What was the plan for you and the guards to make sure they weren't penetrating and getting open looks?

JADEN BRADLEY: He's a great guard. Great leader for them. He had it going in the first half doing anything he wanted he still got to his spot in the second half. He just wasn't hitting all the shots.

It's just a tough cover. Just trying to get through all those ball screens. I felt like our bigs did a great job helping us just in different defensive coverages. Whoever was guarding him did a great job just mixing it up on him.

Just shout-out to Coach Murph for the scout and we kind of stuck with it.

Q. Koa, congratulations on the MLP award. What is it like to play for the guy to your left? How does he inspire you and your teammates? Can you really take us into your program and how he motivates you and has helped make this incredible run possible?

KOA PEAT: Coach Tommy is huge for us. Always giving



us great speeches the night before the game. I think it was back to the LIU game, just had me ready to play honestly that night, and we played the next day in the morning.

I mean, Coach, he's great. Ever since he recruited me, it's been nothing but love, and I'm just happy to be able to win games for him. Me and these guys, we want to win as many games as we can for Coach because he deserves it. He won't say it, but I think he's the best coach in the country.

Q. For Ivan and for Jaden, following up on the scout, you spoke to Braden Smith, where was Fletcher Loyer on the scout? It seemed like the entire wings had him in lock all game. It seemed like he couldn't get through y'all all night? He had three shots, two threes. It seems like you made it extremely difficult for him. Speak to where he was at on your scout and how you made it difficult for him tonight?

JADEN BRADLEY: He was definitely high up on the scout. Braden Smith and the other bigs, they have a lot of attention on them. If you fall asleep, he's hitting two threes and another three.

That was a big part of the scout. Don't let him get a clean look. He got some good looks. He hit a couple, but I feel like everybody that was on him just made it -- contested everything, tried to get to every ball screen. We know if we limited his three-point attempts, we have a great look at winning the ball game.

Q. Jaden, how aware have you been of the history of Arizona basketball? How much did that attract you to the school, the history of success? Also, the significance of getting to the Final Four for the first time in 25 years. As great as the program has been, this has been an elusive step.

JADEN BRADLEY: Definitely know the history. Arizona is a great, you know, athletic school. Coach Murph does a great job. I feel like every year I've been here just telling us the history, knowing the players that came before us, even the managers and everybody that came before us, the coaches. So knowing the history, I feel like just they're going to tell us even if you don't want to hear it.

Making it to the Final Four is big. We appreciate Tucson, the supporters, and everybody behind the scenes. We just are happy that we get to reward them with this.

Q. Koa, at the end of the first half Coach stopped you as you were coming off the court, and you had a moment with him. What did he say to you to spur the second half that you ended up having?

KOA PEAT: It was something about the play call, honestly. It wasn't nothing too serious. Yeah, I messed up the play. It's my bad. My bad, Coach.

TOMMY LLOYD: You got it right the second half.

Q. Koa, this question is for you. You had such a remarkable first game of the season in Vegas against Florida and then perhaps some adversity in the heart of the season, including an injury, but you have such a rewarding tournament so far and I think Most Outstanding Player here in San Jose. Was there something you leaned on or attacked, that you resorted to to maybe restore your confidence or get to that next level here in the tournament?

KOA PEAT: I mean, nothing really honestly. Just going out there, playing my game, you know, trusting my teammates, them finding me in open spots, and staying the course. Just keep playing. That's really it.

Q. Ivan, do you recall the first time that you heard from Arizona, somebody with them, and what maybe you remember about that and if you could have imagined that you would be at this point way back then when you first talked to them?

IVAN KHARCHENKOV: No, I never thought, you know, when I was first time talking to Arizona. I didn't even know really what it was all about.

But when the talks got pretty more serious and, you know, close to the deal, yeah, of course, we were talking about winning. That's the most important thing in sports.

Yeah, I mean, we're rolling pretty good right now.

Q. Ivan and Jaden, for the second game in a row this crowd has been absolutely deafening in support for you guys. What's your message to them? What's it like playing in an atmosphere like this?

JADEN BRADLEY: I've just have been following Ivan's lead, waving my arms and getting the crowd hyped. We really appreciate them. It felt like a home game atmosphere out there. We couldn't have did it without them.

Excited to get back, get back to them to celebrate this with them. Just excited. You know, want to see them in Indiana. Let's get it rocking again. Let's get it rolling, and just appreciate y'all.

IVAN KHARCHENKOV: Yeah, they're big-time. I love

playing in front of our fans. They give us emotions, a lot of energy, and you know, just looking at the crowd you remind yourself who you are doing it for.

Q. To follow up on that, you guys, you took like a victory lap through the stands to high-five a bunch of your fans after the game. I don't know that I've ever seen a team do that. Did someone start that? Who led that? Why did you guys do it?

KOA PEAT: It was Braden's idea, honestly. He's really big -- we're all big on the fans, but just that love and support they show us, we just got to show it back and give it in return. That's what we did. We went around and just dabbed up all the fans. We're just so thankful for them.

THE MODERATOR: Gentlemen, thank you so much. Let's open up the floor for questions for Coach, please.

Q. Coach, you pretty much answered the question, but were you amazed how you guys made a 25-point turnaround after being down seven at halftime? You used that strategy that actually worked, but you still had to sit there and watch it.

TOMMY LLOYD: Yeah, you know, our guys were obviously great in the second half. I have so much respect for Purdue. I wouldn't have said we're going to come out and, you know, beat them by 22 in the second half.

The message to the guys from me was, like, stay steady, let's work ourselves back in the game. We've been great at the start of the second half. Then we'll go from there.

Our guys did a good job. They came out, and we tied the game pretty quick. Then it's a 0-0 game, and can we win it down the stretch? Then somehow some way we were able to sustain that run.

But, you're right, I thought when you're down at seven at half, you think this thing is going to come down to the last four minutes and you're going to have to find a way. That was what I told the guys. Let's find a way to be in the game in the last four minutes, and we've been great closing games this year.

Q. Tommy, how often do you like to step back and let the team communicate? What made you think in this moment that it was time for you to kind of shut up?

TOMMY LLOYD: You know, we're together every day, and so they hear me a lot. I feel like, you know what, one of those things I'm so proud of when I listen to these guys at the press conference, when they're, with no prompting, relaying the messaging that our coaching staff is trying to

get them to understand. It tells me that our guys are paying attention.

The most powerful thing in a team sport is a player-led program. The coach, you have to help them navigate it, but when you can get the players to kind of own these moments, you are just so much better. You are so much better.

Yeah, for me, I've done it, I don't know, probably four or five times this year. Every time it's worked. So you probably can't do it too often, but I've done it at a few time-outs. I've done it at a couple of halftimes. These guys have a way about them. There's a seriousness about them. They know how to kind of ratchet things down and tighten it up and get after people.

I was really proud of them how they responded in that second half.

Q. The first thing you did when you got on the mic after the game was mention Lute. Just his meaning to this program and why you thought that should be the first thing you said?

TOMMY LLOYD: Listen, Lute has given me a great life. He and I shook hands only a few times kind of in a handshake line or something at a game, and I think I was at a cancer event for him one time.

His legacy in Tucson is so powerful. He's the guy. There's others before him, but he's the main catalyst to make our program the center of the community.

When I got the job, I was, like, wow, people in Tucson really want to like their basketball coach, and it wasn't a contentious relationship at all. They want to love you. The reason they want to love you is because they loved Lute so much, and he meant so much to the community.

Without Lute -- without Sean doing what he did for those 12 years he was here, I wouldn't be able to do what we did today. I fully understand that.

Those guys, this is for them too. You know, I have no problem sharing the success of this team with the coaches that came before me.

Q. Tommy, so much has been made about Arizona not going to the Final Four for 25 years. Does it feel fitting to you that you're going at least in part because of an Arizona-born kid in Koa? He grew up in this state understanding what this program means.

TOMMY LLOYD: They call him Mr. Arizona. Koa is



special, and I know you guys hear it, but you got to hear it again. Four state championships at the same high school. Didn't go to a prep school. Four gold medals with USA Basketball. No one in FIBA history has ever done that. And helped lead Arizona to a Final Four.

That was my recruiting pitch. Four, four, and four. Let's do it. The dude, he's amazing. His ability to perform the way he did in these moments, you know, he's been in a lot of them. I told our guys, don't make too much out of this. It's like a state championship game. You guys have all played in them. Or a gold medal game or whatever. Let's just find a way to win the game. Don't make it more than it is.

Our guys did a great job just coming out and being able to perform in that second half.

Q. Brayden Burries struggled a little bit in that first half shooting the ball, but felt like in the second half he was affecting the game in other ways. How would you assess the second half performance?

TOMMY LLOYD: The first half he didn't look great. He kind of looked tentative like he looked at the start of the year. He kind of took some questionable shots.

Then in the second half he was on the left wing, and he kind of -- I think he had an open three, but he kind of hesitated and then ended up shooting it and missed it. I think a couple of guys in the staff got after him a little bit. I knew he was going to make his next one.

He's really been able to respond from those moments this year, and I think that just shows the overall growth of him as a player.

Q. How significant with as much success as Arizona has had over the years to get to the Final Four? How significant is that? A related question, how much do you stay connected to central figures of the past, whether it's Steve Kerr or players from the championship team, that kind of stuff?

TOMMY LLOYD: A ton. I love those guys, and they have given me a better life because they helped build this program to what it is now. The legacy is so strong. Those guys have been so cool and so welcoming to me.

You know, the sun may be shining on this team and me coaching it right now, but when it's shining on you, you got to fight like hell to protect it and build it.

So that's what I feel like my number one responsibility is, to fight to protect the program and fight to build it for those who came before me and for those that are going to follow

after me, because you know what, Arizona is going to have another good coach after me. I promise you. The place is special.

Q. You just used number four about a minute ago. When you sit down and scout and strategize against a team like Purdue, how does that counteract the play into your scout when you have a team of multitude of players that have played four years and have experienced the depth that they have?

TOMMY LLOYD: Massive challenges. They have a great coach, and they have a great system, and they have so much experience. I mean, their recall of probably being able to make adjustments and run sets they haven't run in months is probably really, really impressive.

We knew it was going to be hard. When you look at it, obviously Braden is so good, and we knew he was going to have the ball a lot in his hands. You know, we tried to figure out a couple of different plans.

But we also knew we had to do a great job on Fletcher Loyer. He made four threes in each of the last two games. We've been pretty good when we're locked in on chasing guys through screens. We're physical enough to kind of get through it.

Then Trey Kaufman-Renn is so interesting. He has that 15-foot push floater. He's great getting down to his right hand. They do a good job of putting him in situations. Cluff is playing his ass often. That dude, I felt like he had every rebound out there today.

So we knew it was going to be tough, but we knew we had to do a good job on Braden. Then we really wanted to, like -- we wanted to see if we could limit Fletcher as much as we could. If Braden scored 25, maybe it wasn't going to be our day. If Trey scored 25, maybe it wasn't going to be our day, but we just felt with our physicality and athleticism and size we could put on Trey, we wanted to see if he could consistently score over us.

I didn't realize he was 5 for 14. I know he had some foul trouble, but our guys did a great job executing the plan on him. Listen, Coach Murph is killing it. Coach Murph has done the last three scouts, and you guys don't know how time-intensive that is.

Now, our staff has helped him, but he's been kind of the driving force. Obviously he runs things by me with these game plans, but he's crushing it. He's had three great scouts in a row, and our guys are really connected with him on his scouting and they're doing a great job executing his plans.

Q. When you arrived in Tucson, what were those conversations with people in the community or the program or whoever about the Final Four teams in the past, and what did you kind of gather about the importance of this particular step for the community and what it will mean for all those people that you guys are --

TOMMY LLOYD: Listen, the people of Tucson are basketball historians. The number of stories I've heard consistently about things that happened 10, 20, 30 years ago, it's impressive. I mean, they really hold on to the things this program accomplishes and they hold on to our struggles as well. They're great historians.

For me, like right now, I'm a little tired, you know. I want to kind of go hang out with my team and my family and just get back to Tucson and those Catalina foothills and take a breath tomorrow. My main motivating factor has been our community and our fans.

I just feel like -- and I'm probably going to be a little bit oblivious to it because I won't be in the middle of it, but you take the 15 minutes of collective joy of each individual that loves this program, that's happy right now, how powerful is that? How cool is that? You talk about getting the compound effect.

So I'm really happy for our community now, and I'm sure -- you know, I'm tired, I want to relax a little bit, but I'm sure when we get back to Tucson, I'm pretty sure there's going to be some fans there waiting for us, which is going to be awesome to share this with them.

Q. Earlier in the season I asked you if you had a rubric for evaluating your team's performance, and you told me you did not, and it's not math 101. Now, I'm wondering, we've had so much -- or the school has had so much praise from the opposing coaches -- John Calipari said on Thursday that you were the one team he didn't want to face. Today Coach Painter was showering the team with praise. Is that an acceptable rubric or an acceptable way for you to evaluate the team, and what you do take from that?

TOMMY LLOYD: Hey, I'm thankful for that, because I do respect Coach Cal and Coach Paint. Those guys have been good to me kind of being a new guy at this level.

Yeah, I mean, listen, I don't sit around and, I don't know, feel good about myself because people are saying good things about us, but I'm proud of what we've accomplished. Those guys are great coaches, and they're formidable foes.

We'll take it all in, but you know what, not to get off track, you know what I'm really looking forward to? A day off tomorrow and then practice on Tuesday. I'm really looking forward to practice on Tuesday.

That was the one little -- your mind goes a lot of places when you are kind of lost in your thoughts. My one thing was, like, man, if we don't pull this out today, we don't get to practice on Tuesday. I don't know if these guys love practice, but I love practicing with them.

I can't wait to get out there Tuesday and kind of get back on them and, like, no, no, no, let's go. We're still fighting, and we're still fighting to get better and see if we can get a little bit better before next Saturday.

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