

# NCAA Men's Regional Semifinals and Finals: Louisville

Friday, March 29, 2019  
Louisville, Kentucky



**Matt Painter**  
**Carsen Edwards**  
**Ryan Cline**  
**Nojel Eastern**  
**Matt Haarms**  
**Grady Eifert**  
Purdue Boilermakers

THE MODERATOR: We have the starting five from last night's game and Coach Painter. We'll start with the student-athletes first.

**Q. Ryan, last night, you were being defended by All-American Grant Williams. I don't think we've ever seen you hunt your shot quite like that before. Can you take us through what your thought process was and will you be hunting your shot anymore than usual tomorrow, after the way you played last night?**

RYAN CLINE: No, I don't think I'll be hunting my shot. I mean, it's not any different than any other game is.

But there were times where my teammates had trust in me, and they were telling me after the game, there was probably 10, 11 seconds left on the shot clock, and they kind of spaced it out for me, let me go do it. Nothing is going to change in particular.

**Q. Ryan, I know you and Kyle Guy were AAU teammates. Can you take us through some of the rivalry and teammate situations you've had with him over the years and how close you guys are as friends and competitors?**

RYAN CLINE: Yeah. I definitely don't think there's a rivalry. We played together in AAU and played against each other in high school basketball.

He's obviously an incredible player, an incredible shooter. It's going to be a lot of fun being able to go against an old buddy tomorrow.

**Q. Kyle did say he memorably crossed you up and**

**made you fall in a high school game. Do you want to defend yourself on that one?**

RYAN CLINE: Did he say that? That's wild. Yeah, I'll text him about that. I don't remember that (laughter). Yeah, that's not cool of him to say. I don't know why he said that. I actually don't know that I've ever, like, fallen from a -- the only time I fell was during, like, a summer basketball camp, and I actually like broke a bone in my foot. It was pretty embarrassing. I don't think that ever happened. I'll definitely talk to him about that.

**Q. Carsen, have you seen any kind of defense much like what Virginia throws at you or will throw at you tomorrow night? Anybody in the Big Ten that has anything close to that? And what makes it so effective?**

CARSEN EDWARDS: I feel like, first off, Virginia is a really good defensive team, obviously one of the better defensive teams in the country.

I guess just competing in the Big Ten with a lot of physical teams and things like that, I feel like obviously, it won't be just like it. But just with teams like Michigan State and things like that, that contain the dribble well and keep you out of the paint and make things tough, it's somewhat similar.

For the most part, Virginia, I feel like, is apart from a lot of teams defensively. It will be something different for us.

**Q. Carsen, TV was showing that you'd matched Steph Curry with the four straight games, 25 points. Has your phone blown up since then? Have you been hearing from anybody about that? You talked a little bit last night, but having a few hours to think about it, having your name mentioned with his, what's that feel like?**

CARSEN EDWARDS: I mean, I guess yeah, my phone kind of blew up a little bit, but that's just because we won, honestly. I look at it because we won a big game, a tough one for us.

Honestly, I feel like I haven't really done enough yet to consider my name getting thrown around with Steph Curry. But just kind of the stats was something that's similar to his. For the most part, I don't look at it like my name's thrown around with Steph Curry. Just a

cool statistic I was able to do in the last four games.

**Q. Grady, you've played with Ryan for four years. He made his last eight shots last night. Have you ever seen him have a performance like that in practice or anything like that?**

GRADY EIFERT: Yeah, definitely in practice. When he gets hot, the rim just gets bigger. He's able to knock down a lot of shots.

Last night, he was able to do that. And definitely in practice, we've seen him isolate against guys and make those tough shots. So definitely seen it before.

**Q. Matt, Virginia can go a number of different ways defending in the post. They can go with a 7-footer, a small mobile guy or a Jack Salt, who is literally a bruiser. What do you anticipate that you're going to see tomorrow and how would you have to adjust depending on who's guarding you?**

MATT HAARMS: We've just got to be ready for all three of those options they put there at the 5. Thankfully, we've seen a lot of guys at the 5 throughout the year. We've seen faster guys, we've seen really big guys. We've seen guys that can step out and shoot the 3. Virginia happens to have all three of those.

So we've just got to be ready for whoever gets the most minutes in that game, in our game. We're going to have to be ready for it.

**Q. For any of you, what would it mean to you to be the first team since -- first Purdue team since 1980 that reached the Final Four if you do win tomorrow?**

THE MODERATOR: Carsen, can you start?

CARSEN EDWARDS: I think it would be a cool opportunity, just being able to compete at this level and be able to get there. We still have a game ahead of us first so I don't want to look too far into that.

But just want to be able to put ourselves in the best position to win tomorrow. That's what we're focused on now. It would be a cool experience with a group of guys I enjoy playing with and being around off the court as well. So it would be pretty cool.

RYAN CLINE: I think the rest of us agree.

GRADY EIFERT: Yeah, just agree and a lot of former players have been able to reach out to us and let us know they're supporting us and have all the faith in us.

What we've done is take it one game at a time since we've been here. That's what we're going to keep doing.

**Q. With all the attention that's been given to Michigan and Michigan State in the Big Ten, how have you all kind of carved your profile this year? Do you feel like you all have flown under the radar a little bit compared to them? Do you feel like you've established a presence in your own right, especially to get this far?**

RYAN CLINE: Definitely, in a sense we've -- I feel like people have kind of overshadowed us with Michigan and Michigan State. But just starting off 6-5, a lot of people have said all year, a lot of people counted us out.

I feel like we're going out there and we're playing more free and we're playing more for each other. So a lot of people said that we didn't have a lot to lose, and I feel like we're just going out there and playing hard and competing for each other.

THE MODERATOR: Anything else for the Boilermakers? Gentlemen, thanks for your time today. See you tomorrow.

Coach, we have questions.

**Q. Coach Keady traveled about with you all the time for a lot of things like this. What's it like having him on this run especially? And how often do you kind of just kind of talk to him just to hear his thoughts on this stuff?**

COACH PAINTER: I talk to him a lot on the phone, obviously. He doesn't live in West Lafayette. But he'll come and kind of have like a -- I don't know, like a three or four game package with us where obviously at the end of the year, going into the Big Ten tournament, going into the NCAA tournament, he normally tries to do that.

He still comes. The last couple years he's definitely has done that, where he's come to a couple home games, a couple road games together and traveled with us.

Obviously, he's a big part of our program. And I've always said that about myself, how I felt fortunate because we've had a blueprint on how to run a program, and anybody can have a good team and get a couple good players. But to have a good program and have consistency and do things the right way and graduate your guys and still be successful on the court, that's what he established at Purdue and that's what we're trying to continue. Just keep working and getting better, especially at what we do.

**Q. Some former coaches who went to the Final Four mentioned that they actually thought at this**

**point, the Elite Eight was the most pressure they felt because you're so close to achieving it. You're sitting here in this moment. I want to ask, do you concur, and what do you feel at this spot?**

COACH PAINTER: Well, I think pressure is something you feel when you're not prepared. If you've ever been overwhelmed by something -- you go into Bloomington and play Indiana and they make eight straight 3s. After that, you feel like, whoa, this is going to be hard to get over.

Getting into a buzz saw last night when they go on that run, I think that's something you feel as a coach, like how can I shorten this run, how can I diminish this run, how can I help my team.

But, like, going into a game, you know how dangerous it is to play Virginia. And so that alone, I don't know how any other feelings can get past that feeling right there of how do we stop Ty Jerome and Hunter and Kyle Guy and the rest of their group.

You know what I mean? That, to me, is like that's enough of an obstacle.

So to be able to feel some other feeling at that time, you know, to me it's just a basketball game. It's not that big a deal. It just isn't. What's the big deal? Like handle it. You've had 35 of them. Go out and play the game and have fun.

I don't understand how you can shoot 50 percent from 3 and shoot 50 percent from the free throw line. You know, I don't understand that. But somehow, Tennessee and Purdue did that yesterday.

So I understand what they're saying in theory. But in reality, just keep doing the same things that we've done to get to this point.

**Q. Ryan has talked a lot about his history with Kyle Guy. How similar are they as basketball players and as shooters?**

COACH PAINTER: They're pretty similar. I watched Kyle a lot. I think I went and saw him play as a sophomore once. I saw him play three or four times in live games during the year as a junior.

I saw Cline play three or four times as a junior. I didn't see him as a sophomore. So I've seen them a lot, both of those guys. They both can catch and shoot off the move really well. Kyle has got a good pull-up game. He's quick in the system, very efficient in their system.

But Kyle can hurt you in a lot of different ways. You have to be there on the catch and make it difficult for him. Cline's the same way. Cline's very unique. I've

always said his jump shot, I've never seen somebody shoot the basketball in his fashion. Looks like he's fly fishing to me.

So I've never once said one word to him about his shot, because I don't know what the hell to say to him, you know. Just keep shooting it, get in rhythm.

But they both have something uncanny is that they both can move and shoot and not be square when they start to release but end up getting square while they turn their body kind of in mid-motion, if you understand what I'm saying.

Which the way they both shoot sometimes might be bad shots for a lot of people, but they're good shots for those two guys.

**Q. Matt, when you were recruiting Ryan, was he not necessarily considered a high major recruit at the time?**

COACH PAINTER: Correct.

**Q. I was told he was probably headed to a small school like Belmont or something like that?**

COACH PAINTER: We were his only high major offer. We went through a couple of years where we just didn't have enough skill. We didn't -- to me, we just didn't have kind of just enough of that intestinal fortitude. Needed guys with a little bit of a fight to him.

He came from the winningest program at that time, and they just ended up winning the State again in Carmel High School. He'd won two State titles. He was tough. They value possessions at his high school, which is really important when you come into major college basketball.

I thought he was a perfect fit for us.

**Q. Coach, obviously, Purdue and Virginia are two programs with a lot of championships, a lot of wins, but no Final Fours in 35 years. What are the similarities between the programs? I know there's overlapping -- you played against his father and I think you played against him as well. So what are the similarities with the programs and you and him?**

COACH PAINTER: Well, obviously, we've won the most Big Ten championships in the Big Ten. And sometimes in recruiting, people find that very hard to believe. We've been very consistent for a long time, but we haven't been able to push through, since 1980, to get to a Final Four. That's what we're trying to do. That's what he's trying to do.

Obviously, his dad was able to do that at Wisconsin.

But I just think a lot of the same staples that we have in our programs, the same values of trying to get guys that fit our system, trying to get guys that personally fit us.

And then, also, they're both great academic institutions. Purdue is a great academic school. Virginia is a great academic school. I think there's a lot of consistencies there.

But Tony was a great player. I was not. And so he actually came in as a player at Green Bay and beat us in our own tournament at Purdue when I played. Seemed like he made every shot. I think he was like 7 for 16 in the game. To us, it was pretty earth-shattering for a guy to come in at 5'11" and we absolutely couldn't stop him. I think our whole team tried to guard him.

He was a phenomenal player, really self-made guy that worked very hard. Obviously, shot 50 percent for his career from 3 and played in the NBA for five years. He was a phenomenal player and a phenomenal coach.

**Q. Last night, you mentioned Carsen's ability to focus and short memory and go on to the next shot. Does that maybe help at a stage like this, especially with his name being drawn and mentioned with the likes of Curry, to focus on tomorrow night's game?**

COACH PAINTER: I think so. For him, he's excited about a challenge more than anything. I think he just looks forward to that next game, that next shot. He really keeps things simple. So I think some of the questions you asked him, he's processing it and kind of thinking about his answer, because he doesn't get to that point. He just plays. I think that helps because he can get in some different situations, and he's always very confident, whether he's making shots or he's not. He thinks he's going to make the next one. I think that's a good quality to have, as long as you have the skills to do it, and he obviously does.

**Q. Only one other time in your career have you only returned one starter, and that was 2012-2013. You were sub .500 that season. Obviously, you've done it here and now you're on the doorstep of making a Final Four. As you prepared for this season, I didn't know if that previous one, if you knew of that stat and if there were things you did differently. Part B of the question is you started off 6-5. Carsen wasn't the player some expected him to be. Did you change anything in terms of practice disciplines or anything that nudged this team along the right path?**

COACH PAINTER: Not really, because I really stayed with the same lineup. Like Nojel Eastern, Carsen,

Ryan, Grady Eifert, they stayed consistent. I took Matt out of the starting lineup and brought him off the bench not because I felt like somebody was more productive than him. I just thought it would allow him to be more productive coming off the bench. He brought a lot of energy.

I didn't know that stat, but obviously it makes sense that you said it.

The one thing when you're 6-5 and the five losses at Michigan, at Florida State, at Texas, Virginia Tech neutral and Notre Dame neutral, it's still real problems. A lot of times, people can get some losses, or they can get a lot of wins. They can be 9-1, 10-1 and they think they're pretty good when in reality, they have major warts that aren't exposed because they haven't played good enough competition.

Ours got exposed. We had Virginia Tech up 14. The Texas game was a possession game. At Florida State, they were fouling us on purpose under 30 seconds in the game. So we were a lot closer, but yet we were a lot further.

We had a bad game against Notre Dame but they simply played better than we did. From there, we won three straight home games and two of those teams were NCAA games. We were able to win a road game in overtime against Wisconsin.

From there, we built confidence. I think some of the things that helped us through the time: We played much harder, we played better defense. I don't think we're a great defensive team, but we found ways to win games differently.

When Carsen struggled shooting, we were still winning road games. When we had other breakdowns, different guys would step up and win games for us. I thought those were good signs from there.

But, no, we really just kind of stayed with our same group for the most part and just tried to keep getting better together. I didn't think it was our personnel. Sometimes we shoot the ball too quick and we've just got to be more patient.

**Q. Matt, obviously, people define coaching success as making it to a Final Four. There's obviously a large list of coaches who have not made it to a Final Four. How do you kind of measure that bar?**

COACH PAINTER: Obviously, when you look at things, I think, when somebody's at the end of their career, I think you're trying to look at things that way.

When you're in the process and you're coaching, you're just trying to take each team that you have and mold

them together to win the most games and to try to be good at this time of the year. I think in this point, we've been able to do that.

There's a lot -- like you said, there's a lot of great coaches that don't make the Final Four. But I think there's a lot of those coaches who haven't done that that have really changed peoples lives with the time that they've put in, and I think that's the whole point.

The whole point is nobody gets in to be a college coach to make money. They just don't. You get into college coaching because you like people and you like basketball. I know you can get fortunate and things can happen and you can get breaks like I have. But that's what you do.

I think that's the true test of a coach is what your former players think of you, especially the ones that played. Because sometimes guys don't like you when they don't play.

**Q. Matt, if you could speak specifically to the matchup with Ty Jerome. Curious also with a kid so willing to shoot the ball from well beyond the arc, does that factor into the defensive approach?**

COACH PAINTER: No question. He's very good at triple threatening you and pulling from 25 feet. He's also a guy that can dribble. If he has space, he'll take the deep pull-up also.

Any time a guy can pass like that and has that kind of size and then range, he's going to cause problems for you. You've got to stick with him. He's going to make some plays, whether that's scoring the basketball or passing the ball. You just want to try to make it as hard as possible.

**Q. Got a kind of geography or location question here. Virginia plays in this building most years. And obviously, you had a nice turnout the other night, as did Tennessee. What did you think when you saw the games would be played down here and what kind of following do you expect tomorrow?**

COACH PAINTER: I think we'll have a great following. I think we'll have more fans at this game than we did the other night. I know our fans are excited about this opportunity. We haven't put ourselves in this spot for a while, so I think we'll definitely have more fans than we had the other night, even though we had a good showing the other night.

The fact that Virginia plays in this building, it's the first time I thought of that. It's just sometimes when you think, you don't think along the lines. You think along the lines how you grew up and who played who. Now everybody's -- you know, obviously, the conferences

are different. But no, I think it's going to come down to who's more efficient, who plays harder, who's tougher.

A lot of the reasons why Virginia is so good is just their consistency, and they stick to their rules. And you have to be -- if you're going to be able to beat them, you're going to have to have more discipline than them. You'll have to be tougher than them. That's a tough challenge.

**Q. Matt, have you played anyone this season that runs this system? Obviously probably not as well as Virginia runs it, but do you have any frame of reference with a packline this year?**

COACH PAINTER: Yes, there's a lot of people that run packline. I think it's very similar to where you go against somebody who runs the Princeton offense. But they don't run it like Princeton. They don't run it like Pete Carril. If somebody does run it like Pete Carril, they were probably his assistant.

You can mimic it and get it there. These guys, his dad was packline. That was just it. And so you have to be able to move the basketball. You have to be able to be efficient. Then you've got to be able to make the right decisions.

If you're just not going to get the ball in the lane, I don't know who you're going to beat in the country if you can't get the ball to the paint in some capacity, whether it's a drive, a cut, a post-up, an offensive rebound, whether you're getting in transition. So it's important to be able to keep the ball out of the paint and it's important to be able to get the ball to the paint in this game. They do a great job of both.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thanks for your time.

COACH PAINTER: Thank you.