

**March 22, 2013**



An interview with:



THE MODERATOR: We are joined by the Arizona student-athletes, Nick Johnson, Kaleb Tarczewski, and Solomon Hill. Questions for our student-athletes?

**Q. Kaleb, going through yesterday's ballgame, talk about, did you feel any butterflies before or as the game unfolded, confidence level continued to grow, how did the first NCAA Tournament game go for you?**

KALEB TARCZEWSKI: It went really well. It's an honor to be here. It's something I wanted to be part of since I was a little kid, so to be here is an honor. Yesterday's game there wasn't butterflies. Kind of just excitement and the butterflies were gone from the playing the games at the end of the beginning. Now is the time when we want to be playing our best basketball and keep advancing.

**Q. Kaleb, being a kid from New England, what did it mean to see Harvard advance? And how excited are you to see this match-up, or conversely, what concerns do you have about the way they played against New Mexico?**

KALEB TARCZEWSKI: Obviously, they're a great team. It's going to be a challenge for us. We're prepared for that. It's really exciting to see them advance. I think that was their first NCAA Tournament win in school history. So that was great for them. A few of the kids on their team I actually have played with or against in high school.

So it's going to be exciting to play against them, kind of see them again and see them again. But when we're on the court, it's going to be a battle and we're excited for that.

**Q. Kaleb, who were those guys?**

KALEB TARCZEWSKI: Evan Cummins, I don't think he plays much this year; he played on my AAU team. And Laurent, he played at Northfield Mount Hermon, and we had a few really good games between them and St. Mark's when I was there.

**Q. Nick, seems like you've been around for five or six years, but that was your first NCAA Tournament game as well. How was that coming out and what was your feeling coming into the game? Did you notice the lack of fans when they first started? What did that feel like?**

NICK JOHNSON: I was definitely excited. Like a lot of these guys don't look at me as a younger guy, but I mean, I was excited to be in the NCAA Tournament. It's been my dream since I was a little kid. I looked at it as another game, came out there and played my game, and, I mean, we executed.

As far as the fans, it was a little shocking. They had to clear the arena before our game so not a lot of people got in for tip-off, but as the game went on it started to pick up a little bit.

**Q. Solomon, are you surprised to be playing Harvard?**

SOLOMON HILL: Not at all. You see the games they played against Memphis. I think they tied it up in the second half at some point and Memphis is an athletic team. They like to get the ball up and down the floor. They beat Cal. They went to Saint Mary's and got a last-second shot and beat them. They're a good basketball team. They went on to execute their game plan against New Mexico, and at times it wasn't even close.

New Mexico tried to make their run, and

Harvard kept making runs themselves. So we have to prepare for them just like any other team. They're a program on the rise and they're making steps in the right direction. You have to note that two of their best players are not playing this year. If those two players were here, they would probably be a higher seed and playing somewhere else.

But we have to take them just like anybody else. Take them seriously. They're a basketball team that can beat anybody, and they showed that last night.

**Q. Nick, you guys played a team yesterday in Belmont that likes to take threes and space the floor, kind of similar to Harvard. How did that prepare you for taking on the Crimson?**

NICK JOHNSON: I think they're similar. Their shooters last night killed New Mexico, and I mean, going into the Belmont game we knew that they were really heavy 3-point shooting team. So it definitely helped us. We're looking forward to it.

**Q. Solomon, I know that any team that's still playing now is difficult. Is there anything extra maybe challenging about playing right now the team that is the kind of Cinderella team that everybody is talking about?**

SOLOMON HILL: You don't want to take them lightly. If you look at what happened last night, you're probably thinking, most teams are probably thinking, oh, it's Harvard. We can get this team, and we will worry about the next game. You can't do that with any game now because everybody is going to show up to play.

Guys are going to step up and make their biggest plays now. So you get those teams that people underestimate and it's too late to fight back and put forth the effort. You have to start that from start to finish.

I think we did a great job of that with Belmont. We took them serious, and our coach is preparing us for the same way to play against Harvard.

**Q. Solomon, following up on that, for your own frame of reference, was seeing Harvard firsthand more helpful than seeing what they did against Cal, a team that you played against?**

SOLOMON HILL: Very much. You talk about the excitement that the crowd had for that

team and for a team like New Mexico that could have been a 2 seed. You could see what makes 'em good. On the floor they have great shooters. They like to space the floor. They have a great point guard who likes to find guys in transition, and they have a 5 man that can battle in the post. He got going.

They have a couple of guys that can drive the ball and get to the free-throw line and they all act at one. It's not one guy that stands out. But their point guard is like their engine. He gets guys involved and makes the game a lot easier for the team.

**Q. Did you guys watch the game live yesterday?**

SOLOMON HILL: We stayed for the first half, was able to catch the first half and the rest in the locker room.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, guys. We have Coach Miller here with us. Questions for Coach Miller?

**Q. Coach, starting with Harvard, are you surprised with what Coach Amaker has been able to do in six years with that program, especially given the restrictions there as an Ivy League?**

COACH MILLER: In one sense, yes, and certainly I mean that in the most complimentary way I can. In other sense, no, because Tommy, whether he's a player at Duke and what he did at Seton Hall and watching him at Michigan and now Harvard, he's an excellent coach, terrific recruiter. I think he has a great staff.

Us out in the west, in particular, he does a great job of recruiting in the west. Some of his key players come from the state of California. He deserves, as does his staff for tremendous credit for being here, and we respect him a great deal.

**Q. Sean, high seeds are going down in this west region. How difficult is that to narrow your team's focus on what's at hand and not look at the big picture?**

COACH MILLER: That's the whole key in this tournament. One of the things that helped us leading into Belmont is so many people talked about Belmont upsetting us. No matter how much you say block out the outside, at this time of the year it's impossible. To me, our players were very aware of Belmont's strengths, came into the game

and I thought executed what we wanted to do very well.

It was a function of their great respect for Belmont. The only thing you have to do at Harvard, looking at Harvard, is knowing that they went to Cal and won. Cal is a great team, as you know. They're in this tournament. They've won a game. To win at Cal is a tough task especially for someone traveling across the country. They left that day and went to Saint Mary's and lost at the buzzer a 1-point game.

Again, you look at Saint Mary's, and whether they beat New Mexico on the court last night and played a good Memphis team to the wire, you start watching them, you know they're a really good team.

This isn't about anything. No seed matters. It's about Arizona being at its very best, doing the things we do, the best we can, being ready to go, knowing that we have to play a great game. If anything happens less than that, we're going to go home.

**Q. Coach, as someone who hasn't watched your team all year, what is the main difference between the team that started, 14-0, beat Florida, beat Miami, and the team that went 5-5 down the stretch?**

COACH MILLER: First of all, and you've probably seen it early in the NCAA Tournament. We come from a great conference, Oregon and Cal, Colorado, UCLA, and you watched the NIT with Stanford and Arizona State. The quality of our conference from top to bottom is the best it's been since I've been the coach at Arizona.

I think anytime you're playing on the road and playing these teams at the end of February and early March, these are huge games and you could play really well and not win them.

Second thing is from a defensive perspective there are times when we have been dominant, times when we have been really good. Unfortunately for us, maybe it's a half or just a game where our defense left us. When it has, it's hurt us in the win/loss column.

Recently, I would say the last four or five games we have played consistent defense, I liked our defense yesterday. And that's the key for us moving forward. We have to defend together. We have to be connected. We have to execute and we can't have any lulls on that side of the ball because we're not good enough otherwise.

**Q. Sean, forgive me if you've been asked this already, but when you were sitting at courtside, finally getting your firsthand glimpse at Harvard, what was the thing that jumped out at you right off the bat as you watched them battle? Second, what impressed you about their frontcourt play against a team that they were physically overmatched against?**

COACH MILLER: I would say that would have been what I did notice. New Mexico really went at them inside, low post catches, seemed like every possession, especially in the first half. The ball went in there, and you could tell that was New Mexico's game plan.

To me, Harvard's big guys are somewhat misrepresented. To me, they're more physical, they scored on their own end and did a really good job with very little help. If wasn't as if they were trapping the post, playing zone, sagging off a player. They played New Mexico's frontcourt guys head-up, and they did a really good job.

The other thing that stood out is, they're very unselfish, and they're very deliberate and patient. They move the ball. If you ask me what team in our conference they remind me of, they remained me a little bit of Arizona State, because Arizona State has a 4-out, 1-in look and they play very well together.

They have a point guard that can really break the defense down using ball screens. They're a team that plays good defense and good offense, and I believe that when we look at us against Arizona State, just in terms of how Arizona State plays the game, I see a lot of Harvard in them.

**Q. Could you just address the factors that went into Kevin getting back into the lineup from being -- taking him from sixth man and putting him into the starting lineup? Have you ever had or been around a player that has had to overcome as much as he has in the last year and a half?**

COACH MILLER: Kevin Parrom, we inserted him prior to our Utah game and didn't do it to demote anyone. Brandon Ashley was the previous starter. If you look at Brandon, I can argue that he's playing the best basketball of his freshman year right now.

But the reason we wanted to put Kevin in the starting lineup is, I believe as you get closer to the end that the players on your team that are your

guiding force, your leaders are your seniors, especially if they're key members of your team. They have the most to gain, the most to lose. It has great meaning to them. With everything Kevin has been through, to me, it made sense to give him that opportunity in each half to get our team off to the best start we could. He's responded and done a great job. Yesterday he was one of the unsung heroes on our side of playing just a really solid game on both ends.

In terms of the adversity that he's overcome, I hope there is no one that I could ever compare him to in the future and there is no one that I could compare him to with all the adversity he's gone through. I think everyone is familiar with the story, but he lost his grandma. He lost his mom while he was visiting his mom in the last month or so of his life. He got shot in his own apartment. Didn't know if he would ever play again, walk again.

For him to be where he's at, and one of the things I'm most proud of as his coach, he's going to get his college degree here in May. As he's gone through all that as adversity, he's continued to stay on track in school. When you have someone like that on your team, it gives your team a lot of character and a lot of courage and it's these moments that you appreciate for him.

Nobody wants the season to end in large part because of Kevin Parrom, Solomon Hill and Mark Lyons. Those guys have represented Arizona in a first-class manner, and they're great kids.

**Q. As good as you were in the first half, the defense let up in the second half. Was that a concern? Or was it a matter of them hitting good shots?**

COACH MILLER: We did hit a lull. I wouldn't say it was a 20-minute lull, but we let off. And sure enough, when you let off on your effort, a lot of shots went in and Belmont started to make a little bit of a run.

But I will also give them credit. They're not a team that you're necessarily going to hold to 50 points. They average 80, and it's just a matter of time where they're going to make some. But for the most part, I left that game with a good feeling about our team's disposition on defense and I hope it carries into tomorrow because Harvard will be equally difficult for us to defend.

**Q. Sean, schools like St. Mark's in Massachusetts are pipelines for the Ivy league.**



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**How were you able to pry Kaleb away from the Ivy League and get him out to Arizona?**

COACH MILLER: I know St. Mark's is a great academic school, but Kaleb probably didn't want to study for 15 hours a day to compete at the Ivy League. I don't know if that's a good answer or not. I would say Kaleb didn't choose Arizona over Ivy League.

I know a lot of his classmates attend Ivy League schools, but being a 7-footer, knowing how talented he is on the court, he's a great student and a fantastic kid. But he chose us over Carolina or Kansas or a couple of other schools, those were his pool of schools. He wasn't your traditional St. Mark's student probably because of the height that he has. But he is also an excellent student. I think if he wanted to go Ivy League he could. It was just a matter of what he wanted to do. Thank goodness he came with us.

**Q. Coming off the emotional win for Harvard and given that they're going to be an underdog again, how dangerous of a team can they be because of that; and secondly, what do you do outside of X's and O's to prepare the team mentally against that?**

COACH MILLER: Well, we talked right after the game last night. To me, for us to let down at all or take a deep breath because of playing a number seed, a 14 seed would be foolish. Harvard has proved, not only in this year but in recent years, that they can beat anybody on a given night, especially on a neutral court.

What they did at Cal, at Saint Mary's, at Memphis, beating New Mexico, being Ivy League champs, they're a very good team. They're extremely well-coached; Tommy Amaker has done an incredible job there, as his staff. They recruit very well. I think they have a number of players on their team that could do very well in our conference.

We know we're in for a fight, especially the confidence that they have. When you win a game like that it doesn't just all of the sudden leave you, many times it carries through for the rest of the weekend.

For us, it's not about being consumed with Harvard, as much as it is about being consumed with ourselves, making sure that we're ready to go. We're playing for a berth in the Sweet 16. If one of our players needs motivation other than that, then we have real problems because when you're at the



level that we're at it's about staying in this tournament as long as you can. We know we have a great opportunity here on Saturday.

**Q. It's one thing to have a size advantage. It's another thing to take advantage of that. What did you see against Belmont that your bigs did so well?**

COACH MILLER: Our big three freshmen big guys really stepped up. Kaleb, if you followed our team in the last month, he has really hit his stride; almost simultaneously to him hitting his stride, Brandon Ashley and Grant Jerrett have as well. They're more productive and confident. They have practiced since August when we went on a foreign trip. They have played in all 33 games that we have played in, maybe Grant missed one.

They're no longer freshmen. They know what to do. They're talented and you could see that yesterday and we're going to need them tomorrow to do the same types of things they did against Belmont.

**Q. You were on some pretty talented teams at Pitt and those teams didn't have a lot of tournament success. Was there any lesson that you learned from those experiences?**

COACH MILLER: Yes. You can't ever take for granted being in this tournament. I can remember like it was two weeks ago we were No. 2 seed, we went to Lincoln, Nebraska. We won our first-round game against Eastern Michigan. We played Vanderbilt, C.M. Newton was the coach. And this guy, Barry Goheen made two 30 footers in a row. All of the sudden it was almost like you couldn't believe, you were gone. It was over with.

For us, we had the chance to reach the Final Four. We had Jerome Lane and Charles Smith. We were the Big East champions, a great group of guys, and we never envisioned leaving that tournament until the end. I will never forget that because it's such a fragile state to be in this tournament. Doesn't matter the name of your team, what you're ranked, the seed, it's about playing your very best and being the most ready you can.

I'm not saying that we weren't the most ready, but like I said, when you go through that one, that leaves a forever memory.

**Q. Harvard shot 45% yesterday from long range against New Mexico, and they'll probably be looking to try and repeat that**

**tomorrow. Can you talk about the challenge of containing Harvard defensively in that regard?**

COACH MILLER: It's like I said about Belmont, sometimes you can get carried away with the 3-point shot, because Belmont also drew a ton of fouls and they had a number of guys that were very good inside the arc. By far, Harvard's most striking statistic is their free-throw attempts per game, especially relative to the shots they take.

I think they're one of the tops in the country of getting to the foul line in terms of their rate. When I say that alone, there is more to that puzzle than just defending the three. You have to defend the 3-point shot, but you have to have your defense organized.

So all those other things don't happen. They start getting to the foul line that means a number of our players are in foul trouble. You get to our bench, you get rotating, that's what opens the flood gates up from three anyone. We have to be comprehensive in our approach.

I think they have a couple of post players right now who are playing with confidence. That was a big difference in their win against New Mexico. They got a couple of inside baskets as well and they have good players.

Wesley Saunders is someone we are familiar with because he's from LA and we recruited him and we know how physical he is. He's one of those guys I'm talking about that just lives at the foul line, averages 17 points a game and his game has very little to do with the 3-point shot. But yet it means a lot to Harvard's offense.

So whoever is matched up with him, that's one of the keys to the game. Overall, we have to have a great defensive effort. If we do that, that's our best chance of winning; and if we don't, I don't believe we're good enough to advance. We have to be ready to go for forty minutes.

**Q. Curious about Wesley Saunders. Did you offer him a scholarship? What did you see in him in high school?**

COACH MILLER: No, he came to our league camp. He was a very good young player, great kid. I can see why he's having such success at Harvard. But we were familiar with him. We watched him a lot, and he was on several teams that we watch quite a bit in the summer. So we're familiar with him.

**Q. Motivation, you talk about being**

**ready for them. Anything specifically you did this time with the guys? Did they see game film of Cal or anything? Did you talk about New Mexico last night?**

COACH MILLER: No, I believe our team is mature enough to understand that Harvard is really good. You know the parity in this tournament. I know I sound like every coach right now, but there isn't a big difference between 6 and 11, 7 and 10, and I believe like when you get to the 8, 9, winner and they play that 1 seed.

I'm sure Mark Few's saying right now, Wichita State is a heck of a basketball team and I feel that way about Harvard. The job that Tommy Amaker and his staff has done, the team they have on the court, what they just did to beat a team as talented as New Mexico, that speaks for itself. We don't need any extra motivation.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach.

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