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An interview with:

**NOTRE DAME COACH MIKE BREY
TIM ABROMAITIS
BEN HANSBROUGH
TYRONE NASH
CARELTON SCOTT**



MODERATOR: We have Notre Dame student-athletes Tyrone Nash, Carleton Scott, Ben Hansbrough, and Tim Abromaitis. We'll go ahead and get started with questions.

Q. Ben, when you look back at your time at Mississippi State, did you ever think you'd be in this position? What has been the key for you getting here?

BEN HANSBROUGH: Yeah, I did. Obviously, I wanted to find a better situation and a better fit for me, but when I found the kind of teammates I was going to be playing with, I think anything is capable with these guys, the way we play together, and the way we focus on one goal as a unit. And anything's possible.

Q. What about you personally?

BEN HANSBROUGH: Yeah, I think so. I'm a very hard worker. I think that's shown through my improvement through the last couple of years and just the teammates I've been able to play with.

Q. Ben, for you again. You're known to be very vocal on the court, both with your teammates and with opponents. What fuels that, and what do you hope to gain by being that way?

BEN HANSBROUGH: I think what fuels it is just my will to win, going out there and playing. It's just kind of how I've been always, since I was little. I've always been very vocal on the court. I guess that's just who I am when I step out there.

Q. Carleton, I know in the preseason Coach (Mike) Brey talked about rebounding by committee would kind of be the theme for this team on the boards. Have you guys accomplished that? And if so, what are the keys for winning the rebounding battles?

CARLETON SCOTT: Just attacking the glass at every opportunity on both ends of the court. Every time we scout a team, we talk about out-rebounding them, and that's going to be a jump start on our offense.

As long as we concentrate on the boards, I think we'll win the battle down there. We do a good job of team rebounding. Like I said, that's why our main focus is on defense.

Q. Ben, when you were looking at schools, what was Mike Brey's recruiting pitch to you, and what did you know about him as a coach?

BEN HANSBROUGH: I think the biggest part of it was, when I was at Mississippi State, it kind of allowed me to get a feel of what I wanted my second school to be all about. Coach Brey, you look at his system, you look at how he runs his team, it's really a team full of guys working together, sharing the basketball, and playing as a unit. That's what I was all about.

I only visited one school. I committed two days after I visited here, and I didn't need to say I need to go visit another school because I knew right away Notre Dame was the right fit.

Q. Tyrone, you're the only guy who's four years straight Notre Dame. This will be your third NCAA appearance those four years. Heading into it, what's different this year where there could be a run compared to the last couple?

TYRONE NASH: I mean, overall this year has been special. With this great group of guys, you know, it's just a different feel than I had going into my freshman and junior year.

I mean, it's just a confident group going out there, having fun, playing the game and really focusing on taking one game at a time and trying to make a long run, continue our senior years.

Q. For Tim and Carleton and Tyrone. Can you talk a little bit about what kind of teammate Ben has been and how that relationship has grown over the years.

TIM ABROMAITIS: He's a terrible teammate. We hate him (laughter). No, he's a guy that's always bringing energy. That's maybe something that's lacked in the past with teams. He's a guy that he knows when to get on you, but he also knows when to pick you up and say something uplifting. I've enjoyed having him as a teammate.

CARLETON SCOTT: Second that. He's been great. As you know, he's a vocal leader, and I'm kind of like the second guy on that.

So me and him we talk a lot and kind of get into it sometimes. We're brothers, and brothers get into it sometimes. It's been a good relationship. He's been a great addition to the team. He does a great job of leading us. He's been great for us.

TYRONE NASH: Like they both said, he's definitely the vocal leader. He's the loud one out there, the brash one.

I'm the quiet one, and I think it's good for a team to have a loud one and a quiet one just to balance out the team. I mean, it's great to be playing with this guy. Both years I've had him here, I've been to the tournament with him. It's been a true blessing, man. I just hope we can keep it going.

Q. For Ben, you're known for your very unique but intense practice drill, drilling around the chairs and everything. Have more people asked you about that and started to copy that or asked how to do that?

BEN HANSBROUGH: A lot of people have asked me about it, but I've been with this being our spring break, I've really only been around the team. I'm assuming you're talking about that Chicago Tribune article.

Yeah, I haven't had a chance yet, but after the season, I'm sure I'll have a chance to help more people out with showing them what I do in my workout, and hopefully I can maybe release something and maybe something will happen.

Q. Tim, how would you describe your coach's leadership style?

TIM ABROMAITIS: He's -- I'd say he's kind of like Ben in terms of he's great at knowing when to get on somebody, when to lay off, and he's a guy that definitely gives us a lot of freedom out there.

On and off the court, I think he's a guy that definitely trusts us, and I think in return that helps us to trust him. We believe in what he's doing. You know, he's a guy that gives us a lot of confidence for sure.

Q. Can you guys talk about what last year's loss did to this team and what the lesson learned is going into this year's first game.

BEN HANSBROUGH: I could answer that. I think it scarred us for sure. I think it's been the driving factor. The way we ended the year, at the very beginning of our summer workouts, we were constantly talking about Old Dominion, constantly talking about getting upset. It's been kind of like a driving factor throughout the whole year, pushing us and always remembering that.

So it's been a good experience for us in the long run.

TYRONE NASH: That game's definitely left us with a bit of a sour taste in our mouth. Really anxious to come out here and compete and really try to change that. Just go out there and battle. You know, just do something we didn't do last year.

Q. Has the tough loss last weekend, has that kind of amplified that at all for you guys?

TIM ABROMAITIS: I think we're definitely a group that's been able to bounce back from it. Obviously, we wanted to win that tournament. That was kind of our goal going into that.

Yeah, I think it kind of refocuses us and

just shows us how quick a tournament can be over. One half we're rolling, up 14, 16, whatever it was, and then in the second half they just turned it around, and it's over.

So we have to be ready to play for 40 minutes every game, and I think that helped show us that again.

Q. Carleton, can you talk about what you've seen from Akron on film and especially the 7-footer (Zeke Marshall).

CARLETON SCOTT: He's a long body, athletic guy, and he can block shots. They're a good defensive team, and they get good shots. They shoot the ball a lot from the three. We're going to be on our toes.

We talked a lot about having played against teams like this, like Louisville, a team that shoots the three well. We've just got to be ready and focused and locked in every defensive possession.

Q. Ty, Coach Brey was talking about Carleton's leadership the other day as kind of an underrated facet to this team. How does his leadership style maybe differ from Ben's in terms of how he goes about his business and getting his point across?

TYRONE NASH: I don't think they differ that much. They're both loud, vocal leaders. Like they know when to get on you. Carleton is like the older father to the young guys, getting on the young guys, just tell them what to do and use a loud tone of voice just so they understand.

Q. Do they tell you what to do?

TYRONE NASH: When I need it. That's the cool thing about our relationship. He can yell at me, and I understand it's only for the benefit of me and the team.

Sometimes I need it, and I look for him to yell at me and get me going and Ben. It's great. It's just a great relationship we have with each other, and it's only beneficial for us as a team.

MODERATOR: We have Notre Dame Head Coach Mike Brey. Coach, you want to start with a statement.

MIKE BREY: Thrilled to jump on the bus to come down the toll road over here. We've had a good week of practice. Got back from New York, got some energy, got our legs under us. Trying to advance, trying to win a first round game.

You know, this group, I think I said last year, as much as they've done at the end of last year and this year, they didn't win a first round game. So that's our challenge against an Akron team who's just won a championship. They just cut nets down Saturday, and they're old, and they know how to play.

Q. Coach, earlier, the Akron coach was talking about your offense, about the motion offense, and how it's almost rare in college basketball. Now, why does it suit what you do, and why has it become rare around the country?

MIKE BREY: That's a good point. I think, you know, our game has evolved down into so much ball screen stuff, and probably a lot of it by way of the NBA.

You know, I think it's our personnel and what we've recruited to, a system we've kind of recruited to and have really taught to over time. Guys that usually take the floor for us, we get to teach for a while before we cut them loose.

But I think it's a beautiful way to play. I think in some of our youth basketball -- now you're getting me on a tangent here. We should play quarters where we can't ball screen at all for our young kids, and they can't dribble too much so they have to move and catch. We do that in our camp.

But it certainly is conducive to our personnel.

Q. Your team far exceeded what was expected of them in the regular season. What was the key to playing over what people projected?

MIKE BREY: I think great leadership and older guys that had a drive about them. Much has been talked about Ben Hansbrough's edge and leadership and drive, but the other three guys that were just up here with him have all had a style in that.

Certainly, though, Ben in the summer couldn't wait to be the voice. And I don't mean this negatively. It always happens. Those rotating up captains, like Ben was, couldn't wait for (Tory) Jackson and (Luke) Harangody to get out of the building so they could put their mark on.

And you know what, Abromaitis, Carleton Scott, and Scott Martin can't wait for Hansbrough and Ty Nash to leave so they can also then kind of

be the voice.

That voice in the summer was pretty strong. It was really strong early. I thought we'd be good. We were better earlier than I thought. And in Orlando, winning the Old Spice gave us a lot of confidence.

Q. Can you talk a little bit about how you've seen Ben row as a player, as a teammate, and as a leader since he came to Notre Dame.

MIKE BREY: Is there a possibility of playing the game too hard? Yes, in his case. And too fast. I think what we did is control his tempo and change his speeds, and it took him to get him to that point because even last year early in the season he played too fast, and he played too hard. I think he's learned over time to change tempos, change speeds.

He's also learned to become a leader with some diplomacy. Not everybody -- you can't hit everybody in the back of the head with a 2-by-4 all the time, and I think he had to learn that. He did a great job meeting our group, and our group has done a good job knowing who he is and his style and kind of meet him halfway.

Q. Can you talk about the impact that Morgan Wootten's had on the coach you are today.

MIKE BREY: There's certainly three sets of groups that have impacted me as a teacher. My parents. I'm the product of two educators, so I grew up around the dinner-table talk that way. Morgan Wootten, I was going to his camp when I was 9 years old and heard him give lectures and then was fortunate enough to go play for him, and then I went back and coached with him. So still a voice of reason and a mentor today.

And then obviously eight years with Mike Krzyzewski. I've had really great training. But Morgan is an educator and a teacher and a communicator, and that's probably, between my parents and him, that's probably the biggest things I took certainly from Coach Wootten.

And he watches every one of our games, and I can't believe he can text because he texts me after games, and I said this can't be him texting. But he is firing off texts left and right. He's the best.

Q. As you know, Matt Painter suspended, one of his better players, Kelsey

Barlow for the tournament. How do you impart the lessons of accountability to your players? Given what we've seen in college sports lately in terms of accountability and lack thereof, what sort of message does that send not only to his team but to college programs in general?

MIKE BREY: Well, as the leader, that's a strong move. You know, it obviously had to be done, and there's a big picture in all this even though short picture you look and, my gosh, we don't get to play him for the NCAA Tournament.

The institution I work at has a little bit of a built-in situation like that. You know, at times throughout it's cost us a player, Kyle McAlarney we lost at a key time. But rules are rules, and big picture is big picture. I think I just used Kyle as an example today. He's better for it. He's a better man for it.

It was certainly hard to swallow because we had an NCAA Tournament team then. Thank God Tory Jackson was ready to be the point guard. But when you're in that position, you can't waiver, and you've got to bite the bullet and do what's best. I give Matt a lot of credit for doing what he had to do.

Q. How fine is the line between letting your players and trusting your players to do what they need to do on the court and coaching, if not every possession, every couple, the players talk about the confidence you place in them. And a lot of coaches today they get paid so much money, so much pressure, they want to micromanage, and that doesn't seem to be the case in your case.

MIKE BREY: I do think we're in an era sometimes of over coaching our game. What we've tried to do with our system is teach. And, again, we have them for a while, and we're able to teach them and get them reps for a while and get them an extra year if we have to redshirt them, et cetera.

I told them many times no coach trusts his team more than I do. I think you want to create an atmosphere of don't let me down. And we're letting each other down if we're selfish or we take a bad shot.

I think it's a very fragile thing especially through the length of a season. It's funny how that ball will reverse in November, December, and sometimes it stalls in late January. I think it takes a lot of energy to coach that way. You've got to

develop deep relationships. Guys have to trust you and know you're plugged into them because it's not a system, it's not a pattern.

But I think our game is so beautiful, you know, when you can teach some guys and then you let them play. I think that's why guys have gotten better for us because they've had the freedom to kind of break out of maybe a mold they were in as freshmen. I worry about it every day because there's a lot of freedom.

Q. Looking at the game tomorrow, you've had a few days to look at Akron. Who are they most comparable to that you've seen this year? Similarly, how do you prepare for such a unique player as Zeke Marshall?

MIKE BREY: They're a little bit like us. They can spread you out. They've got shooters out there on the perimeter. They use the three-point shot as much at the clip as Louisville does, 34 percent are field goals, which leads the league, Louisville does. And certainly Akron leads the MAC in that area.

And they can throw it inside to big guys who can grind it inside, and if you over bite the help, they kick it out to shooters. They're old. They've played together for a while. They have won together for a while.

And I can't emphasize enough they just cut a net down on Saturday with a magical run through the MAC. Marshall certainly gives them a shot blocker. We played against some size in the Big East, but this is a guy that's standing back there.

They really know who they are and play to their strengths, stay away from their weaknesses, and I think that's why they're in the position they're in.

Q. Tell us about Tyrone Nash being a point center, how unique it is to have those abilities and what that gives you on both ends of the floor.

MIKE BREY: You know, we started talking about that, and he kind of liked that back in the spring because he said Coach has a hybrid position for me, a point center.

He really is great with the basketball. He relieves some pressure and can come out and handle the ball and enter the offense, especially when (Eric) Atkins is not in and Hansbrough is being face-guarded and hounded like he has been really for five months. We can kind of invert our whole offense, and he's great with it.

He's great with it -- you know, he's a great point center from the low post too. People see him handle the ball up top, and certainly that's good for us, and he can enter, and he can bring the ball up. But when he gets a low post touch in our offense, usually good things happen.

He can score it enough. He doesn't score it like Gody (Harangody) did. That's all right. We don't need that. He can kick it out and find people from there. So when he gets a touch, it's really good.

I don't know if anybody in the country is asked to handle the ball like he does, guard a center, and then you know what, we may get (Louisville's Peyton) Siva or (Villanova's) Maalik Wayans in a ball screen and guard that little guy too. He does a little bit of everything. I think he's gotten more confidence in who he is as a player. I think his bar was kind of low.

How good is he going to be? Is he good enough? I think he surprised himself with what he's done. He's been kind of a poised leader too. Ben is our nuclear weapon in a lot of ways, and Ty is a nice offset to him.

Q. You and Carleton both mentioned that Akron shoots the ball a little bit like Louisville. That's the team that gave you two tough games this year. Is there something about that style that gives you guys problem?

MIKE BREY: I think you just have to be aware of shooters. They've got a number of guys they can put out there and keep the floor spread, like us.

And you can't over help. If you give up some two-point field goals, which we did at Louisville, I think you've got to swallow that a little bit because when they have gotten rolling, they have gotten rolling from knocking it down outside, and certainly that's what they'll want to do in here tomorrow.

You know, changing defenses, changing the ball screen look. Again, we're going to see ball screen stuff. We've seen a lot all year. But they don't turn it over. They know who they are. They keep the pressure on you. They're poised because they're older, and they've been through a lot together.

Q. Everybody talks about the seniors, but could you talk about a contribution of Atkins has brought to this team playing point

as a freshman.

MIKE BREY: When you think about our rotation -- or I think we knew what we were going to get from the four captains who were just up here, and certainly we needed more from them, and they've all exceeded and done. You knew they were going to be good players. And I knew what Jack Cooley was going to do. So there's five. Jack Cooley was going to keep coming with what he did last year.

What does Scott Martin and Eric Atkins bring to our nucleus, and they've brought a lot. That's why we're in the position we're in. Eric has been really good from Day 1. He thinks the game more like an older guy. And fortunately for him, he's playing with older guys all the time.

And they did a great job in the summer getting him ready because, when you have Hansbrough, Nash, Scott, Abromaitis telling you, you're going to be good. We need you. We've got your back, boy, that helps you as a young guy.

He's a key for us. In Orlando, when we burst onto the scene and first felt we could do this thing, he was every bit a part of that championship. If we're going to do anything in this thing, we're going to need him to be really good.

Q. Mike, what's your reaction when you hear people talk about the diminished overall talent in college basketball this year? And do you look at that at all as an opportunity given your experience?

MIKE BREY: It's a little frustrating to hear that, Dave. The phrase that's been out there, there's no great teams. Well, I think we're a great team because we play like a team. I take it a little personal, you know, with -- and I'm sure a lot of other coaches in college basketball too.

There's not lottery picks. I don't quite get that. But certainly in the climate that's become college basketball, we found a niche, which we were always kind of building for and always kind of had that rhythm to our roster with older guys. But certainly this year, hey, us and Akron. There's a great example of two teams, kids that have played together for a while, probably got -- I know they got a lot of gym rats, I've got a lot of gym rats. I think it's kind of refreshing.

And I think it's kind of the way of the world, the way it's going to be. I bet this tournament is going to be really good even though maybe there's no great teams. You know, that's the theme I've heard.

Q. Did you see the Fab Five documentary and wonder what you thought of it. And if you think that that has anything to do with what people would call a great team or not today.

MIKE BREY: Well, I lived the Fab Five documentary. I was an assistant at Duke at the time. I did not see the documentary, but my son mentioned to tell me I had more hair, I wore a tie, and my waistline was better, when he saw it the other night.

But it was funny. Carleton Scott came on the practice floor, and he watched it Monday or Tuesday, and he said, coach, you know, those guys didn't -- they couldn't plug into that era, our group. And I said to him, the reason you wear big shorts right now and black socks now is because of those guys. And he goes, 'Yeah, I never really thought of that.' Those guys started the whole trend.

It was really a unique time, and certainly to be at Duke at that time, there were some great match-ups. As an assistant, I recruited some of those kids. But they definitely had a legacy on things.

We were talking last night at dinner in the championship game, I just remembered, just their size, how big they were. The flashback I had was you throw it into (Christian) Laettner in the post and (Chris) Webber and Juwan Howard clamped it, doubled it. I think he threw the first two passes over press row trying to throw it out because he was so big. They were just imposing bodies on the floor there.

They definitely had their legacy, but the kids today don't even know. It was interesting to hear Carleton say that.

Q. What about the Uncle Tom part they had?

MIKE BREY: I think Grant Hill answered that great with his letter. I think that was unfortunate. I'm sure Jalen Rose would like to reel that back in, quite frankly, and he should.

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