

# Final Four Profile: Arizona Wildcats

*They are the most consistent and reliable team in America, but they don't play like anyone else in America. Arizona's unique style does not have to change for them to be the last team standing.*

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When you think of modern basketball, the first name that might come to mind is Stephen Curry. Curry, the most prolific three point shooter in the history of the game, has inspired a whole generation of hoopsters to step behind the line, pull up from range, and sling their way into the game through 30+ foot jumpers.

In the NBA, any coach who rejects this modernity might not make it past their introductory press conference without someone knocking some sense into them. You just can't compete in the NBA without being able to shoot threes. In college, however, there are 361 teams and 31 conferences. Style can vary, based on recruiting, size, and NIL resources.

Tommy Lloyd's Arizona Wildcats have achieved something pretty improbable. Lloyd's play style does not address the three pointer, and yet, they find themselves in the Final Four. How has that happened?

Through 38 games, the Wildcats have taken just 608 threes, averaging just 16 per game. That ranks 356th out of 361 total teams in division one. For context, Alabama ranks first in America. They average just under 36 attempts per game, giving them a season total of 1,256.

Through Arizona's run in the NCAA tournament, they have broken 75 points all four games. In two games, they broke the 90 point barrier, including a 109 point performance over Arkansas in the Sweet Sixteen. It just doesn't make any sense.

The team construction for Arizona is the sole reason they are where they are. They have weapons in every corner, and a few key pieces off the bench as well. Jaden Bradley (13.3 ppg, 3.5 rpg, 4.4 apg, 1.4 steals per game) and Brayden Burries (16.1 ppg, 4.9 rpg, 1.5 steals per game, 40.2% 3PT) run the backcourt. Bradley has experience and poise, with his game winner over Iowa State in the Big 12 tournament as proof of his late game reliability. Burries is the most notable NBA draft prospect on Arizona's roster,

and he complements Bradley's experience with a youthful playmaking ability. Together, the two of them also form one of the better defensive backcourts in America.

Koa Peat (14.1 ppg, 5.5 rpg) anchors down low with Motiejus Krivas (10.4 ppg, 8.2 rpg, 1.9 bpg), the 7'2" center who can alter any shot by simply standing in the paint. On the perimeter, Ivan Kharchenkov (10.5 ppg, 4.3 rpg, 2.3 apg, 1.3 steals per game) has become a fantastic defender and great asset. Off the bench, Tobe Awaka and Anthony Dell'Orso provide sparks when their starting five need a breather. This rotation has driven them to just two losses, one at Allen Fieldhouse over Kansas and another at home vs. Texas Tech in overtime.

The Wildcats have been near perfect all season. Despite Duke earning the number one overall seed in the tournament, Arizona has been jostling with Michigan all season for the title of best team in America. Michigan has the star power, the athleticism, and perhaps the charisma. However, Arizona might just have the better team. There is not necessarily one "star" sticking out from the rest, although Brayden Burries has rocketed up draft boards over the last two months. Then again, Jaden Bradley won Big 12 Player of the Year, and Koa Peat kicked off the season with a 30-point performance against reigning champions Florida.

The identity here for Arizona is clear: they are the most complete team, and they do it without a major component of modern basketball. They don't need to shoot threes. The patience in the mid range of Jaden Bradley and the dominance down low of Koa Peat is enough to drive them to insanely efficient offensive outputs. This team is good enough to win just the way they are; how scary would it be if they actually *did* shoot the three ball?

Tommy Lloyd has been a steady force since leaving his Gonzaga assistant post to coach Arizona. It is his first Final Four, and there is speculation that he may be next in line for the North Carolina head coaching job once this tournament is over. On one hand, it is *North Carolina*. Who wouldn't want that job?

On the other hand, he is building something special at Arizona. Not only is he a west coast guy, but there is nothing like a national title to sweeten the pockets of boosters and athletic departments. Lloyd's masterful recruiting has taken him all over, including in Europe. He dipped into the transfer portal for Jaden Bradley and that has worked out in spades.

Arizona may be the strongest, most consistent team in America. It might not matter who comes calling for Tommy Lloyd after Monday. Winning cures all, and the Wildcats have perhaps the best chance to silence all the noise this weekend.

