



Sports

LATO'S LENS:

TYLER LATO'S 2026 FINAL FOUR ALL-TOURNAMENT TEAM

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And just like that, it's over. The 2026 NCAA Division I Men's Basketball Tournament concluded on Monday with the Michigan Wolverines defeating the UConn Huskies 69-63 in the national championship game at Lucas Oil Stadium (Indianapolis, Ind.), securing their second title in school history. Much can be said about this year's Big Dance, as once again, all sides of the bracket were loaded with future NBA talent and some of college basketball's future stars. After traveling to Indianapolis myself and watching both Final Four matchups along with the title game, I can't help but talk about the several players who excelled at the sport's highest level. So instead of the standard "Greatest Upsets" and "Top Performers" format of Lato's Lens, I'll list the players who, in my opinion, deserve All-Final Four honors.

Guard: Elliot Cadeau, Michigan

Cadeau transferred to Ann Arbor after playing two underwhelming seasons with the North Carolina Tar Heels. The

former five-star recruit notoriously struggled from behind the three-point line, especially in his freshman campaign, where he shot only 18.9% from there. You wouldn't be able to notice Cadeau's underclass struggles after watching him in Indianapolis last weekend. Against Arizona in the Final Four, he added 13 points, 10 rebounds and five assists to the Wolverines' colossal 91-73 victory, running the Wolverines' high-fluent offense to a tee.

One of his best performances of the season came in the following national championship game, where his 19 points, three rebounds and two assists earned the Final Four's Most Outstanding Player award.

At the end of the day, Cadeau displays the positive side of the transfer portal; if you put the right player in the right system, only good things can happen.

Guard: Keaton Wagler, Illinois

Despite being bounced from the tournament at the mercy of eventual runner-up UConn by a score of 71-62 in the Final Four, Keaton Wagler made his case to be drafted in the first round of this year's NBA draft even stronger after his performance

in the game.

The 6-foot-6 wing from Shawnee, Kansas, recorded a 20-point, eight-rebound performance in the game, ultimately fueling an Illini comeback that would fall just short. His ability to finish at the rim was impressive for a tall, lanky freshman. Should Wagler add size to his frame, he'll become a dominant player in the NBA.

Forward: Alex Karaban, UConn

After struggling late in the Huskies' regular season, "The Captain" bounced back to lead the Huskies to their third Final Four in three years.

His numbers speak for themselves. He finished his career as a Husky with a 17-point, 11-rebound double-double against Michigan, along with nine points, four rebounds and four assists against Illinois.

With a career full of ups and downs, Karaban etched his name in UConn record books as the winningest player in school history, along with the school's three-point record, two national championships and an 18-2 record in the NCAA Tournament. It was only fitting that he ended his career in Indianapolis for his third Final Four appearance.



Koa Peat of the Arizona Wildcats celebrates after making a basket. Despite his sometimes inconsistent play, Peat is projected to be a late first-round pick in the NBA draft. PHOTO COURTESY OF @NAISMITH-TROPHY ON INSTAGRAM.



Elliot Cadeau of the Michigan Wolverines dribbles the ball down the court. Cadeau was a standout player for the Wolverines during their NCAA tournament run, leading them to a national championship. PHOTO COURTESY OF @OLIVIA ON PINTEREST.

Forward: Koa Peat, Arizona

A former consensus five-star recruit and Arizona Gatorade Player of the Year, Koa Peat lived up to nearly every expectation while playing for his home state this season.

The freshman forward averaged 17.2 points, 7.6 rebounds and 1.6 assists through Arizona's five tournament games and notched a 16-point, 11-rebound double-double in what could've been his final game for head coach Tommy Lloyd.

Although there are several inconsistencies in his game, several draft experts slot Peat as a late first-round draft pick. He's an overall intriguing prospect with lots of upside, evident after his first season of college basketball.

Center: Tarris Reed Jr., UConn

Tarris Reed Jr.'s development as a center for head coach Dan Hurley's program was like none other.

He went from averaging 9.6 points, 7.6 rebounds and one assist a game to a staggering 14.7 points, nine rebounds and 2.3 assists. On top of that, his performances in the 2026 NCAA Tournament will go down as some of the best of all time.

He immediately set the stage for UConn's run to Indianapolis with his 31-point, 27-rebound performance against Furman and proceeded to score 10 or more points in every tournament game. His 26 points in

the Huskies' upset victory over No. 1 Duke in the Elite Eight single-handedly kept UConn in the game despite trailing by as much as 19 points at one point.

Against Michigan, Reed recorded another double-double (13 points, 14 rebounds) to end his collegiate career. For only being a 6-foot-10 center, Hurley got the most out of Reed for his two years as a UConn Husky.

Honorable Mention: Aday Mara, Center (Michigan)

Aday Mara went from barely sniffing the court at UCLA to being one of the most dominant big men in all of college basketball.

His performance in the Final Four was jaw-dropping, to say the least, putting up 26 points and nine rebounds against Arizona. Even though he put up average numbers in the title game (eight points, four rebounds, one assist), his presence in the paint alone had the Huskies taking bad, heavily contested shots that would ultimately cost them the game.

Tarris Reed Jr. was certainly the best center in this year's tournament; however, the Wolverines simply could not win the title without the 7-foot-3 big man from Spain. If Mara decides to forgo his eligibility to pursue the NBA, the sky is the limit. However, if he returns to Ann Arbor for 2026, the Big Ten is in for another rude awakening.