

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2025

Remarks Honoring the NCAA Men's College Basketball Champion University of Florida Gators

May 21, 2025

The President. That's a big crowd. That's really, really nice.

I just met your coach. Now I see why you won. [*Laughter*]

But they are—I said, "Boy, they are tall." Wow. You're tall guys. Good-looking guys. Huh?

Congratulations. Fantastic job. That's not easy. Right, Coach?

Head Coach Todd Golden. No. [*Laughter*]

The President. But today, we're delighted to welcome the 2025 NCAA basketball champions: The University of Florida Gators. Congratulations.

Participant. Gators!

The President. Hello, Tim.

Congratulations also to a really great, young head coach, Todd Golden, on the entire job he did—the season, the inspiration that he gave these players. He's unbelievable as a coach. I heard a lot of great things about him. Ooh, would I like to be his age in—ooh. [*Laughter*]

We—don't go anywhere, Coach. Stay—stay, Coach. You can't leave.

And joining us this afternoon is University of Florida's interim president, Kent Fuchs. Kent. Hi, Kent. Good. Good. Congratulations.

Attorney General Pam Bondi, who's doing a phenomenal job—phenomenal—keeping us safe. And of course, there's no bigger Florida fan than Secretary of State Marco Rubio. Is Marco here? Where are you? Pam, why don't you and Marco come up. Come up. Senator, come on up. Get up here. Come on up here, Senator.

And I see Marco's son Anthony is a running back for the Gators' football team. Whoa. That's not bad. That's pretty good.

We're also joined by Senators Rick Scott, Ashley Moody. Rick Scott—where's Rick? Rick. Come on up, Rick. Ashley is up.

Representatives Aaron Bean; Gus Bilirakis—Vern Buchanan; Kate [Kat; White House correction] Cammack. And if you want, come on up. This stage is meant for a lot of people, actually.

Byron Donalds—Randy Fine—Randy—come on up, Randy. Congratulations on your election. I was worried about you, Randy. [*Laughter*] I was worried. He ended up winning by 16 points, right? I wasn't too worried.

Scott Franklin. Scott, thank you very much. Carlos Giménez. Where is Carlos? Come on up, Carlos. Good guy. Mike Haridopolos—Laurel Lee—Laurel—Laurel Lee. Look at this.

Hi, Greg. They don't have your name down. Greg—get up here, Greg. Greg Steube. Anna Paulina Luna. Anna, Anna. Come on, Anna.

Jimmy Patronis. Jimmy, congratulations. That was a big—

Representative Jimmy Patronis. Thank you.

The President. That was a big election.

We got them all. We have Greg up here.

Thanks as well to the wonderful members of the Florida State Legislature.

And a very special thanks to the NFL legend and University of Florida—I mean, one of the greatest players I've ever seen. I'll tell you what, as a college player, maybe the best ever. And you did damn well—and you did damn well in the pros too. He was great. Despite being on the Jets, you did damn well on the—[*laughter*]. Come on up here, Tim. You've got to come up here. Tim Tebow. And he's a terrific guy. He is a terrific guy. He's a winner. Boy, he was a winner.

What'd you win two, right? And he almost won a third. There's nobody did much better—nobody did that. I think we—you know, he goes down, really, as one of the best—maybe the best college football player, if you think about it, with—based on—we can only base that on results—right, Tim?—which is all that count. [*Laughter*] Great guy too.

The 2025 University of Florida basketball team was one for the history books. And I saw a few of those games, and they were tough games against great teams.

You brought home the third national title in program history and made Florida the only Division I program ever to win three national titles in both basketball and football. That's not bad.

The team was hot from the very beginning, starting off the year with a 13-game winning streak and roaring to a 27-and-4 record in the regular season against really, really good competition, including two wins over number-one-ranked opponents.

In one of the pivotal moments early in the season, the Gators found themselves in a fierce battle with South Carolina—a great team—trailing the Gamecocks 52 to 38, Coach. That's pretty good, Coach. [*Laughter*] They're not too happy about it, are they? [*Laughter*] That's one of those—you know, you're happy, but they're not happy when that happens.

With 12 minutes left on the clock, fighting against time, the Gators clawed your way back into striking distance. With just 5 seconds left on the clock, senior guard Will Richard seized his moment—and drove in hard to sink a game-winning layup, earning Florida a 70-to-69 come-from-behind victory. Well done. Where is—where is Will? I want to see this guy. [*Laughter*]

That's good. That's great, Will. Boy, oh, boy, these are good-looking guys. [*Laughter*] And they're definitely—they're definitely tall. One of my guys said downstairs—he's a big guy. He said, "These are the tallest human beings I've ever seen." [*Laughter*]

You know, I have son who's 6 foot 9. But 6 foot 9 is not—I now see—you know, he always says, "Dad, I'm not that tall compared to some of these guys," and now, I understand what he's talking about. [*Laughter*]

By the SEC tournament, Florida truly caught fire. The Gators even set a new tournament scoring record when you beat Alabama 104 to 82.

In the closing minutes of the SEC Championship game against Tennessee, the Volunteers cut the Gators' 13-point lead down to 5. Ooh, that's called sometimes "choke time," Coach. [*Laughter*] That's never good, when you take that big lead and you're all—you're thinking about your victory speech, and you forget to play basketball.

Mr. Golden. I don't think about it too much. I don't think about it too much.

The President. Right? You forget you've got to play golf or basketball or whatever it—and then, all of a sudden, you say: "Oh, man. We could lose this sucker." Huh? [*Laughter*] That's never good, but you handled it. The pressure was on. You handled it.

That's when star senior guard Walter Clayton, Jr.—[inaudible]. I'll tell you, I hear he's really good. [Laughter] I see he's really rich too. You know that? Seized control of the game—

Guard Walter Clayton, Jr. Not yet. [Laughter]

Rep. Patronis. Not yet.

Participant. Not yet.

The President. Yes, not yet. Right? Not yet.

So you're doing—is he coming back, Coach?

Mr. Golden. No, he's—he'll be playing in the NBA next year.

The President. Oh. Well, then he's rich. [Laughter]

No, I hear he's unbelievable. Special. Going to be a very early draft choice, huh? I think.

Mr. Golden. I believe so.

The President. If they're smart.

Mr. Golden. If they're smart.

The President. If they're smart. Seized control of the game and scored eight straight points, leading the Gators to your first SEC Championship in 11 years and earning himself a title in tournament MVP. That's great. Lot of MVPs up there.

Up next was the "Big Dance." Florida opened March Madness with a commanding win over Norfolk State and followed it up by edging out two-time defending champ UConn—that's tough—in a thrilling 77-to-75 win.

Some of these games are close, Coach, huh? [Laughter]

Mr. Golden. They were.

The President. You know what they say about those close—that means they have a good coach.

Mr. Golden. [Laughter] I don't know about that.

The President. You won a lot of close games here.

The Elite Eight brought to a face-off with Texas Tech. Down by nine with under four minutes left, Florida responded with a furious rally led by sophomore Thomas Haugh, who made back-to-back three pointers. Back to back. Where is Thomas?

He's got good hair too. [Laughter] Nice hair.

Forward Thomas Haugh. Thank you. [Laughter]

The President. He's got no hair-loss problem, I can tell you. [Laughter]

Thomas was still on full display as he earned his fourth double-double of the season by recording 20 points and 11 rebounds—wow—against the Red Raiders.

And with an 84-to-79 victory over Texas Tech, you punched your ticket to the Final Four. Not easy to do. Thank you. Not easy to do, fellas.

Facing off against top-seeded Auburn, Walter Clayton—again, Walter Clayton—this guy Walter Clayton has to be very—[Laughter]—Walter Clayton Jr. turned in another big performance, dropping a career-high 34 points, and became the first player since Larry Bird—

how good was Larry Bird?—in 1979 to score 30 points or more in both the Elite Eight and the Final Four. That's some *[inaudible]*.

Mr. Clayton. *[Inaudible]*

Guard Alijah Martin. *[Inaudible]*

The President. They like Larry Bird. I do too.

So, in the championship game against the Houston Cougars, what became one of the most hard-fought title games in college basketball history, the first half was a battle over every point, with both teams playing ferocious defense in the lowest scoring first half of a championship game since 2011. The Gators fell behind, and it was looking bad. But in the second half, Florida stormed back with a 14-and-3 run. That's not bad. *[Laughter]* With less than 60 seconds left on the clock, Houston led by one point.

Did you think you were going to win?

Mr. Golden. I did.

The President. That's—*[laughter]*—that's what he gets paid for. That's——

Mr. Golden. I did.

The President. This guy is good.

Houston then fouled Alijah Martin—okay, where is Alijah?—giving him two free throws, which he easily sank.

Were you nervous? I always think, "Here's a guy, he's got to sink the"—it's not that easy. I can name a couple of very big players that didn't do too well in that circumstance.

Were you nervous when you were up there?

Mr. Martin. Nah. No chance. *[Laughter]* No chance.

The President. That's pretty good.

He sank them both, Coach, right?

Mr. Golden. Yes, he did.

The President. Oh, if you didn't sink them, you wouldn't be up here right now. *[Laughter]* And nobody would ever call you again. *[Laughter]* That's great. That's a lot of pressure. That's a tremendous thing.

Houston fouled junior guard Denzel Aberdeen, who expanded Florida's lead again. And that's great. Where's Denzel? I love your name. I love that name—Denzel Aberdeen. I have a place in Aberdeen, Scotland. I like that name. *[Laughter]* Aberdeen.

And he's a good player, Coach?

Mr. Golden. Very good player.

The President. I wouldn't—I'd like to have him say, "No, not that good." *[Laughter]* You look like a good player.

On Houston's final possession, the Gators clamped down, pressured the ball—that's right; I saw that game. That was a crazy game. And forced a turnover. The ball rolled loose, and the Gators clinched the national championship 65 to 63 in one of the most exciting games and championships they've ever had.

That's true. Great coaching.

Lesser teams would have crumbled. That was a hell of a game.

Tim, what do you think? Pretty good, right?

Former Denver Broncos quarterback Timothy R. Tebow. The best. [Laughter]

The President. Huh? That was pretty good.

And under that pressure—very few teams could have withstood that. That was an amazing moment, actually. And those two throws—free throws by Denzel were pretty amazing.

But time after time, you refused to let up. I mean, think of it. All these close games and against great teams, and a lot of those guys are going into the NBA. And you won, Coach. You just kept winning.

You refused to let up when the odds were against you, and that's the mark of true champions, all of you. The coach is great, and the team is great. And the coach feels really—I asked him, first question, "How do you think you'll do this year?" You know, in other words: "Forget about last year. How are you doing this year," right? [Laughter] We always think forward, Coach.

Mr. Golden. Definitely.

The President. But he said he thinks he's going to have a fantastic team.

Will you go in ranked top five or so, or one or maybe?

Mr. Golden. I think we'll be top five.

The President. Five? Good, Coach. That's good. Well, if you're top five, that means, with you as a coach, you're going to win, right?

Mr. Golden. Well, I appreciate that.

The President. So I think so.

So, again, congratulations to a well-earned victory. And all I can say is: Go Gators. We love you in Florida. I tell you, we love you in Florida.

And now, Coach Golden. Coach. Thank you, Coach.

Mr. Golden. Thank you very much. Appreciate it.

[*Mr. Golden dropped his passport.*]

Whoa. That's my passport. [Laughter]

First of all, thank you, Mr. President——

The President. Thank you.

Mr. Golden. ——for inviting my team and our program to the White House to celebrate our national championship. It means everything to us. So thank you very much.

The President. And we're going to go to the Oval Office right after.

Mr. Golden. We're going to go to the Oval Office after this.

The President. We're going to the Oval Office after this, right?

Mr. Golden. Yes.

It's—and then, we just want to thank all of our friends and family and supporters of our program that are here today enjoying this moment and celebrating with us. If it wasn't for your all's support all year, we wouldn't be here. So thank you all very much.

Mr. President, I like to think of our program similarly to how you think of the United States. We're a meritocracy. All right? We work really, really hard. No matter what you look like or where you come from, if you put the team first and win, we're going to play you.

And we have a program full of that: guys that have great attitudes; great work ethics; most importantly, want to be at the University of Florida.

The President. Good.

Mr. Golden. All right? We have young men that have great physical tools, great basketball talent. In fact, as Mr. President said, a number of these guys will be participating in the NBA next year or when their time at Florida is up.

But the reason why we were successful this year is, we had incredible team talent. We had guys that were willing to play together, sacrifice individual stats and records for the greater good of the group, and it led us to a 36-and-4 record and a trip to the White House.

I'm incredibly proud of my players and our staff and the work that we've done over the last year, and—and our goal is to do everything we can to put ourselves in position to be here again next year, but we've got a lot of work to do in the meantime.

But, again, Mr. President, thank you so much. And to show a token of our appreciation, we have an autographed team basketball and a——

The President. Oh.

Mr. Golden. ——a Donald Trump jersey with number 47 on it—all right?—to honor your 47th term as President of the United States of America.

The President. Thank you, Coach. That's great. Wow.

[*At this point, the President was presented with a team jersey.*]

Thank you very much. That's beautiful.

Mr. Golden. Yes.

The President. Thank you.

Mr. Golden. Thank you all very much. Go Gators.

Audience members. Go Gators!

The President. So, if they want—I'm not sure they'll want to. I think the most exciting room anywhere in the world is called the Oval Office, and I'm going to invite the coach and the team down to the Oval Office. I might even ask our great Representatives, Senators, Marco, everybody, to come down with them, and we'll take some pictures in the Oval Office.

And I have a special little coin for them, a really nice coin. I hope they never lose it, because if they do, it's a lot of money, that coin. [*Laughter*]

But—well—so let's see. Do you want to go to the Oval Office?

Participants. Yes, sir. [*Laughter*]

The President. I thought they were going to say that.

Thank you all very much. Great team. Great—great everything. Thank you.

Fantastic. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:31 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Larry Bird, former forward, National Basketball League's Boston Celtics. The transcript was released by the Office of Communications on May 22.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : NCAA men's college basketball champion University of Florida Gators.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Aberdeen, Denzel; Bean, Aaron; Bilirakis, Gus M.; Bird, Larry; Bondi, Pamela J.; Buchanan, Vernon G.; Cammack, Kathryn; Clayton, Walter, Jr.; Donalds, Byron; Fine, Randy; Franklin, C. Scott; Fucks, Kent; Giménez, Carlos A.; Golden, Todd; Haridopolos, Mike; Haugh, Thomas; Lee, Laurel; Luna, Anna Paulina; Martin, Alijah; Moody, Ashley B.; Patronis, Jimmy; Richard, Will; Rubio, Anthony; Rubio, Marco A.; Scott, Richard L.; Steube, W. Gregory; Tebow, Timothy R.; Trump, Barron W.

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