

Who is Maryland Men's Basketball getting in Buzz Williams? A Winner, a Developer and a Family Man

Posted by Andrew Breza on April 4, 2025



Photo courtesy of University of Maryland Athletics

For most college basketball programs, ending the season in the Sweet 16 of the NCAA Tournament is considered an utter success.

Although a season-ending loss is always a tough pill to swallow, making it that far means you had a better season than about 99.96% of Division One teams.

That should have been the case for Maryland Basketball, who fell to the eventual national champions, the Florida Gators, 87-71. Although it was the final game "The Crab Five" would appear in, the loss put a close to the Terps' farthest run in nearly a decade, when that 2015-2016 team also finished with a 27-9 record.



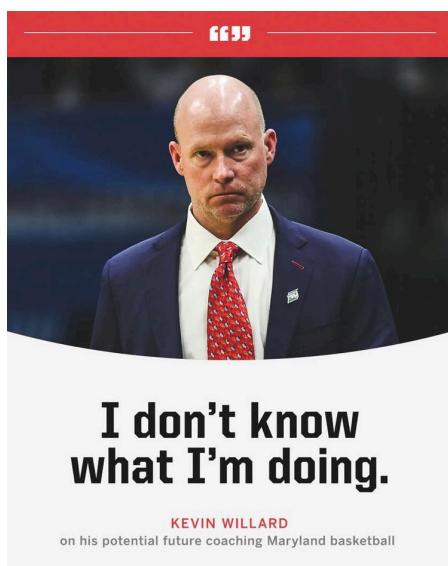
Pictured from left to right: Rodney Rice, Selton Miguel, Ja'Kobi Gillespie, Julian Reese, and Derik Queen. Photo courtesy of @TerrapinHoops/X.

However, it was anything but that for the Terps, one of the nation's most historic and prestigious basketball programs. In the early morning of March 30, head coach Kevin Willard was Villanova-bound, leaving a promising team with no direction.

The dramatic saga began on March 16, a day after the Villanova job opened. Immediately, Willard's name began floating around as a candidate for the job, but those rumors were quickly shut down by reports that Maryland was working on a new contract for him, set to make him the top 10 highest-paid coach in college basketball.

In the week and a half following that, the entire situation turned on its head. Athletic director Damon Evans left the program for the open SMU job, Willard started giving mixed responses about his future with the program, and head football coach Mike Locksley publicly criticized Willard for not keeping the issue "in-house." All of this occurred while the Terps were playing in March Madness, the NCAA transfer portal opened, and other teams worked swiftly to fill their head coaching vacancies.

On March 26, the day before their matchup with Florida, Willard began dodging questions about his contract, just a day after saying he wasn't leaving the program. It was reported later on the 26th that Willard had skipped team dinner. The Terps would fall to the Gators the next day, and despite Willard saying "he didn't know what he was doing" regarding his future, he was gone just three days later.



Graphic courtesy of ESPN

In the two days after Villanova announced Willard as their head coach, all but two players on Maryland's roster – Derik Queen and Chance Stephens – had entered the transfer portal, although with Queen being a projected NBA Draft lottery pick, Stephens may be the only

holdover. On the recruiting trail, four-star guard Chris Jeffrey from local Mount Zion Prep, the program's lone commit in 2025, decommitted.

The program was suddenly in complete disarray just five days after their season ended. It was up to Colleen Sorem, who was named Maryland Athletics' interim athletic director on March 21, to try to find a sense of stability in the form of a new head coach.

Despite being named the captain of a sinking ship, Sorem and the athletic department delivered on April 1.

According to Sorem, they sought a coach with demonstrated success as a head coach, postseason experience, familiarity with the East Coast and the rich DMV recruiting area, experience with NIL and the revenue sharing landscape, but most importantly, somebody with great character and a proven leader of young men.

After a reportedly 10 day search where they evaluated over 30 candidates, a name quickly rose to the top of the athletic department's list against that framework. It was also the only name to appear on every list submitted by supporters of the program whose input was used in the process.

That name was Buzz Williams.

Williams, known for his three piece suits and his off-the-wall energy (hence how he earned the nickname "Buzz"), has been a head coach in college basketball since 2008. Most recently, he finished his sixth season as head coach at Texas A&M, where he led the Aggies to the NCAA Tournament in each of the past three seasons, including a trip to the Sweet 16 this past year. Williams was formerly the head coach of Marquette from 2008-2014 and at Virginia Tech from 2014-2019.

Williams boasts a career record of 373-228, appearing in the NCAA Tournament 11 times and being named the SEC Coach of the Year twice in 2020 and 2023. Over the past six years, his A&M teams have become synonymous with gritty defense – the Aggies were the 9th ranked defense in the country this past season, according to KenPom.

Perhaps most impressively, Williams has earned 100 career victories at three different Division One schools. At Maryland, he has the chance to become one of just three coaches all-time to accomplish that feat at four, seeking to join Steve Alford and former Maryland head coach Lefty Driesell.

Interactive Graphic of these three coaches here

On April 2, university president Darryll Pines and Sorem held an introductory press conference for Williams at the Xfinity Center at noon. There in support was a crowd of students, journalists, boosters, and other Maryland head coaches, including Locksley, women's basketball coach Brenda Frese, and legendary former men's basketball coach Gary Williams.



Williams and Frese at the press conference on April 2. Photo courtesy of me.

"There has been a legacy of men in this program with the surname of Williams," said Pines.

"Walt Williams, Buck Williams, Jordan Williams, and of course, Gary Williams. Now, there's a new Williams, but really, there's a buzz around campus."

Pines said that throughout the expedited process, they watched countless videos of Buzz coaching, in interviews, and delivering speeches on leadership. However, one video that stuck with them was a video in which he didn't say anything – the postgame press conference from Texas A&M's season-ending loss to Michigan in the Sweet 16, where Aggies' senior guard Manny Obaseki sang Williams' praises.

Video clip of Obaseki's quote here, replacing the text in the article

At the press conference, Williams made it very clear just how much the opportunity to become Maryland's next head coach meant to him and established his goal of honoring the legacy of Maryland's basketball program.

"Life is often measured in time, but it's remembered in moments," Williams said. "I've spent most of my adult life studying greats like Coach [Gary Williams], not ever thinking that my name would be in that mix, nor am I deserving."

The major theme from Williams in the 30 minutes he was on stage was his desire to build a true team.

"The one thing that's constant is change," Williams said. "Being on a team, that's something that doesn't change. There's something life-changing about being on a team. In the four and a half hours I've been on this campus, I understand the magnitude and responsibility that comes with this [team]...All I can tell you is that the intent of my heart will not be selfish but to be the best that we can be to represent all our teams."

As for what that team's identity will look like, Williams addressed the ever-evolving landscape of college athletics and his own evolving philosophy as he enters the Big Ten for the first time.

"What I've learned as a coach in this ever-changing model is you have to be able to coach a lot of different ways," Williams said. "I think the coaches that I've studied that are married to their style, I don't know if that's sustainable in what this model has become."

With it now being a week into the transfer portal and, as of now, only one guy on his roster, Williams' attention will turn to filling out his team.

Williams mentioned that prior to the press conference, he had a meeting with all the players, even the ones in the transfer portal, to meet them and give them a platform for how he could help them after an unstable prior week.

"Sometimes players don't have the opportunity to speak up," Williams said. "They've been through a lot of success, but the last few days, it's been very unsettling and very unstable. I wanted to give them a platform and a commitment: if I can help you, I'll help you. If that means it's here, we'll figure it out. If it's somewhere else, that's okay too."

In College Station, seven of Williams' former players have already entered the transfer portal. Four of them – freshmen George Turkson Jr. and Andre Mills along with juniors Pharrel Payne and Solomon Washington – have entered with a "do not contact" tag, potentially following their coach to College Park.

*NOTE: Will be updating the above paragraph to make it present for the graphic below

Graphic about the four A&M players following Buzz to College Park here

In the meantime, after all the controversy surrounding the Kevin Willard situation, Maryland simply hopes they have found their guy for the foreseeable future. ESPN reported that Williams' contract is for six years, and although he's never stayed longer than six years at his previous spots, Gary Williams seems to think Buzz is in it for the long haul.

"This place is bigger than any coach that's ever coached here, and that's not going to change," Gary Williams said. "I think this is a place where you can have the rest of your career, and I think Buzz is looking at this place as that kind of job."

Although the basketball team won't be back in action until November, there's a new "Buzz" surrounding the team already – in more ways than one.