

Atlantic Coast Conference Basketball Tipoff Media Day

Wednesday, October 8, 2025

Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

Clemson Tigers

Coach Brad Brownell

Dillon Hunter

RJ Godfrey

Men's Press Conference

BRAD BROWNELL: Excited to be here for year 16 for me. Excited to see what this new team brings. RJ Godfrey and Dillon Hunter are alongside me, two seniors that I think will be tremendous leaders for this year's team.

I like our group. Obviously, we have ten new players, six freshmen, so we're a little bit young, but I think we've got great depth. I'm excited about how we're practicing. I think our guys are competing very hard.

The challenge I think for our coaching staff is to try to blend this new team together and find a style of play that we think fits and will help them be successful. Unlike my good friend and football coach, Coach Swinney, I'm not going to filibuster. I'm going to move it along to the next part of the interview process.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Coach.

Q. You got a brand new team, obviously. The tempo last year was the slowest that you've played in a couple of years. Was that by design? Do you think this team will play a little bit more uptempo, kind of with shooting the ball -- with the ability to shoot the ball with some of the guys that you brought in?

BRAD BROWNELL: Yes, it probably ended up being by design last year, because we had a really strong starting five. Guys like Chase Hunter, Ian Schieffelin, were guys that I wanted to make sure played 35 minutes.

So this year's team will be different. We're going to get up and down the floor more. I think we're going to extend our defense, try to be a bit more aggressive, play with high hands and great activity and energy.

I think this could be a group that we play ten guys double



figure minutes. Offensively we're trying to push and play with tempo and start the offense with a little more thrust. I'm excited for that. I think our players are, and I do think that that's the best way for this team to play.

We've done it a couple of other years. My first year I think we did a little bit of that here at Clemson and then also the COVID season in '21. I think this team resembles those teams in my mind.

Q. You brought up Dabo Swinney, and obviously the culture of Clemson outside of just sheerly basketball or football, that family that you have and that approach that you have. Dabo I believe made mention of the fact that he was laughed at when he came in and said that they were going to be something, and they've won national championships. You've obviously brought Clemson basketball to a place where we've seen you on the national stage make it towards the tail end of the NCAA Tournament. Just the overall essence of Clemson and what should people know, not just about this program, but what it is to be a Tiger?

BRAD BROWNELL: Yeah, Clemson is a special place. It's just something that we talk about it at Clemson. It's in these hills. There's something in these hills. It's more of a feeling. You just have to come see the place, spend time.

I sent my two daughters to Clemson. We're all-in. We love it. Been there for a long time, and I think it's because the values and what Clemson stands for is excellence. I think you see it throughout the university.

Obviously it's grown tremendously under the leadership of Jim Clements, our athletic department under Graham Neff is outstanding, and you see all different kinds of teams and athletic programs within our university doing well.

So it motivates you, right, to try to do the same with your program. I think it's just such a close-knit family atmosphere. We spend a great deal of time together. We encourage our student-athletes to get to know as many of the regular students and other student-athletes as they can.

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I think that's one of the things that just makes Clemson unique and special. It's a truly special place, and I'm humbled to be the coach there.

Q. You talk about a new identity and this being a new team. I guess just what goes into that process? You bring in so many different players from the portal and guys like Dillon Hunter and RJ are mainstays, but what goes into that process of discovering that throughout the summer?

BRAD BROWNELL: Well, you've got to do a lot of work. You have to have a great staff; I do. My assistant coaches are fantastic, and I think the fact that we've had some continuity these last several years in staff has really helped us.

Those guys have to do a great deal of work and effort to bring in the right types of players that we think fit how we want to play and who we are and what is our identity as a program.

I think we're very honest and open in our recruitment and make sure that guys come in understanding what it is that our expectations are, and then we try to find out what their goals and dreams are and how we can help.

It takes time, right? You've got to build relationships, right? This is about relationship building. That's what coaching is now. I was asked what's different about me now in year 16 as year one at Clemson, and one of the things is just how much more time I spend with players individually one-on-one. You just have to do those kinds of things.

Then you have to hope that your players are spending time together not just when we're in Littlejohn, but when they're away from Littlejohn, that they're investing in each other. Teams that do that certainly have a greater chance of being successful.

Then as a coaching staff, it's trying to blend, you know, the skill sets of all these different types of players into one that you think can be successful and adapting year to year. I think that's part of the challenge as well.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you. Questions for RJ.

Q. RJ, if someone told you a year ago you would be here at the ACC Tipoff representing Clemson, what would you have thought?

RJ GODFREY: You know what, I wouldn't be surprised. I think Clemson holds a special place in my heart. I found that out day one last year. I would not be surprised if you told me that last year.

Q. What have you done over the offseason to up your game to get ready for this season?

RJ GODFREY: I think just focusing on the things I need to work on. I think, like Coach Brownell said, we have an awesome staff who invest in their players very much. I've been working with Coach Jeff Reynolds a lot on my shot, especially lately. He is one of the reasons why I've been able to become a good player.

He's been in the business for so long and he helped me get my free-throws right. Knocked down some big threes in the tournament two years ago, and I think this year he's going to really elevate my perimeter game to a whole new level.

Q. You said that you wouldn't be surprised if somebody said that you would be back here. To say yes to a coach one time is one thing, but to say it twice, what is it about Brad Brownell to make you want to come back, be a part of this, maybe something that lingered with you from before?

RJ GODFREY: I think Coach Brownell, just his philosophy has helped me just in life. I've kind of just on my personal level just kind of tried to adopt like a soldier mentality. That's kind of what he kind of puts on us, the model of grit, doing things when it's hard, doing things when we don't want to, doing things when you're not in the best mental or physical spot. Just fighting through adversity.

It's something that I took for granted my first two years here, and then when things got hard at my last place, that's kind of what I tried to have my backbone on. That's what he lives about.

So I think Coach Brownell has been an awesome leader in my life, not only on the court, but off the court. He's gotten me so much better in so many aspects outside of basketball, and I wanted to feel that again.

You know, when I got the opportunity to go back, I was, like, Man, I can't pass that up. I cannot pass that up.

THE MODERATOR: Along those lines, when Coach recruited you the first time, there was a little bit of a recruitment here in the second time. How was that conversation the same or how was it different?

RJ GODFREY: It was so long ago the first time, I don't even remember. I don't even remember. But second time he didn't really have to recruit me. He already knew the interest I had for the program and everything. I mean, I wanted to come back and not only play for him, but play for



the Clemson fans.

Like he said, there's something in these hills that makes you want to fall in love, not with only just the players and the coaches here, but the people. The people here are so awesome. I love being a Clemson student-athlete before anything.

I'm just so grateful I had the opportunity to come back and play for the orange and purple again and put on for Clemson.

THE MODERATOR: RJ, thank you. Questions for Dillon.

Q. Brad has been talking about this being a new team, new identity. For you being the mainstay, the head of the snake of this, what's been the challenge for you this offseason of leading this team?

DILLON HUNTER: I would say one of the main challenges is, like, you know, it's a whole group of guys, new guys. They don't really know each other. Like new environment. A lot of guys coming from different places, Utah, around the country. It's really about gelling, you know, like spending time outside of basketball off court, just getting to know each other.

Starting in the summer that was our main thing. We would go out, go fishing with RJ or go out to the lake, go out to get something to eat, getting to know each other.

I feel like now going into the start of the season, we're starting to see the gel and form during practice, and everything is becoming simple after that.

Q. You've played in just shy of 100 games for Clemson up to this point, but the evolution of your role as we know that you haven't started as many of those games. Just what can you say about that evolution for you trusting in Brad Brownell and what he has for you and what you could be and maybe what this season looks like for you to have more starts and for the team to lean on you?

DILLON HUNTER: Yeah. You know, Coach's motto is grit, perseverance of a long-term goal. With Chase being at the school and everything he's went through and showing me how, like, man, you can come back from these battles. He was fighting injury. I wasn't really having injuries, but just not being able to play as much time as you want. You just got to put the time in the gym. Everything will work out how it needs to be.

I think having Chase definitely helped me. He went through that time period, and now coming into my own,

like, man, from last season, I had to step up in my role, lead the team.

I feel like last year I was still a leader on the team, so stepping into this role this year, it's not too much hard or hard on myself. It's just being a leader.

THE MODERATOR: Do you have to win a championship in order to call it a successful season?

DILLON HUNTER: I would love to win a championship. That's all on my mind, championships and winning the ACC championship. We were short last year. National championship, we have it written all over the board.

I feel like at Clemson we have a different motto now. Early on it was just we're going to the tournament, but now we're trying to win national championships.

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