

# Emirates NBA Cup

Monday, December 15, 2025

**San Antonio Spurs**

**Coach Mitch Johnson**

Championship Practice Day



**Q. How would you rate the camaraderie on this team? It seems from top to bottom, it's a pretty tight group. They're all in the same direction, like each other, so forth and so on.**

MITCH JOHNSON: I agree. I think we've been fortunate to have a blend of some guys that have been in the program now for some time as well as bringing in some people that have been great fits.

I think obviously Brian [Wright] and his crew get a ton of credit for identifying those types of people and players that have fit. It doesn't mean it always works. I think that's part of the good fortune with that, where we've had some individuals that we've added, whether that's through the draft or through different mechanisms, but to add to the group over the years to that core that has kind of been here for a while, the Keldon, Devin, Julian, Jeremy crew, Victor, and they have meshed on and off the court. I think it goes a long way.

**Q. Assuming the minutes restriction doesn't completely go away after one game, what kind of ramp-up process do you envision? How long will it be before there's no restriction for Wemby anymore?**

MITCH JOHNSON: I think that depends on what your definition of a restriction is. I think we're not at a stage where we will be unintentional with his minutes, whether that's volume over time, whether that's long stints. But we want to make sure we've learned or continue to learn from what has happened and what we've gone through.

That doesn't mean we have the answers, but I think that means we don't just say, oh, now we're back to whatever. I think we are still learning, and we want to be very, very mindful of that.

It'll be something that Victor and I will continue to talk through and talk about. It's hard; he wants to play. He wants to start. He wants to finish. Wherever you put some minutes, that means you have less over there.

We still have to think about what's best for the team,

unfortunately. That decision can't be made in a vacuum, even though it's a very impactful and influential decision. We still have to make sure it fits with the other rollout of who's playing with who and how that affects others.

**Q. We've all seen Victor shoot fewer threes this year. You've talked about that mindset shift before. I'm just curious how you actually drill and instill something like that on the court and off of it to make sure in the flow of action, old instinct doesn't take over. How do you actually practice shifting that mindset?**

MITCH JOHNSON: There's a few different ways. I think, again, part of it has been his intentionality of being more efficient and being forceful around the rim. I think that's also been a byproduct of him getting stronger and working on his body.

I think it's a great reflection of our development staff and our assistant coaches in terms of continuing to work and partner with him on understanding your spots and these are openings, this is how you can take advantage, and when you're trying to be physical here's something to combat that, et cetera, et cetera.

I think part of it also is he hasn't played with some of these guys that are going to live in the paint, as we've seen with some of our handlers, and that may open up some more threes. So I don't think we are at the final stage or end line of this is how he's going to play.

**Q. Last game was a good example of how Vic can kind of shoot over anybody, anywhere, anytime. The great players, their great advantage is they can just get you out of any situation. What are you learning about what Victor is capable of as far as shooting out of or passing out of any situation, and how is this offense evolving over time and how do you see it evolving over time to take advantage of that?**

MITCH JOHNSON: I think there will be moments where we want to get him the basketball in certain spots and certain environments and actions, and there will be times where those decisions will be made for Victor to terminate the possession, which typically he's shooting the shot or has caused multiple bodies and crowds around himself that

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hopefully his teammates should be getting a good shot, whether that's in one pass or even at times it can be a swing-swing or two passes out.

There will be that, and that will be just time. That's just something where you're trying to provide a landscape that has pristine spacing that puts the defense in a bind where they can't guard him with multiple people and get back to the rest of the people on the basketball court. That's where over time if we can get our proper starting spots, that's a buildout that takes real pattern recognition and just on-the-job training. I think he's proven that he's shown some improvement there when he's gotten the ball in some of those areas, and that's just playing in the flow of the game.

I think we've seen when we don't stall ourselves out by trying to be stubborn on getting one person the ball or trying to watch one person play, our offense has been more dynamic. So it'll be a balancing act of that, which again, every great player is because you want them to be able to leave their imprint on the game at certain times, but you also want to make sure that you're hard to guard, and typically being hard to guard means the defense is chasing the pass and having to guard five people.

**Q. Just so you know on the starter issue, Vic was very interested the other night to find out if you could win MVP and Sixth Man in the same year, just so you know. How do you kind of marry the concepts in your mind that it's a big game tomorrow and you're playing for a trophy, and at the end of it you're going to be 18-7 no matter what happens? How do you balance those two elements?**

MITCH JOHNSON: You know, honestly, that's a good question. I wasn't sure until we got to kind of where we are. I don't think we balance it. I think we go into tomorrow trying to win the NBA Cup, and that's the approach.

Afterwards, that is what it is. But our guys are really, really excited to be here. They've been excited since the start of it, our first game at home. Sometimes it feels like just the court looks different. You're not really sure. Then over time, I think we've seen our group really embrace the Cup. We've earned the right to be here, and I think we're going to attack the game tomorrow and be really fired up to try to go win it.

**Q. I know Mike Brown is part of the coaching fabric of the Spurs. I don't know if you had a chance to get to know him during your tenure there. What do you think about his career and anything you've learned from him?**

MITCH JOHNSON: We did not overlap. But obviously we have a lot of common people because the Spurs have had the fortune to have some good people that have been there throughout the years.

I've had some interactions with Coach Brown over the years. He's obviously had tremendous success at different spots on different types of teams. So it has been something that I have tried to study and steal from, as we do with all the good coaches. I'm not doing anything new or reinventing anything.

When you see sustained success, there's something to learn from. That may not mean that it's applicable for yourself or for your current team. But I think he's always been very organized and very prepared and been able to have success at different stops on the way. So that's something that I've tried to follow and have a pulse of.

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