

# NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Round - UNC Wilmington vs Texas Tech

Wednesday, March 19, 2025

Wichita, Kansas, USA

Intrust Bank Arena

## Texas Tech Red Raiders Grant McCasland

Media Conference



THE MODERATOR: We're going to ask Coach for a statement and then go to questions.

GRANT McCASLAND: What an awesome opportunity to be in the NCAA Tournament. You know, this takes a lot of people to make this happen. I'm thankful to be at a university that loves basketball, that supports, that genuinely cares about our guys. There's not a better community and place to play basketball than Lubbock, Texas.

You know, we're thankful to be here. Obviously playing a tremendous opponent. Wichita is an awesome basketball town. We have a lot of respect for Wilmington and Coach Siddle and what they're doing and how hard they play, and looking forward to tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. Where he heard from Darrion Williams saying he is good to go tomorrow. Where is Chance McMillian at?**

GRANT McCASLAND: Chance is going to be closer to a game time decision. We are confident that at some point we'll get him back. Just hopeful it's sooner rather than later.

**Q. Injuries, does it get more important to try to -- I know every win is a win at this stage, but to build a lead early so maybe you don't have to play some of those players as much early in the tournament?**

GRANT McCASLAND: At this point watching Wilmington on film, having faced them in the past, there's no saving anybody for anything. This is do everything we can to put ourselves in a position to play our best basketball tomorrow. I do believe that's going to take everybody, every second in order for that to happen.

**Q. You are in UNC Wilmington's shoes when it was North Texas taking down Purdue. I guess now being on this side of it, knowing what it takes to be able to knock out a higher seed, what are you having to do to counter that?**

GRANT McCASLAND: Well, I think it's a basketball game, and I think you've got to remember that, that that's the intent is for hopefully 40 minutes you're the best team. Honestly I try to communicate this with our guys as clear as I can.

I think there's enough experience over the course of the season that you play different teams that you have a lot of respect for that may not be nationally known in regards to your guys, but you know how good they are. Our guys respect this now.

We've had to win games where people didn't expect us to be good. We didn't have one player mentioned in an all-conference role in the preseason. We were picked seventh in our league, and we finished up second, which we wanted to be first, and we ended up with all-conference players.

I think our guys uniquely understand it does not matter what other people think. You get 40 minutes to prove you're the better team. That's what our focus has been, and our focus has been how do we get better? I mean, we practiced in preparation for it today, and we went live, and we got after it because we have things we can improve on as a team.

So I just think that's our mindset is play it 40 minutes, get after it, scrap. You respect everybody, and you better get better over the course of those 40 minutes in order to win in the NCAA Tournament.

**Q. Wilmington's coach came in and talked about rebounding is going to be key. They've only lost three or four games when they lost the rebounding battle. How key is rebounding?**

GRANT McCASLAND: Oh, it's huge. It's huge. I have a ton of respect for this Wilmington team because of the way they compete on the glass. When we watched a lot of their



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CAA games, they bullied people, and they do such a good job of winning in the margins.

They've got great size, which I think is unique. They also not only have great size around the basketball, but they got great size at the guard spots. They've got a point guard that's 6'7". They have a big team, and they utilize it well. Not a lot of people utilize it. So we do feel like rebounding is going to be huge in this one and creating extra possessions as well as limiting theirs.

**Q. The toughest team wins. That's what's going to happen tomorrow.**

GRANT McCASLAND: I don't care who you play. That's the way we feel it's going to be. It's fun to watch people shoot it well. We love to make baskets like everybody does, but in this one it will be that first 50/50 that's bouncing on the ball, I'll be interested to see who comes up with it. I do feel like those -- winning in the margins -- is going to determine the outcome of this one.

**Q. How do you feel this team has handled the adversity of this year, and are they as prepared as you wanted them to be at the beginning of this year?**

GRANT McCASLAND: Well, you know, I think any time you get to this stage of the season, you are not confused on what your team is. You know, one thing that we've continued to do is when we've guarded well and we've rebounded well, we've given ourselves a chance to win all those games.

So our improvement in those areas have been what allowed us to have the best road record we've ever had in our league and in the Big 12, that is, for Texas Tech. That's kind of become something that we believe in and we feel like is significant in order to win.

**Q. Over the last week a lot has been made about the number of bids that different conferences have received. What kind of camaraderie do you have among the Big 12 coaches in trying to -- I know you pull for a lot of friends and other acquaintances you have in the tournament, but is there a sense between the collective teams of the Big 12 that are in the tournament that you are really trying to help each other and to try to advance the profile of the conference as a whole?**

GRANT McCASLAND: Oh, no question. Any time you go through the gauntlet of the Big 12 -- and I'll tell you, this year is the first time obviously we played 20 games. Then you add to it that there were no byes. There really was a survival component to this.

You get to the end, and the coaches in this league, man, they're Hall of Famers. What I love about the coaches and the teams is they're not just Hall of Famers in regards to how they've competed historically, but they're like genuine guys that do care about their teams and care about the teams in the Big 12. The willingness to help going into the tournament.

I do know that we feel like we're prepared. Just by the sheer number of teams in the tournament doesn't mean that that league will necessarily have success.

I do think that there's an edge. If you look at the previous champions before UConn, I mean, the Big 12 was well represented. To put ourselves back in the position of competing for national champions, I do think we've got teams in this league that are capable and have the opportunity to do it. There's a lot of help in regard to this tournament and helping each other.

**Q. What would you say is the primary concern when playing against UNCW after having a week to kind of watch them and scout them out?**

GRANT McCASLAND: You know, a lot of teams I think -- they played at Kansas earlier this year, and I think a lot of teams come into this tournament, you don't really know what the makeup of the team is necessarily and their anticipation of how to compete in this. Watching them play and talking to coaches that have played them, they have a championship mentality. I mean, they definitely play the next play.

They don't have a lot of lulls. They've consistently won 20 games under Coach Siddle and finished in the top two or three in that league consistently over the last four years. So I just know that's the way they compete.

Any time you have teams that maybe get in the tournament that catch fire at the end and didn't have necessarily a great season, they've had great seasons every year. I just watch them and know that they're a team that's not going to go away. They're going to compete every second, and you're going to have to beat them. You're not going to go out there and win a game because you played okay. You're going to have to go out there and play your best basketball to win.

**Q. You spoke earlier during the season about how the closeness of teams really do well. I think we were talking about the NFL team, but your team is super close. Can you just talk about how closeness can help? Also, just being March Madness, you're trying to win to advance to play with this team, but also to keep**



**this family of guys together for one more game.**

GRANT McCASLAND: You know, there's a finality to the end of the season that I think everybody can kind of look at it both ways. You can tense up and be, like, man, this could be it, but I do think that love wins over fear. I really do.

There's a genuineness in the way our guys love being around each other. You can try to fabricate it with retreats, which is what we do. You can try to build it by the way you compete, but I think going through difficult times as a team is the best way to see how much they really care about each other. There's been enough of that, whether it be injury, whether it be losses in important parts of the season, but I will tell you sometimes you get to the end, and guys look at each other, and there's a little bit of, like, let's just be okay with whatever happens.

I do think that there's a sincerity in regards to the way our guys love each other and that they don't want it to end. Not based off of, oh, no, what happens if we lose, but because they really do want to go compete. They love basketball, and they love each other. That combination is what I think makes the difference in teams that advance.

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