

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Round - Wofford vs Tennessee

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Lexington, Kentucky, USA

Rupp Arena

Tennessee Volunteers

Igor Milicic

Jahmai Mashack

Chaz Lanier

Media Conference



Q. All of you, looking back, refreshing and hitting the reset button from Sunday in Nashville, it's only been a couple of days. What's that mindset been over the last few days, put that in the rear-view mirror and get everyone ready for the tournament?

JAHMAI MASHACK: Our mentality was to wash it out, reflect on the season, we've had a great season, and to not really sulk in that loss. We've had a great season, an amazing year. And now it's time to wash that SEC Championship loss out and move on to the tournament, get ready for Wofford.

IGOR MILICIC: It was hard to lose that last game, but we gotta move forward and flip the page and be ready for the next game. We got bigger goals for the season, and we gotta try to prepare for the next game.

It was hard, but we gotta flip the page and be ready for the next one.

JAHMAI MASHACK: It was definitely tough. Nobody likes to lose. I hate losing. But like Chaz said, we're not going to sulk in it, we're going to use it as fuel.

And that's something we have always talked about, ever since we had that loss, is using that as fuel to go as far as possible to try and reach the end of this tournament as well, just because we had such a really good tournament and probably the best conference ever.

So we're really excited about being able to do well in there and carrying that momentum into March.

Q. Jahmai, for you personally, what does it mean to be a player that's been -- every season you have been in college in this tournament? How much pride do you take in that? What does it say about the Tennessee program?

JAHMAI MASHACK: It's definitely a blessing. It's definitely something I don't take for granted. For me being able to be as healthy as I've been, being able to have the opportunity to play. Some guys make it there but don't have the opportunity to play because of injuries or outside stuff.

So being blessed enough to be able to be healthy and still

THE MODERATOR: We are joined now by Igor Milicic, Jahmai Mashack and Chaz Lanier.

Q. Jahmai and Igor, you guys have worked maybe all your lives to get to this moment. What's it like being here today about to take the floor for the first time at an NCAA Tournament?

CHAZ LANIER: It's just a blessing, to sum it up in one word, to be on this journey with a great group of guys, a great coaching staff. It just means the world to me. This season has been so much fun. And we still have big aspirations to win it all. So we're in a good place, and I'm excited.

IGOR MILICIC: Like he said, we worked hard to be here, and it's truly amazing to finally be here. It's the first round, and we're pumped up, excited.

I'm excited. It's my fourth year of college, and I've never been to the Big Dance. And I've been looking forward to this my four years. So it's big-time, and I'm definitely, definitely ready.

JAHMAI MASHACK: It's exciting, you know, just being able to be blessed to be here all four years. It's kind of something that doesn't usually happen for guys. So I definitely don't take it for granted.

But, honestly, I'm just happy for the guys that are able to be here for the first time, being able to experience the whole thing. And hopefully we can go as far as any team in Tennessee history has gone.



be able to win and, you know, do it at a great program with new players coming in every year, it's definitely something I don't take for granted.

I'm going to appreciate the moment. I'm going to make sure I take it one day at a time and, like I said, soak in the moment, but wanting to get the most out of this tournament by going as far as we can.

Q. Jahmai, obviously you've been in the program these last four years. Why do you feel like this team might be well suited to make a deep run? What advice do you give guys, having been in the tournament, having experience being a high seed, into making sure you all make the deep run?

JAHMAI MASHACK: Man, I think the biggest difference between this team and all the teams I've been a part of is this team has gone through some wild stuff this year. We've really gone through some really down parts.

And this year has been a rough road and a lot of stuff that people don't even really realize with our guy being injured at the beginning of the season, J.P., us losing players to transfer portal, guys going through mental health stuff.

It's been a really, really hard year for us, times where we all were practicing, and it doesn't even feel like we have enough players to practice. That's something that doesn't happen a lot at high majors.

Being able to fight through all that, go through that adversity, playing in the toughest conference ever, being able to sustain injuries, sustain mental health, and still having each other's back, people don't realize how hard that is.

And I think that's something that this program especially has gone through that no other program has really had to fight through.

I think the resilience that we had, we have Teflon skin, we have tough skin. Having all that experience is going to help us in the long run. I think that's the difference between this team and why we're going to make it far, is the experience.

Q. Jahmai, I know you haven't practiced on the floor. The bus pulling into this place, how -- is it weird to wrap your brain around this is a place where you are playing in the NCAA Tournament game? Because normally it's strapping up for a road fight.

JAHMAI MASHACK: Yeah, it's a little weird playing in an arena like this, but like I always say, I'm never going to

speaking down about the arena I'm playing in because I feel like it creates bad vibes, and I don't want that to happen to any of us.

So I always say I love playing at this arena, I love the gym, I love the courts. And I think that's going to help me if I talk like that. I think I can speak for all of us and say we are excited to play at an arena like this, and we're going to go out and hopefully use the experience that we have played in here as an advantage over the other team.

Q. Chaz, when you look at how you've played this season, how do you feel like your form is going into this game? What would you like to show starting now toward the end of the tournament?

CHAZ LANIER: I feel like I've had a great season so far. I know I still have some areas of growth where I need to get better. That's just my main focus for the tournament, just doing what my teammates need me to do, and my coaches need me to do to get the job done. We all have one common goal in mind, and that's what we're here to set out to do.

Q. Igor, when y'all went back and scrubbed off the film from that Florida game and the rebounding stuff, what was the issue there? It looked like in that game it was as hard for y'all to rebound as it was at any point during the season. What went wrong there?

IGOR MILICIC: We didn't bring the physicality, we had foul trouble. It was just hard that game. We were in there -- our heads were in there. We gotta pick it up and just be better next game. Can't happen again, because we won't get another shot. So we just gotta make sure we bring the rebounding, we bring the physicality, and we bring the fight, and we bring the dog that's been in us all season. That's probably the biggest part.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you for your time.

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