

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Round - McNeese vs Clemson

Wednesday, March 19, 2025

Providence, Rhode Island, USA

Amica Mutual Pavilion

McNeese Cowboys

Javohn Garcia

Christian Shumate

Media Conference



we're just hungry. We got a lot of guys, me, JG, everybody on the team, just thirsty to win, thirsty to play again and thirsty to have more time together around each other and make more moments happen.

JAVOHN GARCIA: Yeah, just going off what Christian said, this year we're more hungry. Last year it was definitely an experience to come here and play, but this year we want to make something, make a run and win some games this year, and just being around each other more and have fun.

Q. For both you guys, we'll start with Christian. We talked yesterday, but just talk about the excitement of physically being here. Are you ready to practice here again?

CHRISTIAN SHUMATE: It's very exciting. Grateful to have the opportunity to be here once again. We're excited to be here, but we're excited to play. We're going to go out and practice today and get a feel for the environment and, you know, just start to get things flowing and getting the mindset to play and win some games, and we are excited to be here.

Q. Anything to add, Javohn?

JAVOHN GARCIA: Oh, sorry. Like Christian said, we're excited to be back here this year. We're going to be practicing today, getting a feel for the court and later on we're going to practice and work on ourselves and see the team we play, what type of stuff they run and stuff like that, so we're excited.

Q. For both you guys, how much did last year's experience give you a better feel for coming into this game?

CHRISTIAN SHUMATE: Well, last year it was good to get the experience, and your whole life you kind of look forward and dream of moments like that. When you get to them, you feel as if that's what you were waiting for the whole time and being able to have that experience is kind of... it's great to have had that experience, but you almost are unsatisfied after having it, especially when you get the opportunity again because you want more and we got a lot of guys on the team who strive more and want to do great things. So now it's good to have had that experience, but

Q. Christian, for you, last year you guys went up against a tall, physical Gonzaga team. This team is very similar. They have five players 6'9" and above. How did you learn from that going up against a physical team?

CHRISTIAN SHUMATE: Yeah, it was... we learned a lot about our team from that game, and I think moving forward from that point and building our team this year, we kind of had that in the back of our minds, and knowing that that was what it was like to play one of those teams. And we had a lot of tests early on in conference to set ourselves up for success within the last year's Gonzaga game earlier on in the season, and I think we have done a better job preparing for the outcome of something like that happening. I think it's something we can match. I think it's something we can overcome. It's something that we can adjust to. And like you said, last year we experienced something like that, I think we're prepared, and like I said earlier, hungry to meet the challenge, hungry to try to overcome it.

Q. I'm wondering if you can go into the Amir thing a little bit. The viralness of it and how did it start? Is this something... the character or whoever he is in all these videos, is that who he is, what he was? How has that helped get this program excited about playing basketball.

JAVOHN GARCIA: It's happened, they just recorded him one game, but he has been doing it every game. He's the same person every day. He's an amazing person to be around. He always comes around and tries to cheer everyone up on and off the court. He's just an amazing type of person and he's a good person to be around.

The hype is, like, real and all that. He's hyping everyone up and has our university really big right now, and I just feel like I love it for him just because that's the type of person he is.

CHRISTIAN SHUMATE: Yeah, I was going to say the same thing. That's who Amir is. He's always been the same person and always uplifting everyone around him, super goofy and that's who he is. He's a funny person. One day it was just a clip of what we do all the time and it caught on. It was super viral and then everybody got a chance to see him how we see him and that was basically the story.

His game? He's nice. He can put a ball in the cup.

Q. Christian, I would imagine after last season you probably had some options to maybe move up to high major if you wanted to and you obviously decided to run it back. I wonder what went into that decision, why were you comfortable staying at McNeese and whatever you are willing to share, what went into your choice of weighing? What went into that?

CHRISTIAN SHUMATE: I was happy. I was happy with my teammates, my coaches. I love the city. I love my coaches. I love my teammates. I just couldn't find a reason to run from happiness, you know? I was fine where I was and I just felt comfortable making that decision.

Q. Question for both of you guys, what about Will Wade drew you to play for him and what makes him a good coach in your mind?

JAVOHN GARCIA: His loyalty is definitely number one, knowing we -- well, me and Christian came from different schools and loyalty is a big thing and he wins. It's hard to not play for a coach that wins and he's loyal to you and he will do anything for you to make sure you're straight after this, and when you're with him, I will say that goes a long way.

CHRISTIAN SHUMATE: Yeah, kind of the same thing. The last question was kind of going into this one as well, my answer. Loyalty means a lot to a lot of people and that's kind of how I look to be, and there were people around us and our team and coaching staff. We were all loyal to each other and we fit in together and we had something good going. So it's kind of easier when you realize those things.

And as far as Wade, all those things apply to him in our relationship that he has with everyone and that's kind of what you look for most and what you want to find in

someone you play for.

Q. Just following up on Coach Wade. He's a Clemson alum. Is that something that's been mentioned at all? I think he talked about you guys don't practice on Clemson football game days. Is that meaningful to you guys to play his alma mater?

JAVOHN GARCIA: It's definitely been a thing. He told us how bad he wants this one and we've just been taking it all in. Everyone as a team, we have been practicing real heavy knowing what's at stake, and it's also Coach Burns' alum, too. They have been telling us about it. We got to get the win for them guys.

Q. And for both you guys, JG, for you first, would you agree that this trip is more business-like for you guys?

JAVOHN GARCIA: It definitely feels a lot different from last year. I said before in the press back at Lake Charles. After the game last year, we were excited to be there. This year, we all have one goal: We're not done yet. We want to win games here, and it can change everyone's life after we win a few games. We all know what we're up against and we have to take advantage of it.

Q. I was going to ask a similar question about last year. Is there some power in going through what you went through last year and it ended so fast and the way it did? Does that stick with you?

CHRISTIAN SHUMATE: Yeah, I would say it does. You got a glimpse of a great experience, but you just know that it can be so much more. I think it kind of just leaves you with a feeling of wanting more, like I said earlier. It's always great to have that experience, but kind of like JG was just saying, last year we thought it was enough to have an opportunity and this year it's more so business.

There's just an overall different mindset from last year's time and this year's time. Confidence-wise, mindset-wise, everyone is ready. We all think we can achieve the same thing as behind our walls and we're ready to show that.

Q. You guys hear the rumors of your coach and all that. How have you stayed focused through all that?

JAVOHN GARCIA: Coach Wade always tells us, don't worry about the outside noise. We just worry about what's going on now. We're going to take one day at a time, one game at a time and just play it like it's our last. We don't care about everything else that's going on with that type of stuff so we're just going to worry about what's going on now.

CHRISTIAN SHUMATE: Yeah. We got a game to win tomorrow, so. That's first.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks so much. All set.

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