

# NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Round - Omaha vs St. John's

Wednesday, March 19, 2025

Providence, Rhode Island, USA

Amica Mutual Pavilion

## Omaha Mavericks

## JJ White

## Tony Osburn

## Marquel Sutton

### Media Conference



that was "wow" for me.

MARQUEL SUTTON: Mine was the welcoming at the hotel. We had a lot of people there cheering us on and cameras and everything, so it was good walking into that.

JJ WHITE: It's hard to answer that question because this whole thing is new for me, so I would say everything has been crazy. The NFL Guy hosted us this week. That was pretty crazy, so, yeah.

**Q. What kind of stands out to you about this St. John's team when you're watching film? What are the big challenges they present? They play pretty intense defense under Coach Pitino. What kind of challenges do you see and any thoughts on going up against Rick Pitino and a legend in coaching.**

TONY OSBURN: Yeah, he's a Hall of Famer for a really good reason. I remember watching Michigan and Louisville as a kid in my basement, so it's a surreal feeling. They're all big, they're going to try to bully you and punk you, and part of our job is to try to compete for 40 minutes against that. That's what makes them so great and that's why they won 30 games and won the Big East.

MARQUEL SUTTON: Yeah, he's a great coach. They're a physical team so we have to match that physicality and we just got to not turn the ball over and hit shots and I think we'll be all right.

JJ WHITE: Yeah, I agree. I think Pitino is a great coach, Hall of Fame coach, the way he gets those guys ready every night, we have to imagine their energy. They come out, play hard and they have plenty of ways to win. If we match their intensity, it'll be a good game.

**Q. Some 15, 16 seeds have won in the tournament. Have you embraced the underdog role and said why not us?**

TONY OSBURN: Yeah, for us, we have nothing to lose. We have to represent our university in the best way.

MARQUEL SUTTON: We're definitely embracing it, just stay connected and play hard and see what happens.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Tony, Marquel, or JJ?

**Q. Just working with Coach Crutchfield over the past year, obviously his experience elsewhere, now that he's a head coach, what's he been like to work with since you have gotten to know him? Just for any of you guys.**

TONY OSBURN: Us three have been here all three years with Crutch. He's meant a lot to us. We built our relationships together, and now we're getting to see some success, and really just day one was believe in everything he's told us because of the great players he's coached, and we're trying to be just like them and now it's starting to pay off.

MARQUEL SUTTON: Yeah, we built the foundation here. He's been really good. He's a great coach. We love playing for him.

JJ WHITE: I knew at those OU days. I know how he felt not getting that job. I feel like he's feeling the fruits of his labor right now, and everything we have done the past three years, it's all a testament to what he does, what he believes in and how he works.

**Q. I wonder if all three of you could tell us something that happened this week that made you go "wow" about that experience.**

TONY OSBURN: Yeah, I think ours is just right now when we saw Tyler Ullis on the Arkansas staff. Me and JJ joked that we watched him growing up and he was a real killer back in the day. Saying what's up to him was my moment

JJ WHITE: Yeah, we're playing with house money. The pressure is not on us, it's on them. We'll see what happens.

**Q. This one could go to any of you guys, but has there been a bit of a vocal leader for any of you throughout this run just on the team?**

MARQUEL SUTTON: I feel like we're all vocal, us three. We're the leaders, they go as we go. All three of us, really.

TONY OSBURN: Yeah, we had really good leaders. It didn't matter the first nine games we won, the older guys showed us how to lead and compete. We're just paving the way for the younger guys, as well.

JJ WHITE: I will give you the answer you want. Tony is our leader. He's been our vocal leader all year. Any time we get into a fight, dog fight, he sits in the coach's chair and Quel doesn't talk a lot so when he does, everybody listens. Stuff comes out of his mouth, all right, let's see what Marquel has to say.

I'm the point guard so they have to listen to me all day playing games. They have been carrying us all season. I play the point guard and be a reflection of the coach.

**Q. You're known for your ability to control tempo but also make big plays when needed. With point guard play being so important during March Madness, how do you control playing that position and keeping your guys in shape?**

JJ WHITE: In my opinion, I think that's the hardest position to play on the floor. I got to be locked in to the scout on report sets, everything they're doing, what they throw at me, coverages, everything like that. It's a testament to the coaching staff and my teammates. As you know, it's been an up-and-down season for us, but when it's up, it's up. Just having that trust with these guys and they trust me, I think I will be fine if I stick to the game plan what my coaches want me to do.

**Q. You mentioned the opportunity of playing with house money, things like that, what this opportunity represents, but what do you need to do? What's the recipe to stay in the game and pull an upset here?**

TONY OSBURN: We have to rebound every possession. That has to be an emphasis. We're kind of the bigger team and impose our will a little bit. It's a completely different ball game here, so every possession focus on that and try to not be sped up, be calm the whole time. They're going to have a great turnout being kind of close, but taking care of the ball, rebound and match the energy and physicality.

MARQUEL SUTTON: Like he said, rebounding, matching the physicality. Can't get punked and it starts from the jump. So we have to be ready from the jump.

JJ WHITE: Yeah, I think it's two things, physical and mental game. Physically it will probably be the hardest physical game we play all year, and mentally it will be. It will be a test and the fans will be here. It will be packed so we have to not turn the ball over and take good shots.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks, guys. Good luck tomorrow.

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