

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

Coach Chris Crutchfield

Media Conference



We have our work cut out for us. They're a very physical team, athletic. They defend you and they probably are one of the best offense rebounding teams in the country.

Q. In the span of your big career, you detoured to high school, to coach high school, right?

CHRIS CRUTCHFIELD: Division II.

Q. How did that help shape you?

CHRIS CRUTCHFIELD: Well, it was during COVID. I took the job and coached my kids for a year in East Central in Ada, Oklahoma, but it was just basketball. You couldn't recruit because of COVID and we were locked into the gym. It was gym and home and it was one of the funner years I ever had coaching basketball, but it gave me head coaching experience, also.

Q. Why was it one of the funnest?

CHRIS CRUTCHFIELD: It was simple. It was simple basketball. There was no recruiting, no scouting reports. It was myself, one assistant coach and our guys the whole time. And back then, it was just limited to what you could do, where you could go, people that could come into your gym. So that's what made it fun, because you got a chance to lock in just on basketball.

THE MODERATOR: Anything else?

Q. What's the recipe for you guys to sort of make this a competitive game tomorrow and potentially pull a shocker?

CHRIS CRUTCHFIELD: I think one is take care of the basketball. Two is going to be able to handle their physicality, and I think the third thing is definitely we have to be able to rebound the basketball. They're a great offensive rebounding team, so those three things, I think, are the major keys, and just staying in the game.

Q. (Inaudible).

CHRIS CRUTCHFIELD: No doubt. We have to make shots. That's been our team identity all year to spread the floor and make shots. That's part of it, to make shots and

THE MODERATOR: Thanks for joining us, Coach.

Q. I was wondering, what was your reaction when you see coaches in your pod all the National Championships and Final Fours they're responsible for?

CHRIS CRUTCHFIELD: Good question. I've been asked that question before. It's definitely a who's who of college coaching and I'm sure a lot of people are asking, who the hell is that other guy in the bracket?

No, it's an honor, and ran into them in the hallway and had great conversations with John and Bill and known those guys for a long time. Happy for the programs to get to this point.

Q. What's it like coaching for your alma mater in March Madness?

CHRIS CRUTCHFIELD: It's an honor just to get to this point and it's even more special since it's my school and I went to school here, and the sense of pride and every emotion you could possibly have, that's what I'm feeling right now just because this is my first time being here and this is my school.

Q. Do you have any history or interactions with Coach Pitino? Any anecdotes with your history with him and the challenge this St. John's team presents? They're going to play defense under Coach P.

CHRIS CRUTCHFIELD: No anecdotes other than the fact I know he's a Hall of Fame coach. Everywhere he's been he's done a great job. Their team is 30-4. No matter what league you're in, if you win 30 games, you're a pretty good basketball team.



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not turn it over and then keep them from getting second-chance points, also.

THE MODERATOR: We have a question coming from Zoom. We're going to try to take this here. If you can hear us, unmute yourself.

Q. All right, thank you. Chris, I was wondering with Creighton being there at Omaha, is that a help or hindrance to you as far as what you have done in three years trying to build a program?

CHRIS CRUTCHFIELD: I would say it's a help. Me and Coach Mac are really good friends. We share on a Coaches vs. Cancer board together and he's been really helpful to me during my time in Omaha, and I think it's fabulous. You can have two good programs in a city like Omaha. Definitely helps us a lot.

Q. When you're going through something like that for the first time with a program, what do you tell your guys? How do you prepare for all the newness?

CHRIS CRUTCHFIELD: The thing I lean back on in my time as an assistant, I have been to several tournaments, but talk to them about a routine, keeping the routine, we're a routine-oriented team. Trying to control your emotions, make sure we don't get too high, too low. The other thing, just do what we have always done. The stage has gotten bigger, the lights have gotten bigger, but let's stay true to who we are as a basketball team, stay true to our scheme and what we have been doing all year, and at the end of the day, it's going to be 40 minutes of basketball that has to be played and around all the hoopla, it's still 40 minutes of basketball that has to be played.

Q. You have coached in a Final Four in Houston as I recall.

CHRIS CRUTCHFIELD: Correct.

Q. It was a hard day.

CHRIS CRUTCHFIELD: I didn't bring that up. You did.

Q. I'm sorry. I was wondering where it's come to rest in your mind as an experience given how great it was to be there but how hard it was while there.

CHRIS CRUTCHFIELD: Well, it was a great experience to get to that level when only four teams are standing. Have a great respect for Lon, what he's done for my career, locked in, Player of the Year at that time in Buddy Hield, we just didn't make any shots. I always reflect to my guys about that moment and getting to that level and what it was

like, and I try to share all those experiences with those guys to help them get through this moment right here what they're going to go through. There's going to be a lot of emotions and anxiety because guys have never done it before. I try to share as many stories as I can with them and try to help them a little bit.

THE MODERATOR: We'll you get out of here, Coach.

CHRIS CRUTCHFIELD: Thanks a lot.

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