

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

Thursday, March 20, 2025  
Providence, Rhode Island, USA  
Amica Mutual Pavilion

## McNeese Cowboys Coach Will Wade Christian Shumate Quadir Copeland Brandon Murray Media Conference

McNeese 69, Clemson 67

WILL WADE: A great game for us. Our first half was flawless defensively. We've been saving that zone all year. We haven't played the 2-3 zone all year. We put it in for some stuff in the conference tournament and never used it. We thought this would be a good time to pull it out so our guys did a great job. We hit our benchmarks. Under Brownell, I think they're 4-15 when you can assist on 12-plus baskets and they shoot under 53% from two and under 38% from three. I left out the 38% because you're going to be hugged up to three-point shooters. I left that out.

But I got what I wanted anyway. We hit all three of the benchmarks that it takes to beat them, and luckily we gave ourselves enough margin in the first half that we could withstand their run in the second half. Out scored them by 20 in the paint, out rebound them.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks, Coach. Questions now for the student-athletes.

**Q. Christian, start with you. Do you think you shocked them with your athleticism?**

CHRISTIAN SHUMATE: I don't know about shocked. I'm sure they probably scouted. They probably did their homework. I think maybe they weren't -- eh, they probably were prepared for it. I don't think it shocked them, no.

QUADIR COPELAND: That's Mr. ESPN right there. I don't



think he shocked anybody.

**Q. Brandon, for you, 14 points in the first half, just talk about that first half and how you guys were able to withstand their runs in the second half as well.**

BRANDON MURRAY: Just having an aggressive mindset and everything, players, coaches just telling me just go, just go. Having that confidence, honestly. A lot of these guys were giving me my confidence and everything, too, so it's really because of the team, so. That's the reason why I feel like I was doing what I was doing in the first half.

**Q. Christian, for you we talked on Saturday what winning a game would mean. You have been at McNeese four years. Talk about what's going through your mind right now.**

CHRISTIAN SHUMATE: It still feels like a dream. I'm sure in a couple of days or when this all is over I'll wake up and look back at it like, okay, that really did happen. But right now we stay focused, we're trying to keep on winning games and we got to this point and we're looking forward and trying to get on to the next one and keep on moving forward. It's an amazing feeling.

**Q. Cope, for you, you said the other day you were 0-2 against Clemson in the ACC. What's it feel like now to get back at them?**

QUADIR COPELAND: It feels amazing especially with these guys. I went to war with them all summer, all winter. To be able to be in this spot and beat Clemson especially. I'm 0-4 against them if you want to count my freshman year, too. To beat them in this situation on this stage, it's amazing. It's amazing.

It don't got nothing to do with Clemson. We could have beat any team in here. It's just amazing to win with these guys.

**Q. Stick with you, Cope. What is it about the guy to your left that has allowed for a moment like this to happen and a lot of moments of success to be a part of now? This is why you're here, right? To be part of a March moment like this. How does that happen here?**

QUADIR COPELAND: Coach Wade made this plan. This is not something that started just now. He planned this since he recruited me in the summer once I entered the program. This is something that's been a goal the whole way and been amazing.

**Q. Christian, if I can just ask you, it's human nature, everybody knows in this room Coach said yesterday to all of us that he was very clear to you guys over the weekend about his situation and the things that were happening with -- yes. And that you guys were also clear to him. You guys had an honest and clear conversation. A lot of times in college basketball now, coaches aren't talking to their players about this type of stuff. They hide from it and their teams have gotten blown out. How much did kind of being clear with each other help lead you to a moment like today and not be distracted?**

CHRISTIAN SHUMATE: I think when you're in a loop and both ends are transparent about things, there's not too much room for conflict. Everybody is aware of everything that's going on, and when there's a clear understanding, everybody keeps the same angle in the front of mind. We'll worry about all of that stuff later. Everybody is transparent on both ends and that's something we worry about later. We're just focused on winning these games.

**Q. Brandon, welcome to the thousand-point club. I just want to talk about the points in the paint tonight, talk about the swagger. You guys were all over the paint tonight, all three of ya'll. Q, Shu, B. Murr. Tell me about it, B. Murr.**

BRANDON MURRAY: I just think we had a mindset from the jump. We went out there and took the first punch and they didn't know how to react to that, honestly. I think we just got to be ourselves. Coach tells us to be ourselves, play with swag. That's what we're going to do.

**Q. Coach, talk about your emotions for the last 24 hours.**

WILL WADE: I have been focused on the game. I have been on one about the game, so whatever else is happening, that's of no distraction to us. I know everybody else, you know, thinks there's distractions and stuff. We operate the same way all the time. We haven't operated any differently. The walkthrough, nothing has been different. There hasn't been a lot of emotion. Narrow focus, the bigger the game, the narrower your focus and it's been absolute narrow focus on winning our first NCAA Tournament game at McNeese State and continue to change -- this is huge for our school. Our enrollment is up 3%, applications are up 10%. We got freaking \$25 million

in advertisements in the last couple of weeks. It's going through the roof. This changes our area, our five parish area. It changes everything.

We have broken every record in the book. This was the last one to get. We want to keep this going. We want to keep this going.

**Q. Will, do you want to share with us what you said to Cope there?**

WILL WADE: They think I'm too honest. Cope thinks I'm too honest. He says, you can sugarcoat it a little sometimes, Coach. You don't have to be quite that honest with everything. So I was joking with him about that.

**Q. For the guys, what do you think this means back on campus to have this win?**

QUADIR COPELAND: We got to get back. I think it would be better if we go to Sweet 16. It'll be better on the campus then. Our goal is not to win one game. That's just one game. We'll worry about the games when we get back.

**Q. This is for Christian being a player there for four years. I know you had challenges in the conference but you were playing mostly in gyms that hold 3,500, 4,000, 5,000 people. You were the first to come out in Providence, it seemed like you really relished the opportunity to go against a power conference team and you almost caught them flat-footed. How hungry were you to immediately make a statement and finally play in a crowd like this when it had been a long time since you had done that?**

CHRISTIAN SHUMATE: I think the preparation. A couple times this season we got put in positions where we got to play somewhat in an environment like this. We learned from those situations and I think we kind of built from it. A lot of learning experiences and I think all of the preparation up until this point has gotten us ready, and I think we were just ready. Everybody, like you said, everybody was hungry. I think since we got here, most of the guys haven't been smiling or happy like that. We were excited to play. We were excited to come out here and play and really beat somebody. That's all we have been thinking about. We've really been on that. We've been on that.

QUADIR COPELAND: We've been on that.

**Q. My question is for Coach. You jumping into the stands there after the game was over. What kind of led you to do that there and where does that moment rank in your coaching career?**



WILL WADE: Pretty high. My president and athletic director here who have been incredible. Our biggest supporters, right there on the front row so why not? Why not? Just incredible. It's a hard trip. I don't know if you try to get from Lake Charles to Providence, it's not an easy trip. I'm the head coach but there's a lot of people that make this thing happen.

I'm low on the totem pole of what actually makes all this work. First and foremost is the players and then you got the donors that allow us to get the players. All that stuff works together. Our entire administration, everybody deserved this. They have gone all in on our program since the day we got there and everyone deserves it. They thought we were a little wacky when we did it but, hey, who's laughing now?

THE MODERATOR: Gentlemen, congratulations. Good luck on Saturday.

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