

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Round - Colorado State vs Memphis

Thursday, March 20, 2025

Seattle, Washington, USA

Climate Pledge Arena

Colorado State Rams

Nique Clifford

Jalen Lake

Kyan Evans

Media Conference



first-round exit last year, so we're ready to try and put some wins together this year.

Q. There was a time this season where you guys didn't have the résumé to even make the NCAA Tournament and now having stamped your ticket, folks are calling you the trendiest 12 seed to make a run and penciling y'all in to an Elite 8 or whatever it may be. How does it feel to have earned that respect and how do you balance the highs and lows as you face Memphis?

JALEN LAKE: I think we just have showed so much growth and resilience throughout the whole year. Like you said, a lot of people didn't believe us because we didn't have the résumé obviously in the non-conference, but we really took that to heart and we showed a lot of growth just throughout the conference and we got a lot better.

So it's obviously a blessing to be back here, so we want to keep things rolling.

Q. I wondered if you guys fill out brackets as a team? Obviously you can't bet but like playing for pride, and if so did you pick any other upsets besides you guys making a deep run?

NIQUE CLIFFORD: I didn't. I don't think most of us picked a bracket. Usually when you're not playing in the tournament, that's when you pick the bracket, but I feel like some of the guys may have made a bracket just to have some fun and picked some certain things, but I don't think any of us three made a bracket this year.

Q. What jumps out about Memphis, keys to their game and what you need to do to try and disrupt them?

NIQUE CLIFFORD: I think they're definitely a really good team, highly coached of course. Penny is a legend. So for us I think it's just sticking to what we do, making sure our game plan is sharp, make sure we're focused. They got two really good players over there All-American type guys.

So I think for us it's just making sure we're locked in on the game plan on them and then making sure we shut their other guys down. Offensively then just doing what we do.

Q. A lot has been made about you and P.J. Haggerty

THE MODERATOR: All right. We're joined by Colorado State. We'll start with some questions from people in the room first.

Q. Jalen, third time at an NCAA tournament. I think in CSU history there's only been one other time that in four years there's been three tournaments. What does it mean to you to be part of that historic run at CSU?

JALEN LAKE: I think it's awesome I've obviously been a part of some really good teams and been a part of a great culture here. So it's an honor to be able to be back here for the third time, so it means a lot.

Q. You've obviously been to a few of these, what does this one in particular feel like when you didn't know for sure that you would be come back this year and to help lead the team to this spot?

NIQUE CLIFFORD: It's definitely a blessing. Surreal being back here. This is your childhood dreams that you grow up working for. So it's always cool to be a part of this tournament in particular and just to be playing in general at this time of year is always something that you got to be grateful for.

So we're just excited to get this thing rolling.

Q. Kyan, you were on the team last year but different, bigger role this year. What's the feeling? What does it mean to you to be part of this?

KYAN EVANS: It's just big time. Kind of like off of what they said, it's just a blessing to be back here. We were a



being two of the best players in the country. Do you look at this stage and this opportunity as a chance to maybe square off against him and prove yourself against somebody who was a consensus All-American?

NIQUE CLIFFORD: I don't really look at it like that. For me I'm just focused on my team and winning. I think those type of things play themselves out and the team that wins, that's usually going to be the player that they consider better in that sense. But I'm just focused on getting better today, making sure that we are locked in on our game plan and ready to go.

Yeah, it's definitely cool to get those type of recognitions and he's a hell of a player. So we're excited to have that matchup and definitely, definitely excited for that.

Q. What have y'all seen when you watch Memphis on film, especially from P.J., what have you learned about his game, things that you didn't know, things that you knew, all of it?

KYAN EVANS: I would just say he's just a super aggressive guy, he's going to be aggressive for 40 minutes. We know he's a high-level scorer and he's got some dudes around him to make him even better. So we just know we got to do a good job on him early.

Q. You got fans all over Colorado, I mean Vanguard, CU, CSU, I want to know what's your message to the young fans who have followed you your whole career, they want to follow in your footsteps about once again being on this stage at this level?

NIQUE CLIFFORD: First off, shoutout Colorado Springs. Yeah, it's pretty cool to be on this stage, to play at the highest level and just inspire the younger generation, kids that look up to me and my teammates.

So just to keep pushing. I feel like my advice would be just don't let nobody tell you what you can and can't do. If you see the vision yourself, you just got to grind every single day, put your head down, work, believe in yourself and the sky's the limit.

THE MODERATOR: All right. Thank you, guys. Thank you.

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