

# NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Round - Drake vs Washington State

Wednesday, March 20, 2024

Omaha, Nebraska, USA

CHI Health Center

**Drake Bulldogs**

**Darian DeVries**

**Darnell Brodie**

**Atin Wright**

**Tucker DeVries**

Media Conference



THE MODERATOR: We have the Drake Bulldogs. Here with me we have Tucker DeVries, Atin Wright, and Darnell Brodie. We will go right to questions.

**Q. What was it like walking back in here?**

TUCKER DeVRIES: It felt pretty good. A lot of memories. I was able to come back this year for Doug's jersey retirement. So being back here and kind of soaking it all in and hopefully being able to create my own memories here as a player would be pretty special.

**Q. What are your memories from here?**

TUCKER DeVRIES: There's plenty of them. Growing up as a little kid, running around the place, probably being annoying, and then obviously getting to see so many great players that played in this building. I feel like a lot of my memories are a lot of everybody else's memories of watching Doug play and all the great teams that were able to win a couple of championships here.

**Q. Tucker, what kind of fan sport are you expecting between the fans from Drake and family friends that you know that are still here in Omaha and then Creighton fans that are jumping on that didn't make the trip to Pittsburgh?**

TUCKER DeVRIES: I expect it to be a great crowd. Hopefully a pro-Drake crowd too. I think it's nice that our fans are able to make the short trip down here and come to the game. There's going to be a lot of Iowa State fans here

that hopefully support us for the first game. And then obviously just the Omaha, Creighton people that were able to get tickets and hopefully they're pro-Drake as well, which we'll take all the fans we can get.

**Q. Darnell, this time of year is when your game seems to elevate. Is there some secret to that? What's pushing you at this time of year?**

DARNELL BRODIE: I don't really know. I guess save the best for last. Just go in and work as hard as I can, give it all I got.

**Q. Your first time here with these guys. What have they talked to you about in terms of being prepared for this tournament?**

ATIN WRIGHT: We haven't really talked much about it. I know we're all locked in. They've been here before. This is my first time. It's a new experience.

Yeah, I mean, the goal is just to stay focused and play well.

**Q. Darnell, with Washington State having a good rebounding team, what kind of emphasis does that put on your role?**

DARNELL BRODIE: They're big. I'm big. I'm going to go in and execute each game as I can. Just do my job.

**Q. This is for Darnell. How would you describe a week like this? Is it mainly fine-tuning your system? Is it a lot of information on the opponent? How would you describe what this week is like?**

DARNELL BRODIE: Going into any game, this week especially, just going in, doing what I'm supposed to do, work hard, lock in. Just the keyword is just locking in.

**Q. I just wanted to ask you about returning second year in a row. What you learned maybe even from last season about playing in this tournament, handling the nerves, the demands, even these kinds of demands.**

TUCKER DeVRIES: I think any time you have experience in something, no matter what it is, it certainly helps. I think last year even with myself not having a very good



performance, our team was right there. I think a four-point lead on a very good Miami team.

That kind of motivated probably a little bit in the offseason and leading up to this point of wanting to get back to this environment, this experience. Hopefully we're able to learn from that and grow from those mistakes that we made and able to cap it off with maybe a different result this time around.

THE MODERATOR: Gentlemen, thank you very much. We have the Head Coach of the Bulldogs. We'll ask him to start off with a statement, and then we'll go to questions.

DARIAN DeVRIES: Excited to be in the tournament again. Really excited to be here in Omaha as well. It's one of those things when our name popped up on the board, there was some excitement in the area from our fans and our team to be able to be this close to home and have so many of our fans being able to come and watch us play. Excited to be here and looking forward to our game tomorrow night.

**Q. First of all, what were the emotions like walking back into this building in a professional capacity?**

DARIAN DeVRIES: I know my son and I, we've spent a lot of time on this gym floor as he was growing up. It's a special feeling to be back, get a chance to play here, play in front of so many people that we have friendships with over the last 20 years.

**Q. Has your father/son relationship evolved at his coach through the Drake years?**

DARIAN DeVRIES: It goes really well when he is making baskets. No. We're having a blast. Our time together, we certainly appreciate. In this profession as he was growing up, you miss a lot of those weekend tournaments because you are playing and recruiting.

Now to be able to spend so much time together and experience it side-by-side is a pretty unique and special deal for a father/son.

**Q. You have pretty good insight as to what basketball is like not only in this city, but the state because you recruited a long time, and you know it. How have you maybe seen the sport just grow in this state? There's four teams from the state in the NCAA Tournament. Obviously Drake's in too. How have you seen the sport grow in the City of Omaha and the state over the time that you were here?**

DARIAN DeVRIES: I think it starts all the way down from

grassroots up to the top. You look at the fan bases and what's going on in the state and how passionate everybody is about basketball. And the youth now, when you're seeing those teams have that type of success and following those players, they want to be like them.

I think it just grows every year that kids have been able to see that and witness that. That's pretty neat to see throughout the state.

**Q. Looking ahead, you are preparing to go up against a team that is really good at limiting three-pointers from opponents. You've had some struggles shooting this season, but you have always managed to get creative, find other ways. Are you looking to kind of dig into this if they find a way to limit you from deep?**

DARIAN DeVRIES: I think they're a really good basketball team, first of all. Defensively they block a lot of shots. They take away threes. They have great size. So they present a lot of challenges for an offense to score. A lot of teams have really struggled to do that.

I would love for us to knock in 20 threes. That would be all right. Outside of that, I think you just have to stick to what you've done all year, try to find different ways to score, adjust as the game goes based on how we're being defended. And hopefully it's good enough.

**Q. You talked about Tucker growing up here. What's it going to be like for Darian, the dad, to see him run out there, especially with the player that he's become?**

DARIAN DeVRIES: Having spent 20 years here and spending so much time on the floor with him, there was a lot of days I didn't see that in his future, to be honest with you. As he has gotten older and had a nice little growth spurt, those things changed a little bit.

Yeah, I'm happy for him to be able to get to play here, a place he grew up, and has so many friends in the area that are going to be in attendance tonight. I know it's certainly something he has dreamed about as he was growing up, so it should be a special game for him.

**Q. I wanted to ask you about the newer guys. They're not new anymore, but you had to kind of rebuild the roster. Talk about your message to those guys. Because Tucker and Conor and Darnell, they've been here, but the other guys, it's their first kick at this can.**

DARIAN DeVRIES: It's a different feel even from a conference tournament. That has a different vibe from the regular season. But this is what you can't get caught up in, the light and the interviews and things. It has to be about



what do we have to do to win this game?

You don't have to be special. You just have to be who we are and stay true to those things. That gives you the best chance to win.

If you try to venture outside of that, you probably are not going to be very successful. I think the biggest thing is just make sure it's about competing for 40 minutes, and everything else is just more on the side.

**Q. Speaking of new guys, when you saw that you drew Washington State, any excitement about having Carlos Rosario on your team, and did you dig into his knowledge at all?**

DARIAN DeVRIES: I think Carlos has obviously some friends on the team and knows them well. They have a former player of ours on their team, so they know us well. I think it's probably an even trade.

**Q. If we haven't covered it already, you spent a lot of time here in Omaha. What were your biggest takeaways from coaching under Greg McDermott?**

DARIAN DeVRIES: Just what a consistent, positive guy he is. The unbelievable success he's had and how the players play for him. The coaches that he's had that have moved on and how he stays so connected to all of us players and coaches. He is one of those guys that I feel very fortunate to have been able to work for and really happy for him and all of their success that he's had here.

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