

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Round - UNC Wilmington vs Texas Tech

Wednesday, March 19, 2025

Wichita, Kansas, USA

Intrust Bank Arena

UNC Wilmington Seahawks

Donovan Newby

Nolan Hodge

Noah Ross

Khamari McGriff

Media Conference

THE MODERATOR: The University of North Carolina Wilmington Seahawks are with us. We have Donovan Newby, Nolan Hodge, Noah Ross, and Khamari McGriff. Questions, please.

Q. You are the core four that your coach talks about. What does it mean to bring this program back to this stage?

DONOVAN NEWBY: I would say it means a lot. The University of Wilmington has a lot of history, being good, being great, won a lot of championships. So to be the group that does it, that got us back there really does mean a lot.

NOLAN HODGE: Obviously it's really special. The community really rallies behind us back in Wilmington. To be able to be on this stage and put on for the city of Wilmington means a lot. Obviously everybody that came before us worked hard for us to get to this point, so it's really special to be in this position.

NOAH ROSS: When we came back this year, it was the four of us that were the core four guys and had a conversation with Coach. This is kind of what we envisioned. The four of us kind of being the anchor and obviously bringing in a lot of new talent. We have a lot of great guys on the team, but to see this come to life after talking about it maybe ten, 11 months ago is really special and rewarding.

Like they said, Wilmington is a great city, and it deserves



all of it, so it's been special.

KHAMARI McGRIFF: To piggyback off what he said, I've been here all four years of my college career so it means something extra special. We've had great teams. We fell a little bit short. I've learned something from Jaylen Sims, Shykeim Phillips, Trazarien White. Just to put all that together and make it to the Big Dance for Wilmington, it's a dream come true.

Q. Coach talks about getting better each week, each game. Was there a moment in the season that you could say, hey, we're there, we're getting where we need to be?

KHAMARI McGRIFF: One moment in the season? I'll say really recently when we had lost those two games in a row at Hampton and Elon at home and then just our energy when we bounced back, we kind of had championship energy ever since those two losses moving forward.

Then we put it on William & Mary and went on a 3-0 to end our conference play. That's kind of when we knew we had what it takes, and we were ready at the right time.

NOAH ROSS: Yeah, I would say the same thing. I think if you asked a lot of the guys in the locker room, they would say the same thing.

We went on a nine-game win streak during the year and then got punched in the mouth with those back-to-back losses, but being able to respond as a group and following Coach's lead on taking everything day by day and getting better each day and then living with the results, ultimately helped us get through that.

I would say that was a big point during the season where we either could have folded or rose to the occasion, and we ended up rising to the occasion. Here we are, so that's definitely the moment I point to.

NOLAN HODGE: We had a player-led meeting, and one of the main points of it was we need positive momentum going into the tournament. Finishing the last three strong, we just wanted to make sure going into the NCAA Tournament we had a positive momentum because momentum can really propel us in a lot of things, so that's



what we did.

DONOVAN NEWBY: Yeah, I would just agree with them. We took that big step. Coach talks about us being player-led, and definitely after those two losses, we definitely stepped up in a major way and became player-led, and it turned out well for us.

Q. You guys haven't played Texas Tech, but you've played North Texas coached by Grant McCasland, Texas Tech's coach. Has Coach Siddle talked about that? Maybe how these teams might be similar and how that might help you guys in your preparation?

DONOVAN NEWBY: Yeah, he talked about it a little bit. We know their coach, he's a good coach, great coach. He wins. We know that with his teams they play physical and things like that. It's definitely going to be, as Coach will say, a UFC fight, all-out war.

We're going to be ready for it, and it's going to be a fun one.

NOLAN HODGE: We know we have to bring our hard hats with this one. Preparing like we did all season, just try to take it one possession at a time and focusing on that.

NOAH ROSS: Yeah, all four of us were here for that game against North Texas. I think that was back in 2022, but that game was kind of a rock fight. We're expecting something similar.

Yeah, a lot of respect for those guys over there, but we aren't just content with being here. So I'm excited for the game.

KHAMARI McGRUFF: Yeah, just playing against them before and watching how they played this year and the past few years with him as the head coach, we know they're going to play hard. It's going to be a fun game, and we love their culture. We like to say we have the same hard-playing, tough, aggressive culture, so it's going to be a fun game.

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