

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 Takayo Siddle

Media Conference



We're going to go out there and compete to win.

Q. Does it make it any more difficult preparing for a team that's had injuries like Texas Tech has been dealing with, specifically their top two shooters specifically with Chance McMillian and Darrion Williams?

TAKAYO SIDDLE: I wouldn't say it's been more difficult. I would say for us, and we've done it all year with teams in our league, if they've had players that haven't played or are coming off injuries, we've always prepared as if they were going to play. That's exactly what we've done for Texas Tech.

Q. What do you remember about most with meeting Coach McCasland? I know you haven't had too much time together. Just from those times a couple of years ago, and do you take much from that game, maybe the schematics of how tough that team played into tomorrow's game?

TAKAYO SIDDLE: Yeah, I took a lot from it. Obviously I didn't watch it. I didn't rewatch that game because different personnel, different place, but when you look at Grant's teams, very competitive, extremely physical. They play extremely hard. I've tried to get that point across to our guys.

If we don't have the fight that we need to have, you know, it can be a tough night for us. But I know we've had that fight all year. I know we'll be ready to compete.

That's really what I talk to them about the most is being ready to fight on every possession. Any loose ball out on the floor, we need to be first on the floor because I know they're going to try to be first on the floor.

If you see the shirts that they wear in practice, "Toughest team wins," the toughest team is going to win this game.

Q. You've been on the cusp of getting to this point a couple of times. Why do you think in your mind this is the team that brings you to the NCAA Tournament and wins that CA Championship?

TAKAYO SIDDLE: That's a great question. You evaluate

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Takayo Siddle.
Opening statement from Coach.

TAKAYO SIDDLE: Unbelievable opportunity. Humbled to be here. Blessed to be here. You know, this group has been very coachable the whole way. They've done everything I've asked them to do. They've worked really hard. They've connected in a major way. They've changed my life in a lot of ways.

So very thankful for them. Very thankful for my staff, the support staff, the administration. What an unbelievable opportunity this is for us. Like I said, blessed to be here.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. What's the biggest concern just looking at Texas Tech's roster for tomorrow night?

TAKAYO SIDDLE: Where do you want me to start? No, very, very good ballclub. Got a lot of respect for Grant and the job that he's done throughout his career. So very familiar with his style.

But when you look at them, first thing that pops out to you is how physical they are on both ends of the floor, how hard they play, how competitive they are. So you have to address that with your team, first and foremost.

Then when you start diving into their personnel, they're pretty deep, and they don't have much drop-off coming off the bench. They have star power, with JT Toppin and some of the other guys on their roster.

I think they're a complete team for sure. Like I said, got a lot of respect for Grant and the job that he's done, but we're going to have our hands full. I know our guys are very excited. I know our guys are ready to compete.



every team that you've had up to this point, and I think the thing that stands out more than anything is how connected we are and how we handled the month of February, how we attacked it. Had great energy. You know, our chemistry grew in a major way.

We worked extremely hard, but I would probably point out our connectedness in the month of February going into the conference tournament.

Q. How was your experience being at the tournament as an assistant help with your preparation now as the head coach?

TAKAYO SIDDLE: Yeah, I think we prepare the same way. We prepare the same way whether it's nonconference, conference, for this moment. We prepare for this moment.

I think one thing that people in this position realize is that their team takes on an identity of the head coach. They feed off of the head coach's vibes and energy, and I've just been really calm and collected. We've been preparing the same way. We haven't made this moment bigger than what it is.

Obviously it's a big moment, but we've just been taking it one day at a time, trying to be great in our process and trying to be really calm and approach this thing the same way we have been all year.

Q. How much does it help having a guy like Sean on your team that's been in this position before and pull off the historic upset? Do you think that kind of benefits other players on your team?

TAKAYO SIDDLE: I think so. I think so. Sean brings a confident vibe to our team. You can see Sean bopping around, listening to his music, singing, and just bringing that confident energy to our team. That's what he's done since we've been here.

I think with the experience that we have on our roster from our guys like Donovan and Noah, Nolan, the guys that are older and have been in the program for a while, they bring a level of confidence to the group too.

We're going to be a confident group overall, and we're going to come out here, and we expect to have a chance to win the game.

Q. You're one of the few midmajors that can match the size of a Big 12 team like Tech. How do you use that to your advantage tomorrow night?

TAKAYO SIDDLE: That's a good question. I think offensively we have to continue to be who we are, and I think that's what's gotten us over the hump this year.

No other team in our league has been able to match our size on the interior. Continuing to throw the ball inside, continuing to be very forceful on the glass offensively, and then being able to -- it's going to be a tall task, but the kid JT Toppin being able to kind of provide some size and stay between him and the basket and make him shoot over a bigger target with our two guys down low is very important.

So while they'll be able to do what they do, I think it will give them problems on the other end defending us with those two guys that we have on the interior.

Q. You mentioned about the size. How big do you think just the rebounding -- Coach McCasland preaches that every week, outrebounding. You're great at the free-throw line as well. Just because of getting those big boards, how big do you think winning the rebounding battle obviously will be tomorrow?

TAKAYO SIDDLE: Oh, it's huge. It's huge. It's something that we talk about a lot. I think we've only lost the rebounding battle five times this year. Every time that we've won the rebounding battle except for maybe one -- I think we tied -- we've won the ball game. It's huge for us.

I think having Harlan Obioha is very huge. Him and Sean Moore, they're our best defensive rebounders. That's a huge stat for us to make sure we focus in on.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

