

# NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Round - Montana vs Wisconsin

Wednesday, March 19, 2025

Denver, Colorado, USA

Ball Arena

## Wisconsin Badgers Coach Greg Gard

Media Conference



**Q. John mentioned (indiscernible) what he wanted to do after his injury. What did you see in his game that made you interested in bringing him to Wisconsin, and how has he made good on that potential this season?**

GREG GARD: Yeah, I think obviously we dug probably deeper into the Colorado State film than we did anything else. His little bit of time at Missouri he didn't play very many games, obviously. And knowing Colorado State's staff, we trusted how he was coached.

Then just getting to know him as a person, I think that's been the biggest thing that's made the transition and the fit so seamless, is just how selfless he is. He's come in with zero ego. He's really coachable.

You would think in this day and age, a guy that's coming in in his sixth year, third school, that he'd come in with a lot more answers than questions, and he's been the exact opposite.

He's been a great teammate. Like I said, he knows he has more to get better at and he has gotten better as the year has gone on.

I think the reason it's been such a good fit and why he's been so successful is because of his selfless mentality.

**Q. Follow up on John. He started one game across his first two seasons at CSU. Obviously by that final year with the Rams he was a starter; goes to Missouri; gets hurt. Did you foresee this big of a leap to the season he's had, or has this exceeded your expectations?**

GREG GARD: Yeah, I don't think anybody would have projected this. If they did, they're not telling you the truth. I think as I mentioned earlier, just how he's gotten better as

the year has gone on.

When he came in in June, we started our summer workouts and it took him quite a while to really be comfortable. Obviously he's learning a whole new system, a whole new locker room of teammates, a whole new coaching staff, and it took him, quite frankly, probably into the early fall to really get his feet on the ground.

Then as the season started in October, he had work to do defensively. He's made great strides on the defensive end. Then offensively I think this system has helped him. It's put him in great position to have success. I think his teammates and how we're able to spread the floor. Then just his maturity, his experience.

He's Steady Eddie. He doesn't get too high, doesn't get too low. Like I said, just the selflessness that he plays with, I think, and how he approaches every day, he's a worker. He's a gym rat.

He's self-made because he hasn't come -- the story of his background, I think he was on the B team as a freshman in high school and didn't get recruited very hard out of high school. He's had to work to put himself in this position.

When you have people like that that put in the time and commit and come the long hard way, I think it's even more gratifying when you see them have success, specifically in today's world.

**Q. What are the pros and cons if there are any of having your son on the team?**

GREG GARD: There's a lot of -- the only cons would maybe be his mom says I don't give him enough minutes. But it's been awesome to have him. I coached him when I was an assistant. We added some of his buddies on an AAU team that I put together when he was like in fourth, fifth, sixth grade, and that was a blast to have him and coach him there.

I think we both kind of always said if we ever had a chance to do it together in college, we would do it. He had opportunities to go to smaller schools and play other places and just said, dad, I want to be with you.

I have to continue to remind myself how special that is and how fortunate I am and we are to have this time together, because you know as a coach you don't -- your family sacrifices a lot. They give up a lot of time because of the travel and just what the profession demands to be successful.

I'll never get all that time back that I missed when he was younger, but I'm trying to maximize the quality of it right now. It's been awesome to walk in every day to see your own son. He's fit great. He's been -- it's hard, I'm sure, for him being the head coach's son and with all his teammates, but he's just one of the guys.

I'm excited for him and obviously his teammates. Just very grateful for this opportunity to have him with me.

**Q. Looking back to last year, you guys got upset by James Madison in the first round. What are you doing differently this year to avoid that again?**

GREG GARD: I think we're in a better place from a health standpoint. We were a little banged up when we came out of the Big Ten Tournament last year. I think we're built differently as a team. I think our depth and kind of how we play is a little different. We've evolved offensively over the last two and a half years.

I think we've also come down the stretch here from really early February on with a plan to be ready for March in terms of how we've scaled back things and our recovery techniques and what we've put in place to help our guys continue to get better.

But in March you have to play what's in front of you. We had a heck of a run in the Big Ten Tournament last week. We're one of the few leagues that finishes on Sunday, so if you're going to play and chase a trophy in that, you're going to end up playing on Sunday.

I think a quick turnaround is actually good for us. I think we've had some pop to us. I think the tournament was good for us, Big Ten Tournament. We got our defensive fight back. I think our recovery and our plan of how we want to approach once we got to this month is right where we need it to be.

**Q. Playing at elevation, what is you guys' plan for that?**

GREG GARD: Yeah, we've done some -- in terms of the recovery and preparation, we've done some things to help them with that. I haven't made a big deal about it because I don't think it's a big deal. We'll acclimate to it, and we've already been working in that process.

It's not going to be any type of an excuse you're going to get from us that -- we've played in a lot of different places. We've played in really hot gyms. We've played in cold gyms when they couldn't get the air-conditioning shut off. We've seen a lot of different environments.

We've got to go play a really good team. That's the bottom line.

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