

# NBA Finals: Knicks vs. Spurs

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San Antonio Spurs

Julian Champagnie

Media Day



**Q. You're one of two New York City guys here in the Finals with Jose [Alvarado]. What does that mean to you? Do you have any memories of facing him in high school?**

JULIAN CHAMPAGNIE: Yeah, means a lot to play in New York for the championship. Obviously, I'm from there. I grew up in Brooklyn, not Staten Island, thank you [smiling].

Being able to go back to the Garden and compete for a championship, it's the best feeling ever.

Then obviously Jose is from the town. I've been around him for a while now. I won't lie, they definitely got the better of us quite a bit when he was at Christ the King and I was at Loughlin. But always good memories. He was a great guard, quick, crafty, feisty. It will be fun.

**Q. What was it like to go out on the practice court and see the big Larry O'Brien Trophy?**

JULIAN CHAMPAGNIE: Yeah, I mean, it was pretty cool. I didn't know that it was hand painted on the court. Walking over it, I'm thinking it's a sticker. I'm thinking, This might be painted.

It was pretty cool. Obviously I've never seen that before. We saw the Larry O'Brien yesterday. That was my first time seeing that in person. Getting all experiences around that trophy, this type of atmosphere, it's been great so far. It's been exciting.

**Q. Steph has had to guard All-Stars in every round of the series. Do you ever just sit back and look at his relentlessness and marvel at it?**

JULIAN CHAMPAGNIE: Definitely. Steph has been great for us all year. He's been our best defensive player other than the big fella down low.

I personally think he's an All-Defensive guy right there, 100 percent. He's taken every matchup with pride. There's not

a night he's not guarding the opposing team's best player.

Shout-out to Steph. We wouldn't be here, this far without his relentlessness. It's been great so far. He's a dog. He's a dog.

**Q. How did St. John's shape you as a ballplayer and as a man?**

JULIAN CHAMPAGNIE: Obviously my coach was Mike Anderson when I was there. He taught me a lot of things about being honest, being coachable, presentable and stuff like that. Also being a team player, finding your role wherever you go.

He's actually coming to Game 1. I'll see him soon. He helped shape me in ways he probably doesn't even know.

Also being from New York and having those kind of fans, that kind of pressure hit on you when you're the guy at your school, stuff like, that it helps you stay poised, even-keeled. It helps you just be ready for any kind of moment, anything that's thrown at you.

**Q. You guys seem to genuinely love each other in the locker room. How did that first build? How has that helped you get through the tough times in the season?**

JULIAN CHAMPAGNIE: Yeah, I mean, obviously a lot of guys were new, pretty much a different team than it was from last year.

Obviously, me, Keldon and Dev and Vic have all been together for about three years now. Then you add guys like HB, Foxy, Carter, Steph, Dyl, all those guys bring a light, good attitude to the locker room.

Obviously we're all ball players, so we all mesh, all do the same things. Also, the team has done a really good job of keeping us together, having us do things in Summer League, where it's team dinner, team activities. You've seen the video of Vic in the pool in the summertime. We all went.

Keeping ourselves connected and combined. We've been doing that since June, July last year. That's why you come



to the locker room, you see us on the court in June this year, it looks like that. It's credit to that. We've been doing that for quite a while now.

**Q. Going back to your New York roots, when you look at your professional story, undrafted, you fought your way through, getting here to the Spurs, earning that role, how does that play into the way you were raised and helped you along the way?**

JULIAN CHAMPAGNIE: Oh, for sure. My parents, in my opinion, I got the best parents ever. They did a really good job of just making sure me and my brother were on the same track, the best track possible, keeping us out of trouble, keeping us in the parks, playing sports.

Like I was saying before, teaching us to be honest, teaching us to be coachable, to be standup kids, stand up for what we believe in and stuff like that. It's been cool.

**Q. On that note, your journey, now you're about to start the NBA Finals, why are you here? Why did you persevere and get to where you are at now?**

JULIAN CHAMPAGNIE: I think it's where I grew up, who raised me, stuff like that, the people I'm around, the people I surround myself with. They do a pretty good job of keeping me on the right track, stay even-keeled and stuff like that.

**Q. You know what it means to New York City to be back in the NBA Finals. On the other side, are you ready to be the villain in your own hometown?**

JULIAN CHAMPAGNIE: For sure. For sure [smiling]. I know a lot of friends who are New York fans. I would love to spoil their plans. I would love to. It would just be fun.

Obviously going back there and competing for a championship is great. I personally want to win, so we'll just see how it goes.

**Q. I know Jeremy [Sochan] probably isn't going to be involved much. Is it good to see him? There's a lot of talk about whether he would get a ring from San Antonio. You're one of the player reps. What are your thoughts on that?**

JULIAN CHAMPAGNIE: Yeah, I mean, it will be great to see Jeremy. That's my guy right there. Spent lot of with him. Love him. Obviously, we'll always be friends.

Right now we're competing for a championship. He's telling his team things. He's doing things with his team. We're doing things with our team. There's no love lost

there. Actually not.

It will be good to see him. That's as far as it goes until after the series.

**Q. Curious about the term 'late-bloomer'. It took you a minute to find your footing in the league. There's so many people who could become late bloomers but don't get the right opportunities. When you look back on your journey, how do you feel about the fact that this door opened up here, what you were able to do with it?**

JULIAN CHAMPAGNIE: Yeah, I mean, one, I'm super appreciative of it. I wouldn't be who I am today without the Spurs organization. I give a lot of credit and really all the credit to them.

I don't know. I think it comes down to opportunity at the end of the day. Obviously, you have to work hard, stay grounded, how could I say it, just persevere, keep your head down, continue to work. Part it is one day hope you get the right opportunity and you just take it.

**Q. Do you know what the Spurs saw in you? Did they ever tell you?**

JULIAN CHAMPAGNIE: Honestly, no. I don't know. I don't know what it was when I got signed here. I was so consumed with just getting waived. When I got here, Coach Pop told me I had a niche, which is shooting the basketball. There were other areas of my game I had to work on, being more nasty, rebounding, playing defense, stuff like that. That's been the working point since.

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