

# National Invitation Tournament: Chattanooga vs UC Irvine

Friday, April 4, 2025

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Hinkle Fieldhouse

## UC Irvine Anteaters

## Russell Turner

## Devin Tellis

## Justin Hohn

### Finals Postgame Press Conference



Chattanooga 85, UC Irvine 84

RUSSELL TURNER: Thank you. Tough assignment coming in here after an incredible game like that that we came in second in. But the team I got this year is legendary. They have left an incredible mark on me, and on our community, our athletic department, our basketball program. Accomplished some amazing things this season that we're going to try to work through this pain and focus on and hopefully be able to use this tough experience to continue to get better.

**Q. Devin, this tournament, as an experience, just the competitive basketball you guys have played, obviously all the wins up to this point, just what's that meant to you?**

DEVIN TILLIS: It's been fun. You know, being able to in a hard game every night is something everybody lives for to compete. Just came up short tonight, so, yeah.

**Q. Justin what will be your favorite memory from this season? What's going to stick out for you?**

JUSTIN HOHN: Honestly, before the year, I told one of our freshman before we played any games, my goal was, aside from winning the Big West tournament, was get 30 wins. Got 32. So I guess that's an accomplishment.

**Q. Guarding their two guards, obviously it was a challenge. Presented a challenge, and then just Huff for you, especially, how much did you have to be present on every defensive possession with him?**

JUSTIN HOHN: We've scouted a lot of guys similar to him. North Texas had Wright who was similar who I played

numerous years when he was at CSUN. Our identity is on the defensive end. So doesn't matter whose number is what. We're not scared of anybody. We're just going to guard him.

RUSSELL TURNER: I thought Justin was outstanding tonight on the defensive end. He's been that way this whole tournament. Just an incredible performance for him, as he's closed out his career, very difficult to think about.

Those big picture questions on a night that hurts this bad but just couldn't be any more proud of this young man, the commitment he's made to our program, to our university, to me as a head coach. Just couldn't be more proud, Justin. Couldn't be more proud.

**Q. I want to ask about Jurian. He had a great game. What's the mental to him and the locker room after such a tough finish to such a great year?**

DEVIN TILLIS: Stay confident. That's all I would say. Never lose your confidence. Obviously JD got thrown in the fire early with Andre Henry getting hurt. He had some ups and downs this season. But just stay the course, keep working and stay confident. He's going to be a great player.

JUSTIN HOHN: There's a lot of things that happened that affected the game tonight. Whatever happened at the end, that's not the big picture. I tell Jerry I don't know every day, he's my roommate, I tell him, he's going to the League. Someone's got to feed him that.

He's a little shy sometimes, but he's got everything that someone making it to the League needs. He's got intangibles. He just needs a kick in the butt sometimes. All love for him. I have immense confidence for him, and I know he's going to be a great player.

**Q. Just this season and this tournament, obviously it's not quite what you guys wanted at the beginning of the year but what has it become for you guys?**

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RUSSELL TURNER: I think the season became more than anybody expected it would. I think this team's overall overachievement is what will be evident in time. It's hard to focus on that tonight with such a difficult loss.

But for us to consistently perform the way that we did, through an incredibly difficult nonconference schedule, we played almost all of our games on the road to a conference season where we won 17 games out of 20 to this run now in the NIT, you know, where we showed our competitive spirit, our togetherness, all the type of things that I think people who follow sports want to connect to and feel a part of, that's what we did for our community.

It's a special thing when that happens. As a coach, lucky to be a part of it a few times. Several times, really. But this was as good an overall season as I could imagine. But I know some will focus on the fact that we didn't win any championships. That's short sighted and a shame. I understand that from young guys and the pain they feel from falling short of their goals but that's a lot of what is great about sport; that you have to go through things that can give you an opportunity to grow. Hopefully our community's support and appreciation for this year's team will also continue to grow.

**Q. You've been able to win so many games on the road and this was a lot like a road atmosphere. Do you think that that atmosphere contributed to it the free throws missed down the stretch? For an excellent free throw shooting team, that was just puzzling, right?**

RUSSELL TURNER: Yeah, for us to miss as many free throws as we did tonight is uncharacteristic. You could attribute that to anything or nothing. Every person who follows the game can make that choice however they want. I know these guys wanted to make their free throws. They wanted to make every play. We didn't make enough of them tonight, barely.

If we had come out on top, we'd have made just enough. That's sport. That's game. That's basketball. That's what we've got to figure out a way to move forward from.

**Q. You talked about the community impact this team has had. I felt it firsthand. Can you elaborate on what this means for students and faculty and workers down at UC Irvine?**

RUSSELL TURNER: I'm not sure the guy to talk about that right now. Hopefully the community of UC Irvine will be able to focus on that going forward. You know, the tough thing approximate sports is that there are a lot of vocal haters that sometimes drown out all the incredible supporters, and what I know that we did with this team was

grow support for our athletics department, for our program, or for these guys, for the way we play, for the things that we accomplish together and the way that we did it; the type of people that we have representing our great university, I think we fit our community in a special way.

It gives me satisfaction when I step back and see that. But some of those impacts that you're asking about are felt more in time than I can easily focus on them tonight.

I just want to say how grateful I am to the NIT committee for seeding us No. 1, and for the way that we've been treated throughout the NIT process. It's been an incredible experience for our school, for our players. The people of Indianapolis could to the have been more welcoming. Created a special feeling for these guys that they talked about before that they will never forget. It's special.

College basketball in Indianapolis is special and Indiana is special, and we felt that, and I'm grateful for it, so thank you.

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