

# Atlantic Coast Conference Basketball Tipoff Media Day

Wednesday, October 25, 2023

Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

## Miami Hurricanes

## Coach Jim Larranaga

## Norchad Omier

## Nijel Pack

### Men's Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Our friends with Miami have joined us here. We'll start with questions for coach.

**Q. Can you talk about the style of the team's play, how it's evolved, what the next evolution of that is?**

JIM LARRANAGA: Well, over the last 40 years, it's changed so dramatically. Almost every season it's all because of the personnel. Whatever my coaching staff and I evaluate as our strengths, we try to emphasize those. Whatever we feel are our weaknesses, we try to limit the number of times that we expose those and try to help those characteristics improve.

When we first got to Miami in 2011, we had a very big team. Reggie Johnson, 6'10", 300; Julian Gamble, 6'10", 270; Kenny Kadji 6'11", 250. We built the team with size, strength, and very good guard play, but still huge guys.

As we moved forward, we adjusted a little bit, but we still had Tonye Jekiri who had size, and we had Dewan Hernandez.

Two years ago when we looked at the roster, our biggest guy was Sam Waardenburg who was 6'10", but not a post player. Really a perimeter player, almost like a guard. He could handle the ball. He could shoot the three. He could drive.

We decided the best approach would be to go to a five-out offense, create a lot of movement, up-tempo. We had some good open-court players.

That team was able to get to the Elite Eight. We were a very hard team to kind of match up and guard even for bigger teams.



Then last year, Sam Waardenburg graduated, Charlie Moore graduated, and we brought in Norchad Omier and Nijel Pack.

Nijel was a natural fit because he's about the same size as Charlie, had a lot of the same skills, great shooter, ball handler, and great quarterback.

The difference was, Norchad Omier, unlike Sam Waardenburg, even though he was 6'10", he was not a great rebounder. He was a great facilitator on offense.

Norchad Omier is the best rebounder in the country. He goes after every loose ball, I don't care if it's practice...

When you have a guy that's relentless and as good as he is as that, you ask yourself is, okay, how do we help him improve at other parts of his game?

Our fans are going to see he is improved in his three-point shooting, his ball handling, and he's still the best rebounder in the country.

We've adjusted to them and they've adjusted to the new style.

**Q. To have the first Final Four in Miami Hurricanes history, you stayed the course with this school and program. What can you say about evolving into the moment? It doesn't just happen last season. This is something you've built over time. What can you say to that?**

JIM LARRANAGA: You know, when my staff and I first arrived at Miami in 2011, we had a team meeting. The first thing we wanted to do is really set the program's style, what we were going to be, by introducing our philosophy.

We talked to the players about the importance of having a great attitude, have a positive attitude. Then the second thing was to make a total and unconditional commitment to the best we can be. We wanted all our players to be role models, behave in a first-class manner.

It wasn't so much about the X's and O's, it was really more



about the characteristics of a good person and a good player. A good player is someone who is a good teammate, a great teammate, someone who is willing to sacrifice for the team, someone who is going to work hard himself, but he's also going to help his teammates work hard, encourage them, cheerleaders for him. Versus, those teammates will cheer him on.

We added Shane Larkin to a veteran group, and he bought into the program immediately. He was a transfer from DePaul. The returning players embraced the new coaching staff and our style very well. So we just built over that next two years. We won the ACC regular season and tournament championship. That makes it a little easier to sell to the next group.

We've had success now, and this is the way we've done it. You need to embrace that and help us continue and let it grow. That's what happened.

Angel Rodriguez, Sheldon McClellan, Kamari Murphy, Tonye Jekiri; they came on board. Davon Reed, they came onboard and helped us get to the Sweet 16.

That was turned over to Bruce Brown, Lonnie Walker, Dewan Hernandez, that whole crew.

I think you said it very well, our success to get to the elite and Final Four didn't happen overnight, it happened over a decade. The guys we have now, like the two gentlemen to my right, have really embraced that.

I'll tell a quick story about Nijel. Everybody was making a big deal of whether these two guys would fit in, be able to have good chemistry. From my memory, he walked into our practice facility and Isaiah Wong was there shooting. They ended up working out together. By the end of the workout they were like best friends.

That's what you want. You want people to embrace other people, who enjoy the culture and the competition. And we have that. We had it two years ago when we got to the Elite Eight. We had it last year. We're working on that right now.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, you can switch places with Nijel. We'll take questions for this young man.

**Q. Can you talk about how much more comfortable you are your second year in the program, how you've evolved your game?**

NIJEL PACK: Yeah, coming in my first year, playing with a group of new guys, learning their games, how to adapt to this program, what it takes to win. The first year was

definitely a learning course for me.

Now being that older guy, that senior, having to be that leader, I feel like just evolve my game so much more, just continue to grow day in and day out.

My teammates always encourage me and help me. My coaches are always pushing me to become a better person, better myself on the court.

I just continue trying to get better to help my teammates and put us in the best positions to win, be successful as a team, try to put myself last, worry about what the team needs to do, what the team needs to worry about to win.

**Q. You heard coach talk about that moment with Isaiah Wong coming in, being total strangers. Bring me to that moment from your point of view. In the world we live in today with transfers, the chemistry is what people talk about. Miami had it immediately from your point of view.**

NIJEL PACK: Yeah, it was great. I can remember built an instant chemistry with Norchad here just because he's my roommate. Living together every day caused us to bond quickly.

The first day, everybody welcomed me with open arms. Isaiah, we worked out together. That competitive nature of is really drove both of us. We really like to see that when both guys are competing.

Even off the court we were bonding well. We always played 2K together. That helped our bond as we played together more and more, grew our bond on the court.

I can say that with every guy on the team. We are all brothers. We want the best for each other. I would say that's why we're so successful, because we truly want to see everybody win.

**Q. Last year you guys, you knew what was coming off the bench. You had a couple seniors... What is that looking like right now? You know what you're going to get from your starters, but how is the bench coming along?**

NIJEL PACK: I think our bench is great. We have some freshmen that are going to be key for us. That's what the whole plan in the summertime is, to help us get ready for these moments. We put in a lot of work. That Paris trip helped us get our games ready, an early test to see what we need to work at.

We have a lot of returners, guys that didn't play as much



this year but are going to see a lot more time this year coming up, expect to elevate their roles. I've seen it throughout the summertime, how many guys, how their game has grown from last spring to now. Now it's going to be time to show it on the court.

THE MODERATOR: Norchad, you can switch places with Nijel. We'll take questions for our last student-athlete.

**Q. A little off-the-court question. How cool is it that you came from Nicaragua and are playing now in Miami?**

NORCHAD OMIER: It's cool. I don't think there's a better Nicaraguan fan base in the U.S. Just amazing in general, but having that community supporting not just me but the team day in and day out is just amazing.

**Q. What can you say about the evolution of this team and just coming together and finding ways to build together. Nijel spoke about how you guys had to kind of being roommates. What the atmosphere has been like off the court in Miami to bring so much success on the court?**

NORCHAD OMIER: I think last year, I can put it as an example, we came in, me and Nijel, like transfers. They welcome us with open arms. We feel like brothers I think from day one.

I mean, this year is just the same thing with the trip to France, having everybody bonding together, getting to know each other better. I think being so close off the court make us so good on the court.

**Q. Last year you started 36 of 37 games, recorded double-digit points or rebounds in 34 of those games. How do you make it look so easy?**

NORCHAD OMIER: I really don't (smiling). I think it's the work that you put in this summer, the off-season, the pre-season, all the practices. You go out, compete against each of our teammates in practice. We are very competitive. I think that's just show in the games.

**Q. A popular question. Do you have to win a championship in order to call it a successful season?**

NORCHAD OMIER: I mean, that's the goal every time we go play basketball. I think me, Nijel, Coach L and the whole team can agree. Coach L say this at the beginning of, like, the first practice, that you got to begin with the end in mind. That's the goal every time when we practice.

I guess to have a successful season, you don't have to win

a championship, but that's what you looking for.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Miami. Good luck this year.

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