

# NCAA 2019 Basketball Championship

Friday, April 5, 2019  
Minneapolis, Minnesota



## Oscar Robertson

## Joe Mitch

## David Teel

## Zion Williamson

USBWA Player of the Year

THE MODERATOR: Ladies and gentlemen of the media, we welcome you back to the main interview room here at the Final Four for the U.S. Basketball Writers Association Player of the Year presentation.

Joining us here on the dais, David Teel of the Daily Press of Newport News, Virginia, he's the president of the USBWA; the executive director of the USBWA, Joe Mitch, also joins us; as does Naismith National Basketball Hall of Famer and legend, the Big O, Oscar Robertson, is here as well. The trophy is named after him.

We're going to let David take it away for the introduction of the dais and for the Player of the Year.

DAVID TEEL: Thank you, Mark. Thanks to everyone for sticking around and joining us early this evening here in Minneapolis. I think it comes as no surprise to any of you that the winner of this season's Oscar Robertson Trophy is Duke freshman Zion Williamson. He becomes the eighth Blue Devil to win this coveted trophy. He is the third freshman, joining Anthony Davis and Kevin Durant. He is also the first freshman to win ACC Player of the Year and MVP of the conference tournament. Zion, congratulations.

ZION WILLIAMSON: First, I'd like to thank God because without Him I wouldn't even be here. I'd also like to thank the USBWA for selecting me as the Player of the Year because there are so many other great players across the country that could have won this award. I'd like to thank my coaches, teammates, managers, and all the staff at Duke because, you know, came in every day ready to work, ready to get better.

This award, I see it as a team award because without my teammates, I wouldn't be here.

I'd really like to thank my mom because she pushed

me. Like after every game, after every practice, she would kind of tell me what I can get better at, what I can do to be a better player. So, really, I thank my mom for everything because I know without her I wouldn't be here. Like I love her, so big thank you to her.

I'm very honored that I was selected for this award.

THE MODERATOR: Oscar, the award is named after you. Can you give a couple observations on Zion and the season he's had as a freshman at Duke.

OSCAR ROBERTSON: Thank you very much for coming out today. As I was talking to Zion back here, I congratulated him for having such a great year. But I also told him, you know, your basketball is all out in front of you. I said, you may not believe it now, but you can get a whole lot better. I think the NBA is fortunate to get a young player like you to go in, along with some other stars, and be very productive.

I know that, when he first came into the league, I was eager to watch him play, and I saw the moves you were making, and you remind me of another player named Maurice Stokes, who played years ago. It's just exciting for me to sit beside you. I'm really honored. You're so humble about the award, which is great. It just means a lot for people to see you play. People here, they hear you talk, and then the next thing is you don't know what team you're going to go to in the NBA, but I hope you get with the right team because you're going to be a tremendous star for the NBA, as I said before.

It's just wonderful to have players like you to enter the NBA because the NBA is a great basketball league, and only for players like you will it go forward. So I'm happy to congratulate you on winning this award.

It's different today. When I won this award, the way you were notified is they'd send a letter to the athletic director, and he told you that you won the award. So congratulations, and I'm very happy for you. For you and the family as well.

**Q. Zion, congratulations on the honor. Obviously, it's a big award, but you're also a huge competitor. What are some of the emotions attached to being**

**here, accepting the award, but not participating in the Final Four?**

ZION WILLIAMSON: I am honored that I was selected for this award. I see it as a team award, like I said, because my teammates always pushed me to be here, and so did the coaches.

But, yeah, I am a competitor. I wish I was here under different circumstances, but I mean, you win some, you lose some, so you just got to move on.

**Q. Zion, you faced all four teams that are in the Final Four, so, A, I'm going to ask you who would be your pick to win it all? But also, if not, what's the one big thing that stood out to you about each of the four teams?**

ZION WILLIAMSON: I'm not going to select any team because, obviously, I want it to be us. I wish all those teams the best of luck. They compete hard. Somebody's going to come out on top.

But the thing about Virginia was how they could control the pace of the game. I don't think I've ever seen them frustrated. So they control the game very well.

Texas Tech, their defense, I mean, they took like nine, ten charges against us, and I mean, their defense was probably the best I played against.

Michigan State, they ran motion offense very -- like great. When the first option wasn't there, they kept running through their plays. I mean, they eventually found open shots.

And Auburn, Auburn's a fast-paced team that can shoot the three ball very well, and I mean, they're very aggressive.

**Q. Oscar, when you came along, you kind of transcended what people had thought a player your size could or should do. Zion, similarly, has kind of changed what we think of a player his size can do. What did you think watching him? Obviously, you guys are different kinds of players, but what did you think watching him and kind of changed what we were thinking of players like that?**

OSCAR ROBERTSON: When I watched Zion, I watched his footwork and his intelligence when he went into the basket because everyone was after him. They were going to double-team him and triple-team him and do all these things to try to keep him from around the basket. He's so gifted and he's just so quick and so high, it's difficult for any one person to guard him.

And as I said before, he's going to get better when he

gets to the next level, which I'm happy about.

**Q. Zion, congratulations on all your success this year. It was a lot of fun covering you. I think we all feel that way. ESPN did have a report this week that there were certain NBA teams you might not want to play for, then they said it was kind of an April Fools' joke. Have you thought about what's next for you, and are there any NBA teams you wouldn't want to play for?**

ZION WILLIAMSON: Whatever NBA team I land on, that's the team I want to -- that's where I want to be. Like whoever drafts me, that's where I want to be. What was the other question?

**Q. Would you be happy playing for the Knicks, or do you have a problem playing for them?**

ZION WILLIAMSON: Yeah, if they draft me, I would love to play for them.

**Q. Congrats, Zion. I was wondering, do you have any specific off-season plans?**

ZION WILLIAMSON: Just enjoy college with my friends and teammates and sit down with my family and discuss what our next move will be.

**Q. Zion, I'm just wondering how much of an influence has Coach K been on you this year, and what specifically has he done to help you acclimate to the college level?**

ZION WILLIAMSON: He's had a big influence on me. You know, just everything he taught the team, like throughout the season, like how to handle different situations, like how to prepare for different things.

One thing that stood out to me with adjusting to the college game was he told me the game was so simple that it's crazy. So he would like break down film about how simple the game could be. I mean, you wouldn't see it when you were on the court, but when you're watching it on film, like the game is very simple.

**Q. What's up, Zion? Previous winners of this prestigious award include big names like Michael Jordan and Kevin Durant. What does it mean to you to be mentioned in the same category as some of the best players to ever compete in the NBA?**

ZION WILLIAMSON: I mean, it's a huge honor to be in a category with those names. Just got to thank God for that, like it's very humbling to be in that category.

**Q. I'm also helping out the Spartanburg paper. What can you say to the folks back in Spartanburg? They haven't had a big-time basketball player come out of there. How do you hope to maybe put Spartanburg on the map?**

ZION WILLIAMSON: I did go to high school in

Spartanburg, but I originally grew up in Florence, South Carolina, so it's kind of hard on which one I'm really putting on the map, I guess. I wouldn't necessarily say it's just me doing this for Spartanburg because there's been a lot of great players that come through there, but I mean, it does mean a lot that I have an impact on Spartanburg.

**Q. Zion, I don't know what the vertical is on that trophy, but it's pretty good. What does it mean to you to win an award like this, named for one of the greatest players in basketball history?**

ZION WILLIAMSON: I mean, it means a lot because, like you said, he's one of the greatest to do it, and I have a lot of respect for him. I mean, me being selected for this, like I can't put it into words, like the fact that he would take notice of me is crazy to me. So I'm like very grateful that they selected me for this.

**Q. Yeah, just to follow up, I know you're disappointed that Duke couldn't be here for the Final Four. As you kind of look back on the game, why do you think you guys weren't able to take the final step? I mean, was it inexperience? Was it maybe defensive breakdowns? Or why do you feel you weren't able to eventually get here?**

ZION WILLIAMSON: I mean, they just executed their plays better than us towards the end of the game. Like I said earlier, they were running a motion offense, and when the first shot wasn't there, they didn't get pressed. They remained calm, then eventually they would find a decent shot. You know, Winston just -- I mean, he kind of controlled the game, like he took over at one point. So congrats to Michigan State, like I wish them the best of luck.

OSCAR ROBERTSON: I just want to say one thing. You said about the game, it was a one-point game. So that can go either way. I thought they played great. I thought Michigan State played great. But it's only one point.

THE MODERATOR: Here's the photo opportunity and the formal presentation of the Oscar Robertson Trophy on behalf of the U.S. Basketball Writers Association to Zion Williamson, freshman player from Duke.