

## Former Roommates To Play Against Each Other Sunday

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Tallahassee Democrat  
Nov. 25, 2018

David Nichols and Joe Cremo have taken the floor together countless times.

When they do so Sunday, it will be as competitors for the first time.

The two were teammates at Albany each of the last three seasons. Each elected to graduate and transfer ahead of their senior seasons.

Nichols enrolled at Florida State (5-0). Cremo was recruited by the likes of Kansas and Duke before picking Villanova (4-2).

Their teams will clash in the AdvoCare Invitational Championship Game Sunday at 1 p.m. inside the HP Fieldhouse at ESPN's Wide World of Sports Complex.

"We both knew it was a possibility as soon as the schedule came out and it's something we talked about," Nichols told the *Tallahassee Democrat*.

"We played each other in practice every day, we're both competitive. We're going to want to win and Sunday we're playing for a big prize."

Their connection at Albany extended far beyond the court as the two also were roommates for all three of their years together with the Great Danes.

"We were roommates for three years so we were very close, we know all about each other," Nichols said.

"I've spent the night at his house before, I know his family, he knows mine, our families know each other."

Cremo and Nichols were both crucial cogs for the Danes over their entire careers there.

Cremo averaged double-digit points in each of his three seasons and hit 45.8 percent of his threes while averaging a team-high 17.8 points last season.

Nichols led the team with 17.9 points as a sophomore in 2016-17 and scored 1,132 points across his three years with Albany.

Nichols and Cremo led the Great Danes to 20-plus wins in each of their three seasons there and a 67-33 combined record, but were unable to lift them into the NCAA Tournament.

They played in the College Basketball Invitational as freshmen and the CollegeInsider.com Tournament as sophomores.

Both are now on teams that are on a trajectory not just to make the NCAA Tournament, but to push for high seeds. That's part of what makes Sunday's matchup so important.

With the jump to improved teams, both have also taken lesser roles. Through six games this season, Cremo is averaging 6.2 points over 20.8 minutes per game. Nichols is serving as the backup point guard behind Trent Forrest and averaging 2.8 points and one assist per game for the Seminoles.

In spite of the smaller roles, they each remain impressed with each other's skill sets from their extended time together.

"I definitely know his game, but you've got to go out there and stop it. He's a pure scorer, scores at all three levels, a bunch of different ways, very talented," Nichols said of Cremo.

Cremo countered by saying, "He's with a different team, he's got a different role now, but I played with him and against him for three years, practicing, competition, battling.

"He's a heck of a player and I'm just rooting for him unless they're playing us."

The Wildcats limped into the AdvoCare Invitational with a 27-point home loss to Michigan followed by another home loss to Furman in their two games before the tournament.

However, they've righted the ship this week in Lake Buena Vista with runaway wins over Canisius and Oklahoma State to advance to the title game.

VU lost its top four scorers off last year's National Championship team, but remains highly talented and is coached by Jay Wright, who has led the Wildcats to two national titles in the last three years.

"There's no doubt that any time you have an opportunity to play for a championship in any sport, at any time, you look forward to that. I've got a tremendous amount of respect for coach Wright," FSU head coach Leonard Hamilton said.

"He's a class act. He does a tremendous job coaching this team and I'm excited about having the opportunity to play against a well-coached team like that because it gives us a chance to play against one of the best and obviously that prepares us for what we know is going to be a very hard-fought ACC race."