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## Rams prepare for unique, best-of-3 championship series

### Related Info

**VCU VS. SAINT LOUIS** *CBI final series (best of 3)*

**Game 1:**at Siegel Center

**When:**Monday, 7 p.m.

**TV:**HDNet

By [Tim Pearrell](#)

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Asked if he could remember being involved in a best-of-three basketball series, Virginia Commonwealth University coach Shaka Smart didn't have to think long.

"When you go to the Y," he said with a chuckle.

The Rams (25-9) won't have much to draw on, other than maybe their pickup-game experiences, when they take on Saint Louis (23-11) next week in the unusual championship format of the College Basketball Invitational.

The series begins Monday at the Siegel Center (7 p.m.), then moves to Saint Louis on Wednesday and Friday for Games 2 and 3 (if needed).

"It's new for all of us," Smart said. "A couple of friends who coach at the pro level, I'll probably give them a call and get their thoughts on how to approach it."

The NBA uses playoff series. Single-elimination usually defines college tournaments.

The Gazelle Group, a sports marketing firm in Princeton, N.J., decided it wanted something to distinguish the CBI when the tournament began three years ago.

"It gives people something to talk about," said Ray Cella, director of media relations for The Gazelle Group. "It also gives you an opportunity to avenge a loss. You lose the first game, it's not over. Our two previous tournaments went three games."

Tulsa beat Bradley in 2008, and Oregon State beat UTEP last year.

The Rams think the format is cool.

"I feel like I'm in the NBA," guard Bradford Burgess said.

Point guard Joey Rodriguez said the only playoff series he's been involved in was AAU baseball.

"We don't usually play teams back to back, so it's going to be really different," he said.

VCU is 17-1 at home this season. Saint Louis, which has the youngest team in the country with eight freshmen, four sophomores and one junior, is 18-3 at home.

Under Rick Majerus, the Billikens allow just 59.7 points per game, the ninth-best mark in Division I.

Scouting reports generally are good for one game because teams have to move on and prepare for a different opponent. That won't be the case in a series.

"It'll be an opportunity to utilize some extra strategy," Smart said. "After the first game, you can watch the tape and learn and make some adjustments. Obviously, the opposing coaching staff will do the same thing. It's a chance to do some different things in the second and potentially the third game."

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