

# National Invitation Tournament: Seton Hall vs Indiana State

Thursday, April 4, 2024

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Hinkle Fieldhouse

## Indiana State Sycamores

## Josh Schertz

### Finals Postgame Press Conference

Seton Hall 79, Indiana State 77

**JOSH SCHERTZ:** Obviously congratulations, Seton Hall. That's a really good basketball team. They showed a lot of heart and fight and made a lot of plays there down the stretch to win the game.

So credit to them. Very deserving champions. Our guys, you know, as they have all year, fought with everything they had. Thought they gave it everything they had. Obviously heartbroken locker room.

Just, I think, you know, that's the hard part of this, is to be great at something, you have to put your entire heart and soul into it, and you know, when you come up short, it's difficult. And that locker room, you know, is right there -- the team that lost the National Championship I was on, guys were sobbing and gutted because you had to put everything you had into it. To be great at anything, you have to be willing to have your heartbroken. Our hearts are certainly broken tonight.

#### **Q. What did this run do for the university community and for the City of Terre Haute?**

**JOSH SCHERTZ:** I think the journey these guys have brought on, the exposure that they have given to our program, to Indiana State, to Terre Haute, I don't think you could do that and you could never bottle it, like what they have been able to do. I don't know if you can put a price tag on it.

Our fans, you know, who have been with us every step of the way, the energy in that building, they have just, you know, that relationship, that connection between community and team is real. These guys, I told them before the game -- in this ERA, it's sad to say but that group in the locker room is a throw back. They are a throwback to an era when things weren't transactional. They care about each other. They enjoy being around with



each other and they play for each other. They play with a joy and a passion and a fight that's rare, and it's obviously captured the attention of not just the community but the country, and deservedly so, because you're not going to find a better locker room and a better group than the one that's sitting in there crying their eyes out tonight.

#### **Q. Those guys, I know they are gutted tonight but they played their hearts out like you said. What was your message to them, in light of this, but also pushing them forward?**

**JOSH SCHERTZ:** I think there's nothing you can say to alleviate how they feel. You know, they are devastated, but I think they have shown over and over again how resilient they are.

And I told them, you know, if you can't end the season with a championship, this is exactly the type of locker room you want to end the season in where guys can not pick themselves off the floor. They are crying. Guys are consoling each other. And they are going to look back and have no regrets, right. Like there's going to be -- it's not like we could have played any harder. Could we have played better? Probably. Could I have coached better? Certainly? Could we have taken the air out of the ball more down the stretch? I mean, you know, maybe. We got four pretty good looks; they didn't go in. The guys who took them, the shots we got, I'll live with that all day.

But if you're not finishing a season hoisting a championship, and only two teams do that, you want, as a coach, to be that locker room when you walk in. You see just how much guys care and how much it means to them. And they will -- when time gives them a chance to heal a little bit, no one will talk out of there then with regrets about hey, we could have given more, could have done this, could have done that. We emptied our tanks as a group.

#### **Q. You mentioned having to replay that last play over and over in your head. Could you walk through that and picture those shots again? Did you think you had the setup right on that?**

JOSH SCHERTZ: Yeah, you know, we really did. I mean, you know, we got two pretty good looks. Robbie has been money all year. In those moments, he's as good a big shot-maker; Isaiah's three in the corner was a good look and I thought Julian's wing three was a good look. They just didn't go in.

You know, but the guys who took them, the quality of shot, you know, like I said, could we have maybe one some more time and done that? I'll have to look at that and kind of review it.

But we gave up two rebounds, offensive rebounds, give up a basket, fouled. Dawes made a big three, and then Davis at the end made a really tough move, but we didn't get a stop either, the last four possessions.

So to close games, you've got to do it on both ends, and we just weren't quite there. I don't think the shot selection was bad. I don't think anybody forced anything. The last shot for Isaiah was a tough one. They did a good job. Dawes did a really job. They didn't get a great piece of that screen and switched out and got a block there. We just weren't able to -- Ryan got that prayer off at the end, but was obviously about an inch and a half too far to the right.

**Q. I have to ask about the elephant in the room. What does the schedule look like for you in terms of dealing with your future?**

JOSH SCHERTZ: Yeah, obviously I'm not going to do anything but it will be in the next -- I'll certainly sit down and I'm going to probably not sleep tonight but certainly try to have a decision in the next, you know, by the weekend for sure on what's going on. Don't want to leave. It's been a great run and I don't want to leave anybody twisting in the wind any more than they have been.

So I'll get to that but tonight is not the time and that's why I didn't want to do it in the season because it's too emotional. There's too many things pulling at you. I won't have a chance to decompress, turn my phone off and sit down and think about what's best for me and certainly these guys will all have decisions to make as well.

**Q. Isaiah led the team in scoring tonight. How do you think he did in this game, reflecting on his year and this game, coming in as a transfer from Southern Indiana?**

JOSH SCHERTZ: Well, the thing with Isaiah is, again, it goes back to a throw back team that. Guy is playing with a piece of loose cartilage floating in his knee and he's playing with a completely torn lateral meniscus in his left knee. Has a complete tear and he's been playing with a complete

tear since early February, and in an era where, hey, guys are skipping Bowl games, or not playing the NIT or whatever.

Like, this dude put off surgery to be there for his team, and you know, like, that's all you know about him. The courage, the toughness to do that; he's not able to really practice. He just gets for the games. I mean, but he's playing through, you know, that loose cartilage floating in there which happened in December. They want to do surgery. Wanted to wait.

And then, you know, the lateral meniscus tear happened in September, and he's going to have to have surgery here ASAP but that guys, his heart, his will, toughness. We went to him there in the last shot. Again, Seton Hall did a good job of switching out, but I've got so much faith in him with his ability to make big shots. He made the huge one there at 74-70 to put us up seven. Man, an absolute warrior. An absolute warrior. Great competitor and an unbelievable human being.

**Q. Reflecting back on this run, what do you think this does in the broader picture for the Missouri Valley Conference, beating all these power conference teams along the way?**

JOSH SCHERTZ: I hope it shines light on the fact that the way the system is set up, there's good teams, and you look at Missouri Valley, we are the ninth-ranked team in the country. You know, when you look at it, and you know, I don't think it gets the respect nationally it deserves, and I hope this run sheds light on the fact of like how good the teams are.

Because we came in here and we played four straight high majors. You know, five if you count SMU. The Missouri Valley prepared us for that. It wasn't like we were in over our heads and felt like, man, we can't meet this level. That's playing in this league, and the grind it puts you threw. It's a gauntlet.

I hope when there's a team in Indiana State's situation, that's on us, because it means we won the Championship but if there's a team in Indiana State's situation where, man, you won 28 games and you're the ninth-ranked team in the country, outright champions, you're shown that you're capable of playing on that stage, that they would give more consideration.

Then the typical what has happened where you go and grab an 18-15 high major team that has been about .500, and that's kind of the way it's gone. But I hope that this maybe shines some light and gives better opportunities to schools, all mid-major schools but particularly Valley



schools in the future.

**Q. It's been 45 years since the 7879 team, still talked about all the time in Terre Haute. 45 years from now, four decades from now, what do you hope people talk about this team about?**

JOSH SCHERTZ: Well, I hope I'm alive to hear them talk about it. I hope that first. That would be good.

But I hope they talk about, obviously, what this group accomplished, but I hope they talk about who this group is. Because who they are is greater than what they have done, and that's pretty impressive because they just won 32 games.

But who they are as human beings, I think it trumps what they have accomplished in between the lines. The way they have connected this community, the way they carried themselves, I told them in there, all the success, all the notoriety, it has not changed them one bit. They are no different. The success does not move them at all. They are still the same great kids come into work, humble, care about each other, treat people the right way; the way they sign for the kids after the games.

I mean, the stuff they have done to connect back, and that support that you saw tonight, is a byproduct of how they have won, how they have played. But it's also a byproduct of how they have treated people and the way they have used their power, their platform. When you have success and you get opportunities these guys have had; the fact that they have stayed humble, treat people the right way, they are kind, they take time. It's so attractive when people use their power and platform for good, and these guys, 1 through 15, have done that.

**Q. You guys were really close to getting to the Big Dance and here tonight you get runner-up in NIT. How much is the message that there's not always a fairy tale ending?**

JOSH SCHERTZ: You know, life is not always fair. You don't always get what you deserve. You know, that's a hard lesson of life. Sometimes you deserve something and it doesn't happen for you. The key is not to allow setbacks to prevent you from opening up your heart again. Like just because you go for something, and you get your heartbroken, and it doesn't work, doesn't mean that you don't try again. You know, that's the key is to continue to put yourself out there, to put yourself into it.

I mean, we put everything we had in this season. We had some heartbreaks. Certainly the Drake game. Tonight; not getting in on Selection Sunday. I told the guys in there,

I'm a better person for having gone on this journey with them. We always talk about, what is the chase building in you, right. Like you're chasing these things.

And it's really, you know, get them or you don't, but it's like, what is the chase building inside of you. Like in these guys, it built resilience and toughness and it built an ability to be willingly and gladly a part of something bigger than yourself. For me, I was just -- I'm inspired by their resilience, their fortitude. I'm inspired by the way they handle suck sets. I'm inspired by the way that they sacrifice and give up for each other. I'm inspired by the kind of teammates they are, the kind of human beings they are. I'm better as a man for having been part of this team and this journey.

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