

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Round - Hawaii vs Arkansas

Thursday, March 19, 2026

Portland, Oregon, USA

Moda Center

Hawaii Rainbow Warriors

Coach Eran Ganot

Dre Bullock

Isaac Johnson

Media Conference

Arkansas 97, Hawaii 78

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Hawaii. Coach, congratulations on a great season. Good game. Begin with an opening statement from you.

ERAN GANOT: Yeah, I'll get to this, but number one, I'm just beaming with pride for everything Hawaii. These student-athletes to my right or in the locker room are hurting. Both can be true: You can be hurt and also be very proud of what they've done in all facets; on the floor, in the classroom, in the community, inspirational to the state, our university, our athletic department, our boosters, our recruits, our administration. I mean, they've checked every box.

There's a finality to this. It's what we all signed up for. It's what we live for. Perspective is everything. I've said this, you've heard me: The ups, enjoy for a sec, get back to work; the downs, let it hurt for a sec, get back to work, keep moving forward. It's okay to be human.

I like our guys' personalities. I'm very thankful to them for what they've done for all of us, and the legacy left behind that gives us a bright future.

I do want to thank or give credit to Arkansas, Coach Calipari, their staff, their kids. They played really well, obviously. I could talk a little bit about more of the game, but obviously not a great start for us. Weren't really there consistently defensively. Liked our offense. Maybe missed some open shots.

They had a lot to do with that. I'll talk more about the



game, but I want to give credit to that great team, wish them well moving forward. There's a reason they won the SEC and are playing really hot.

Last thing I'll say is very thankful to our fans who didn't travel and the ones who did travel. It's an honor to go through this battle with this group who represented our state, our university, our athletic department, basketball, the NCAA, incredible Big West Conference. There are better days ahead.

Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: If you have a question...

Q. Isaac, you could see the emotions coming out as you were saying good-bye to everyone in the stands. What was going through your head, recapping the season, everything that you've been able to do?

ISAAC JOHNSON: We had so much family there today. My immediate family, my parents, my wife, my father-in-law, and then the rest of our Hawaii 'ohana.

I just was so grateful for them, for the love and support that they've given me. When I came to Hawaii, I was newly married, and I had no idea what was going on with life. In basketball I had zero confidence. So for this coaching staff to believe in me from day one, for my teammates the same way, and especially the fans who rallied behind us all season.

I was bummed that we couldn't play today the way that they deserve. But I am grateful for the way we were able to put on all season. It was just a thank you to them. So mahalo to everybody who came to help get us to this point.

Q. Coach Calipari talked about the first five minutes. At one point it got to 20-4.

ERAN GANOT: Thanks for the reminder (smiling).

Q. Obviously it was clear from the outset their athleticism, their speed. They weren't just playing above the rim, they were playing two feet above the rim. Do you think there was a shock factor there as far as the level of athletes and the level of basketball they



were playing in the first five minutes?

ERAN GANOT: Do you want to take that?

ISAAC JOHNSON: We see Dre do it every single day in practice.

But yeah, I mean, they're great athletes. That's what we expected while we were here. We watched film on 'em. We know at the end of the day two points is two points. So it wasn't necessarily a shock factor from the level that they're at. It just was we didn't execute to the point that we should have and allowed them to get easy buckets like that.

Not that we were taken aback or shy from what was happening. It was just basketball, so...

DRE BULLOCK: Yeah, I mean, we weren't surprised. Coaches did a good job for prepping us for scout. We seen they film. They can really fly, get out there, they're fast. Credit to them, they're talented.

Yeah, I mean, we just got to do a better job preparing those first five, six minutes. We just started out on a bad note. I mean, just got to learn and grow from it.

I mean, credits to them.

ERAN GANOT: Yeah, I give them a lot of credit. Sometimes both can be true, where they played well and it could be not a shock from us. Give them credit.

I think what was disappointing in that first, we were talking to our team, they roared back obviously. We missed some good looks. We compounded it. I think we weren't quite there, transition defense for sure where we've been. We had some block-outs when we had some good defensive stands.

I think it would be a disservice to them to say it was a shock. I think it's a credit to them. They were very impressive and they've obviously come in here hot, winning the top conference in the country. They kept it going.

I'm proud of our guys, fought back. It was a deficit that we were trying to manage. A couple times cut it to 10. But give them credit.

Q. We know when something's going on in the islands, people love to rally around it. Being able to represent Hawaii on a national stage, what did it mean to bring that aloha to the national stage?

DRE BULLOCK: It meant a lot. Shout-out to our fans.

Like, they showed up in Portland. They showed up in Vegas. They show up in Hawaii. Cali. Wherever we're going to, our fans are always there supporting us.

Definitely meant a lot. Didn't get the job done, what we wanted to. I'm just happy to put on this uniform, play our hearts out there, leave it all out there on the floor.

I mean, shout-out to the fans, though, for sure. We got the best fans in the world. Result wasn't what we expected, but like I said, I'm just grateful for this experience, going out there for one last time putting on a show, so...

ISAAC JOHNSON: I say Hawaii will always be a piece of home, no matter where I am in the world. I've lived in different parts of Oregon, Utah, Ohio, Germany, now Hawaii. Hawaii will always be part of home.

So I think that's due to the support and the love from the people. Just everyday life, people recognize us, and they're not afraid to show their support and their love for us. That means so much.

I think our team has done a wonderful job of not getting cocky. We have a lot of humility on our team. I think that's what's brought us so far and brought us together so much. It's almost a treat when people recognize us, say hi to us, want to have that experience with us because it also shows us how much we mean.

It's been an amazing experience. We're just so grateful for every opportunity that we've had to represent the state of Hawaii.

ERAN GANOT: I've called it like the power of the Hawaii fan base. There's nothing like it. I really wish everybody could be so fortunate. The love and aloha you feel. We walked out of the hotel, the hotel was rocking. Then we go on the bus, even the walk to the bus. You come out there. We're 2500 miles away from here and we feel like we're at home.

I say that for all our teams. We have (indiscernible) Division I team. We do not have a pro team. 106 years of Hawaii basketball. 106. This group, whenever they walk through the halls into the locker room, there's a plaque of every NCAA and NIT team. There will be a plaque added. I know it hurts right now. There will be a ring prepared. We can look back at this and continue to grow. That's representative of a lot of honor.

The weather, I said when I got out here, everybody talks about the weather and the beauty. They're right. It's the second best part of Hawaii. It's the people. We represent all those people and do it with pride.



THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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