

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Round - Hofstra vs Alabama

Friday, March 20, 2026

Tampa, Florida, USA

Benchmark International Arena

Hofstra Pride

Coach Speedy Claxton

Preston Edmead

German Plotnikov

Media Conference



Alabama 90, Hofstra 70

SPEEDY CLAXTON: Proud of my guys that we went out there and competed. Tough to win a game when you give up 17 offensive rebounds. For a team like us, in a tournament like this, we pretty much almost have to play perfect basketball. And today, we didn't do that. We didn't play well enough to win the game. Credit to Alabama. They were down a really good player. But overall, really thought my guys went out there and fought.

So proud of the effort.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the student-athletes.

Q. For Preston, thank you for coming out here. This is the last place you want to be right now. How important is it to not taint the season with this one game?

PRESTON EDMEAD: We know what we did was special. We look back on that, made history. I'm proud of my teammates.

GERMAN PLOTNIKOV: Same thing. Got to embrace the moment. Not a lot of kids in college basketball get to do what we did. Not just talking about Hofstra, but college players in general, you know what I mean. Hard to get here. I'm happy me and my teammates got here. We're extremely grateful to be here.

Q. On behalf of the whole sports media, thank you, guys, so much for this season and always taking the time for us. It doesn't go unnoticed, and we appreciate it. It's a lot of our last rides. German, what does it

mean to you to be a member of the Hofstra Pride?

GERMAN PLOTNIKOV: It means a lot. Almost at every interview, I say it's been an amazing four years. Heck of a ride under Coach Claxton's winning. He taught me a lot. I've been a part of a lot of great teams, played alongside a lot of great players. Shout out Aaron Estrada, Tyler Thomas, Cruz Davis. The list goes on and on. I'm extremely grateful to be in the position I'm in. We'll see what the future holds.

Q. German, you're four years in. When you look at what Preston did today and what he did all year, the rest of the guys, Cruz, what do you see for the future starting next year with this group? How encouraged are you by where this program is and is going?

GERMAN PLOTNIKOV: I was just telling Preston on the way here, I was going to the waiting room, I was telling him, a heck of a room for you. The hard work he's put in, the sky's the limit for the kid. Every time -- I'll be honest, every time I get to the gym, this kid always beats me. He's in there before me for sure, putting in that work. One of the first people in the gym every time before practice even starts. Preston's already in there sweating, counting out how many makes he had out loud.

I'm super proud of him, super proud of Cruz. I've been playing against Cruz since high school. So I've seen him grow and I'm extremely, extremely proud of him as a teammate, now Player of the Year. Crazy, crazy run for him. We'll see what the future holds for him.

Extremely proud of all my teammates.

Q. German, what do you think made this team different than in years past? You obviously talked about how much you've learned from the losses in the elimination games.

GERMAN PLOTNIKOV: Yeah. I mean, I just feel like -- I always say ever since we won a championship, I always say it takes a village. It's not just players. It's coaching staff. It's the community. It's the people behind it all. I feel like this year, all throughout the year, everyone was dialed in. Coach Speedy was saying in his -- on Selection Sunday, shout out the scout team. Sometimes it was



... when all is said, we're done.®

harder to play against the scout team than against an actual opponent.

I feel like the biggest difference this year was obviously we had everyone so dialed in. Now we're harvesting the results of that.

Q. Preston, what do you think you learned about yourself and what do you think you've learned about yourself this season as a freshman and in the last couple weeks here when your game has really taken off?

PRESTON EDMEAD: I feel like I learned so much. My teammates, my coaches. I feel like they took my game to the next level. And I'm so grateful for them because without my teammates, without my coaches, I wouldn't even be up here right now.

Q. Preston, obviously, you just mentioned it's been a special couple of weeks for you. But you hit a game winner against Towson. You dropped 26 in the championship game to make it here to March Madness. Now another 20-plus point game here leading the way in scoring. How do you build on an unbelievable season?

PRESTON EDMEAD: Stay in the gym with my coaches. The answer is getting in the gym. Not being relaxed, not being comfortable. Staying uncomfortable is what I mean.

Q. Preston, do you have a memory that's going to really stick out to you from this year?

PRESTON EDMEAD: So much. I never wanted this season to end because it was so special. It's too much memories to pick one. Winning the championship, being here right now. Like stepping out on that court, it was amazing. I never wanted the season to end. Too much memories.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, fellas.

Questions for Coach.

Q. It's hard at this moment sitting here. When you see what you did this year and you've got guys like Preston coming back, I'm assuming, hopefully Cruz, what do you look at?

SPEEDY CLAXTON: The future is bright. We're going to bring those two guys back, build around them. They can be the foundation. I'm pretty sure if we bring them back, we'll be preseason number one pick in the league, which doesn't truly mean anything.

As long as those two guys continue to work on their game, which they will, and get better, the future will be bright here at Hofstra.

Q. Coach, when you're preparing a team, you want to make sure there's no stone unturned. How hard was it to know one of their best players isn't playing, and you don't know where those points are going to come from?

SPEEDY CLAXTON: Yeah. We knew -- obviously, we knew that Holloway wasn't going to be playing. But just like when one of our guys is down, it's the next-man-up mentality.

So we knew somebody on their team was going to step up. Tonight, it was the 2 guard. He's their best player. He just raised his game to the next level because Holloway was out.

So it's not too surprising. He had a big second half for them. I think he only had eight in the first half, but then came out and I think had 21 in the second half. So definitely raised his game, and that was pretty much the difference in the second half.

Q. Coach, it feels like a theme this season has been taking a punch and giving a punch right back, whether it's in the win-loss column or starting a game slow and picking up pace. What's the message in the first time-out when you're down by 6 and go on the huge run?

SPEEDY CLAXTON: Just to settle in. We had two crucial turnovers to start the game. I wanted to call that time-out to settle my guys in.

No different from the Monmouth game, we started off a little slow. So wanted to settle their nerves and refocus them. And then we started playing and went on a little run.

Q. Coach, I know there's a lot of emotions right now, but how proud are you of this team and this journey you went on?

SPEEDY CLAXTON: Extremely proud. I knew we had a special time from day one. These guys, there wasn't not one day in practice or a game that they didn't compete. So extremely happy to have been able to coach this team this year.

We made history. We wanted to go further. But at the end of the day, we still did special things here.

Q. Speedy, you talk about bringing those guys back. It's if, right? If they come back.

SPEEDY CLAXTON: Always if.

Q. I guess how much has changed since when you were a player when you could build a program like that and keep these guys coming back?

SPEEDY CLAXTON: The landscape is forever evolving. Hopefully, we are able to keep those two guys. It's going to be our main focal point going into this offseason. So we'll see. Like I said, the landscape is changing. We've got to roll with the punches, and we've got to just -- adjust the best way we can.

Hopefully, those two guys will be back with us and we'll be building around them.

Q. Confident you'll get that done?

SPEEDY CLAXTON: I'm confident, but who knows? The season just ended. We haven't even started thinking about that yet. We'll take a week off and sit down with them, their mentors and kind of see where we're at with things.

Q. Coach, three times in the second half, you got it to 5, but you couldn't get that next stop to get it to one possession. Do you think if it would have been a one-possession game it would have turned out a little different? There's a lot of pressure there now.

SPEEDY CLAXTON: Yeah, yeah. We got it down to 5 a couple times. Then they hit a big shot. Hats off to them. I truly believe we would have got the stop, got the rebound and maybe got a score, it would have changed things. I wish we could have seen that.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach.

SPEEDY CLAXTON: Thank you.

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