

Big Ten Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Friday, March 15, 2024

Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA

Target Center

Nebraska Cornhuskers

Fred Hoiberg

Bryce Williams

Keisei Tominaga

Postgame Press Conference

Nebraska - 93, Indiana - 66

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Nebraska head coach Fred Hoiberg, along with Keisei Tominaga and Bryce Williams.

FRED HOIBERG: I was really, really pleased with our effort. I thought pretty much start to finish we were locked in, gave them a few too many offensive rebounds in that first half, fouled the three-point shooter twice in the first half.

But I just loved how we finished. I think it was a 17-0 run we ended the first half on. I thought Bryce got us off to a really good start. They were trying to go under on some ball screens. Bryce stepped up with confidence. Knocked some shots down.

Hit a few turnovers early. But once we cleaned that up and started making simple plays, we opened it up a little bit. I was really pleased how our guys found Keisei with the little heater he had there in the last ten minutes of the first half. Then we found a little formula. They were a little sluggish in the second. But we didn't want to duplicate what happened in Bloomington where they cut a 20-point halftime lead all the way down to three in about nine minutes.

Good job by our guys coming out and extending the lead a little bit. Again, everybody that stepped on the floor made a contribution. That's what it's all about.

Q. Hey, Bryce, you hit two threes right out of the gate. Keisei got going on that heater in the first half. At what point did you guys know it was going to be one of those nights where the shots were falling and the



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offense was really hitting a groove?

BRYCE WILLIAMS: It's kind of taking what the defense gives you. Both of us are pretty good shooters, I'd like to think. If they want to go under us and disrespect us, then we have to shoot it. Tonight we were making those shots, and we felt confident, and that gave us an early boost.

Q. Bryce, just from your perspective, when Keisei is feeling it like that, what does that look like for you? How are you trying to get him the ball there?

BRYCE WILLIAMS: Easily. I just want to find some way to get him in the action because he can shoot it from anywhere. It's not that hard to get him in action. Whenever Keisei hits one shot, it's find Keisei the next play. That's the goal, and that's what we're going to keep going to.

Q. Keisei, what was that moment like just the end of the half, to kind of put an exclamation point and finish it with that made three-point there?

KEISEI TOMINAGA: It was a good feeling. I didn't think I'm going to do a step-back three, but I saw they switch on me, and I think that was -- I don't know. That was a good feeling.

FRED HOIBERG: I drew up a great play. (Laughter).

Q. Bryce, the shooting and this offense is going to get a lot of attention, but defensively how proud were you guys of your effort, especially inside on their bigs?

BRYCE WILLIAMS: That's the focus. That's the focus every time we play Indiana. Every night, just to be the best defensive team we can be.

They got us a few times, but we limited them, especially with what they wanted to do was play through the two bigs. We got Reneau and cleaned up on the glass.

They got too many 50-50 balls, but at the end of the night, we came out on top, and that's all that matters.

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Q. Fred, you're in the semifinals of the Big Ten tournament. Women made it to the finals. What do you tell all the Nebraska basketball fans that these programs are for real?

FRED HOIBERG: Our fans were unbelievable tonight. I was really happy, and I thought our guys did a good job getting the crowd into the game. I even saw a guy with a Michigan State sweatshirt going crazy after Keisei hit three in a row.

It was a fun game out there, and we got it going like that. But our crowd really got us going and energized us. We went on a little bit of a run. I thought it got really loud.

Yeah, our women, we talked about them, and they really inspired us to show that you can do this in this format. I think, if I'm not mistaken, this is the first time Nebraska has ever been in the semifinal in the Big Ten tournament.

So pretty cool. It's hard to beat a team three times, and Indiana is playing really good basketball right now with five consecutive wins. We just went out there early. Even though we gave them, you know, kind of trading baskets early in the game, once we started getting stops, I think held them under 30 percent in the first half. That's really when we extended our league.

Q. Fred, trying to front their bigs can be a real challenge, but it seemed like your guys did a good job of cutting off lanes and being bodied up to it. Did that work out better than you thought it might?

FRED HOIBERG: They did. They exposed us the first couple games at times. They just threw it right over the top of us. When we did go in the double-team, I thought our physicality and our hands were really good. It wasn't a direct line pass. It was a looping pass that we got our hands on.

That was the real key. Those guys are two of the best in the league, as good a front line as there is in the Big Ten. I felt that everybody that had an opportunity really battled in there. We started digging out some rebounds. Again, we gave them too many early, but once we started finishing off possessions, that's really what fueled our run because we were able to get out in transition.

Q. Fred, you talked about, going into this, just the stage of the conference tournament. A lot of these guys and how they're going to handle entering postseason. I'm sure you couldn't have been much happier with how pretty much everybody put on the floor played under that spotlight.

FRED HOIBERG: I thought we played with great confidence, that's what I really liked. This game is always tough, you've got butterflies, especially with the late game. We sat around the hotel all day long. We tried to get activities. We had a nine a.m. shootaround. We were getting ready to go to the game, I told my staff, hell, it feels like that shootaround was two days ago.

Once the guys got out there, I told them, the lights are a little brighter, the arena is a little bigger than what we've been playing in. Just go and do the same things that made us a really good basketball the last six weeks of the season. That's what we are going to have to continue to do.

We're playing a helluva team tomorrow in Illinois, who gives you matchups problems all over the floor. And when you play this late game and you've got to bounce back and play at 2:30, it's hard. It's really, really hard.

We're going to get our guys out of here tonight and let them sleep. I'll send them a first look. Illinois, we've only played them one time this year. Really have to have a good mental day of prep heading into this one, but that's what this time of year is all about. You've got to get ready, move on to the next one, and hopefully go out and play inspired basketball again.

Q. Fred, at halftime, 17 straight points, Keisei is doing his thing. What was the message at halftime? What was the halftime locker room like? Because I'm sure it was pretty loud.

FRED HOIBERG: The message was, you remember what happened in Bloomington. We were up 20. We were up 23 today at three points. We knew they were capable. We knew they'd come out and heat us up a little bit, which they did. Once we started getting our movement back, they did a really good job. We started playing a two-man game with Rienk and Bryce. And then I thought we cut really well off of that to build the lead up.

I think it got up to 17 or 18 at one point, but we built that lead up to 30 again. Just really pleased how we got back to our movement. We did the things that made us successful in that first half.

Q. Fred, first, any comment on Trev Alberts' departure. And your thoughts on Devin's?

FRED HOIBERG: I was wondering when someone was going to ask me that question. We've got a job to do now. I wish Trev the best in his new journey, Trev and Angie. I'm confident that the leadership will find a really good replacement that will do a great job leading the athletic

department.

I'm all in on this place. I love it. I want to be here. Hopefully we can continue to have success, have sustained success at Nebraska. There's no doubt that we can do it with the fan support, with the facilities that we have. This is a place that is really special, and it's going to attract a really good leader for our athletic department.

Again, I wish Trev the best, but we've got a job to do right now. We're focused. You could see that today with our guys, and it's got to continue. Hopefully we come out and play well again tomorrow. We're going to have to against a really good basketball team.

Q. Fred, Indiana has obviously got a lot of length and physicality. Just how do you think you handled that, especially down low in the paint?

FRED HOIBERG: Yeah, they really do, and they put you in a tough position. Are you going to double them? Are you going to play one-on-one in the post? You've got to spray out to the shooters.

I thought Gunn was phenomenal off the bench. And Mgbako got them off to a really good start. Those guys can really shoot the ball. Cupps and Leal made big plays for this team last night. It's a talented team that's playing really good basketball.

Galloway for me is one of the best players in the league. When you've got to replace that with somebody, they've got to step up. I thought Gunn did a good job of that coming off the bench tonight.

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