

# Pac-12 Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Wednesday, March 8, 2023

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

## Washington Huskies

## Mike Hopkins

## Keion Brooks Jr.

## Koren Johnson

### Postgame Press Conference



competed. We didn't rebound. That's kind of been the Achilles heel. They had 21 second-chance points. If you look at that, we had more foul shots, we made more threes. They killed us in the paint and second-chance points. There was just too many plays down the stretch where we couldn't retain the ball.

It's something we've been working on it, and we've been hurt at it. We got to get better at it. That's on me. We just got to do a better job in the rebounding.

**Q. Slightly off topic, I don't know if you had heard the news that your long-time mentor, Jim Boeheim, had announced his retirement. I didn't know if you had any thoughts on just the legacy that he left behind and what you learned from him.**

MIKE HOPKINS: I did not know that. That's a shock. Arguably the greatest coach, second in most wins, and if the NCAA gave him the wins back, he might be close to No. 1, a national champion. I was a part of that.

A guy who's been doing what very few people can do for a long time, but to be over 50 years at one university is pretty special. He's given his heart and soul to that school. Still surprised they don't have a statue made of him in the middle of campus.

When you think of Syracuse University, you think of Jim Boeheim and you think of the Carrier Dome, and now both of those will be gone, which is very sad. But one of the greats. One of the greats.

**Q. First half offensively it just seemed like there was lids on both sides of the basket. In the second half somebody took it off. What was the difference between the first and second half offensively?**

KEION BROOKS JR.: In the second half we started to move. The ball was stagnant too much in the first half, just stuck. In the second half, we got ball movement, player movement. It gave us gaps to get in the lane, and then some guys stepped up and made some shots.

Wish we would have done that more in the first half, did a

Colorado - 74, Washington - 68

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Washington. Coach, if you would start with an opening statement and then we'll take questions for the student-athletes.

MIKE HOPKINS: First and foremost, I take full responsibility for this season. I felt like we had a chance to really make some steps. We had a lot of new guys. I just couldn't get 'em to where we need 'em to be. It was a new team, had a lot of young talent. Putting them together I had a difficult deal.

Really disappointed for our fans, our alumni, our ex-players, the community of Seattle. It's not our standard. There's no one more disappointed than me because I know the group that we have. We underperformed. I'm excited about these kids. Love these kids. To lose like this, I'm just disappointed for them.

Got to tip our hat to Colorado. It was one of those games, we're new, we've been working on this process. In the beginning of the game we just didn't have the energy needed to win. We fought back. I was proud of how they fought, showed our character. We just couldn't get over the hump.

THE MODERATOR: We'll take some questions.

**Q. Coach Boyle said he thought that the key and the difference in this game as opposed to the previous two games was the ability to get you guys to get into man. Can you talk a little bit about that.**

MIKE HOPKINS: Yeah. We felt we were struggling on both. We played a lot of man in the second half and they shot 58 percent. For the most part, I thought we



better job of moving them around so they couldn't load up and be so packed in with their pack line defense. But yeah, that's how that worked out.

KOREN JOHNSON: I would say the same thing. First half we was very stagnant standing around and watching each other just try to attack and going one and one.

In the second half we kind of pushed it in transition a lot and we opened up gaps by running our aloha motion, where like we dribbling, and then cut, and then get wide open layups.

**Q. Coach Boyle, when he was out here earlier, he said you had 26 in the last game against them and sounds like you were the focus on defense and specifically early in the first half. Did you notice they were doing something different on you tonight than they had the previous two games?**

KEION BROOKS JR.: I mean, I knew I was going to be the point of focus. I mean, just being honest, that's every game for me. I know I'm going to get bodies thrown at me, held, grabbed, doubled, whatever they need to do to try to make me less effective in the game offensively. There was nothing new to me. I should have done a better job in the first half of getting in my spots, hitting my open teammates. So that's completely on me. Coming into the game, like I said, every game I know I'm going to get everybody's best shot because of what I did throughout the season. So it was, whatever they did, tip your hat off to 'em, you could say they did a good job, but I put that on myself.

**Q. Keion, have you made any decisions about your future next season? And then for coach, where do you see kind of the state of the program as this season wraps up heading into next year and maybe your immediate plans from here.**

KEION BROOKS JR.: I know that's a question that everybody's kind of been wondering about and had their mind on. But it would be unfair to staff and my teammates for me to -- if I would have made my mind up I would have had to made it up before the game. That's not fair to them. I don't know what's next for me, per se. I just want to, first of all, thank all of them for bringing me in and giving me an opportunity to showcase what I could really do. Moving forward I'm going to have to have a conversation with coach, the rest of the staff, my teammates and my family and see what's best for me moving forward. But as of right now I just kind of want to let this sink in and be appreciative for everything that they have done for me for my one year here so far.

MIKE HOPKINS: For me, it's not where we need to be. It's

not our standard. Our standard is to be upper echelon, having a chance to play post-season, NCAA tournament. That's what it is. And that's on me. We got to change some things, especially offensively. There's certain areas. But one thing that's exciting is the group of guys that we can return. Obviously Keion hasn't made a decision, a lot of guys haven't made decisions and obviously with NIL and transfer portal and all these things it's still so fresh. But we can, the only player that can actually has to leave is Jamal Bey. And we had a player on all-defense, we had an all-rookie and we had an all-league player, which is really, really exciting. We've got a great player coming in in Wesley Yates. But this program deserves championships, playing for 'em and I haven't gotten it there. But I'm excited for the future. Some changes are going to be made. I take full accountability for it and I'm excited. Trust me, there's no one more disappointed in this than me.

**Q. I know that you had Cole Bajema honored on Senior Night. Is his future decided or might he come back still?**

MIKE HOPKINS: The only player that has to leave based on eligibility is Jamal Bey.

**Q. It was tied with like 1:25 left. Just the difference in that final, sort of 1:25, that allowed it to go to them and to not to you guys.**

MIKE HOPKINS: There was one play where there was a scramble. I'm thinking it possibly was an offensive rebound. They swung it, swung it, swung it and they made a three. It was to take the three-point shot. That was big. Then we came back, I think we turned it over. Actually we didn't, we called a timeout, we ran a play, we turned it over on the baseline to get it to Cole for a three. Sometimes that happens. But when these games come down to it, we had a foul line violation, a couple missed rebounds where we had it that they ended up scoring. It just felt like it was one of those games where we just couldn't get over the hump. We got over it once, but it was a play here or a play there. And when you're playing in tournament play, having a chance to advance that's what it comes down to and we didn't make enough of 'em.

THE MODERATOR: Okay. Thank you very much.

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