

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Round - High Point vs Purdue

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High Point Panthers Coach Alan Huss

Media Conference



together a team and a roster. The transfer portal has certainly helped our rapid ascension to the top of our league. We wouldn't have been able to do this in old times, but we were able to attack the portal and find a couple of kids in junior college, a couple of kids in the transfer portal, and I think our high school kids have done well, as well. The guys have bought into their roles and this year especially. That part as a coach is gratifying.

Q. Thanks, Coach.

THE MODERATOR: Anything else out there?

Q. Hey, Alan. There's been a lot of Greg McDermott assistants going on to do well. Is there a common denominator? What does he do to prepare you guys for being head coached?

ALAN HUSS: Yeah, Coach Mac, it's very basic why a lot of us have found success. He empowers his assistants. If you have the opportunity to work for him, you find out quickly that if you're ready, you're going to be exposed. I was lucky to be able to rattle out the offensive stuff we did there. You want to talk about a trial by fire, you're working for one of the best offensive minds in the games of basketball and he's asking you to run a drill and that's an unbelievable way to grow as a coach. That certainly wasn't unique to me. He allowed a lot of us, three or four assistants every year to kind of run with their particular area and I think that allowed not only me but a number of others to go on and find success.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks, Coach. Right here in the middle.

Q. Coach, as a "Cinderella team" coming in, how do you and your guys approach this?

ALAN HUSS: It was a weird deal for us. We have been done for a week, so we got to watch other people fighting for a spot suffer. That was kind of enjoyable. Once we found out our opponent on Sunday night. I spent a lot of time in the state of Indiana, familiar with their program, so we were able to pivot and put together a game plan. At this point, it's not about Cinderella. Once the ball goes up, it's about trying to win a basketball game, trying to be solid in all aspects and all phases of the game, and we'll try our

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thanks for joining us.

Q. Hey Coach welcome. You were up here earlier having played at high major schools before and having experience with all that. How much do you think that helps translate walking in into a tournament event like this and playing a big ten team, just from the mental standpoint of having been there before?

ALAN HUSS: This season we have not really played any high majors. This will be a step up in class and size and athleticism, all those things. I think the important thing for our guys to understand is just it's another basketball game. Obviously there's more at stake. It's one team goes home at the end of the day, but at the end of the day, we have to stay true to processes and no matter our opponent, we got to do what we do and make sure we make things difficult on our opponent.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks, Coach.

Q. Take us back two years and kind of how you put this group together and how does what's going on right now fit into the vision that you had at that point?

ALAN HUSS: That's tough. We got the job really late because we were in the Elite Eight. I was at Creighton before this and we just started attacking things. I walked in and the best players in my program all told me they didn't like me very much and they were going to go somewhere else. They did so very shortly. The ones that weren't quite as good decided they were going to stay, so we had work to do reconstruct a roster. We finally got a roster kind of put together that I think fit our vision pretty well and what we wanted to do, and a season ago, our best two, most experienced players were both ruled out for the season before they played a second. So we kind of had to reboot again, but it's been fun. It's been fun to try to throw

best to do those things.

Q. I also spend a lot of time in Indiana and I'm curious if you wouldn't mind sharing your thoughts on Darian and getting that job.

ALAN HUSS: Yeah, the state of Indiana is going to love Darian. He coached me. He somehow kept his hair while I lost mine. I played against him as a freshman. He was our GA and then became a full-time assistant my senior year and we have been close ever since. Darian has an elite basketball mind. He works relentlessly and he values skill, skill that I don't know if there's a better basketball state in the country than Indiana. He's going to be able to find plenty of it there and I think the fans will love his style of play. They played a little slower at West Virginia just because he got the job late. They're going to play gritty, run motion, play man-to-man defense. It's going to be a style of play the state is going to absolutely love.

Q. I want to follow-up on what you said about watching everybody else suffer for a week there. What's it like in a one-bid league with the pressure there and how much does it flip coming to this tournament?

ALAN HUSS: We have been a favorite in pretty much every game all year and people don't appreciate how difficult that is. I would rather be the favorite than the underdog, but it makes you have a mental edge. I believe that our guys, we know we're going to get everyone's best shot all season. I think that's the one advantage we have, we move into this space, we have been on edge all season. If we don't have our best stuff, we're walking into an environment, we're walking into a team and it's one of the biggest games or the biggest game on their schedule so I think that's helpful for us, but the one bid stuff is... I haven't been a huge part of that in the past, even back to my playing days. I really been in one-bid leagues and the pressure is real. We were down 15 points in our conference championship game and I would have been the worst coach in the world and they would have been the worst team in the world had we not got it done and still had 28 wins.

Pretty good season. That's the world we live and coach in and we accept the challenge and hopefully it's prepared us for another pressure-packed situation tomorrow.

Q. Building off Nathan's question about how you build your roster, you're getting guys who were "transferring down". What are you looking for in those players in terms of you're probably doing some projection in terms of production and also maybe a mindset of guys who can deal with that?

ALAN HUSS: The transfer downs are the hardest to evaluate. A couple of ours we had pretty solid cheat codes on. Kimani Hamilton from Mississippi State, we recruited him all along the way at Creighton. I wasn't the lead recruiter on him, but I watched him a number of times in club basketball, high school basketball. He had almost no game experience, no meaningful game experience at Mississippi State, but I was able to think back to a long evaluation that was a little bit more traditional in our recruitment of him at Creighton so that helped with him.

D' Maurian Williams had success prior to going to Texas Tech and falling out of the rotation. Those two guys in particular, I think I would love to tell you that I had some equation that everyone else doesn't have, but it was dumb luck, probably in both those situations that we had something we could lean on. That's the most difficult thing about this all. It used to be we had years to develop relationships and understand the human beings we were recruiting, understand the families and the different factors that go into making them the people and players they are. Now that's all sped up and access to information, access to understanding what these kids are about and what makes them tick, that's gold at this point.

Having staff that can get to the bottom of it, let's be honest, people don't always tell you the truth in recruiting. They're trying to help a friend, a player that they coached, whatever the case may be. So getting access to solid information and being able to really identify these kids, especially the transfer downs. It's easy the kids that transfer and we have a sample size at the Division I level to evaluate. Either they fit stylistically, maybe they can do this thing or that thing a little bit differently or better with us than they were able to in their prior system, maybe it's just a straight slide them right from their role there right into ours, but those guys who don't have a large sample size for us to evaluate, that's where the information is critical.

Q. Touching back on your time in Indiana, that stint at La Lumiere, how essential was that to taking over at High Point?

ALAN HUSS: When you're working at a boarding school, those jobs are more difficult than what I do now. You're really doing the exact same thing. You're bringing in a team, recreating that team, but they're not grownups yet. They're still in high school. In many cases, they're 14, 15, 16 years old and they're moving away from home. They don't have the support network. They don't drive yet. They're just... they're kids. You have all the responsibilities that we have now. In addition to that, I had a day job. I worked in the admissions office there. In addition to all that, these kids weren't self-reliant like they are at the

collegiate level.

The beautiful thing about boarding school is you get to learn all these things, fight all these battles, wear all these hats and you get to be the chauffeur and the laundry man and all those things.

I think number one, it humbles you. There's a number of times where you're doing something funny in that environment where you can think back to really look inside or outside. You look around and go how did I end up right here doing laundry at 11:30 in a snowstorm in La Porte, Indiana. That happens. But you make mistakes also at a lower level that aren't scrutinized.

I think as a coach, making mistakes and learning from those mistakes is probably as important to the growth process as anything. I certainly made my fair share, and for me, there were very few people who cared when I made them so I was able to learn without ending my career.

Q. You and Paul, an interesting layer to the matchup. How does your familiarity with him influence your game?

ALAN HUSS: He certainly know what is we're going to do. We sat in the same meetings for a long time. Paul is a great friend, he was instrument in our success. I wouldn't be sitting here without him. When he arrived at Creighton, we went from being a team that kind of did jumping Jacks to becoming the defensive juggernaut that they are now, which is crazy to say. He was such a huge part in that growth process for our program there, but he knows what I'm going to do.

I'm certainly familiar with what Purdue is going to do. There's a familiarity there. I don't know that it makes that big a difference other than I cheer for him when we're not playing against him. I won't cheer for him tomorrow.

Q. We asked you about La Porte, so I guess we should ask you about Culver, too and your time there.

ALAN HUSS: Same deal, Culver is a larger school. You don't wear as many hats as at La Lumiere. My family was fortunate to be in the state of Indiana, northern Indiana for a long time. We valued our time there. My kids were little kids in both these places and grew up on campus and when you start talking about quality of life, working at Culver at La Lumiere, that's a pretty good life.

There's a reason people go to those places and don't leave. It's like stepping back in a time machine. Kids play outside. You have great people and families around.

You're immersed in where you live and work and it's a phenomenal lifestyle.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks so much, Coach. Good luck tomorrow, appreciate it.

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