

# NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Round - Texas A&M vs Nebraska

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FedExForum

## Nebraska Cornhuskers Coach Fred Hoiberg Keisei Tominaga Josiah Allick

Media Conference

Texas A&M - 98, Nebraska - 83

FRED HOIBERG: Congrats to Texas A&M. That team is playing as well as anybody in the country right now with the way they're shooting the ball. It's a tough match-up with the way they drive it. And when they're hitting shots, it's a very tough team to beat.

I thought we got off to a great start. I was really pleased with how we came out with energy. We were shooting the ball well and unfortunately we just traded baskets.

And Keisei got us off to a great start. Josiah was all over the place on the glass, flying in there. Really proud of these two guys for everything that they accomplished this year. But at the end of the day it was a very tough match-up.

As far as, the thing I want to focus on is the positives of this season. We accomplished a lot of things for the first time in the history of the program. Had the second-most wins in the history of the program.

And these guys have such a professional mindset with everything they did, stuck to the core values that we put in place early in the process. And this is going to go down as one of my all-time favorite teams that I've ever coached.

I love each and every one of these guys. The thing that stings more than anything is I'm not going to have a chance to coach these two guys again. I won't have a chance to coach this group as a whole again, and that hurts. That really, really hurts.



And for what these guys did, I'm going to be here for them for the rest of their lives for what they helped us accomplish this year. And, again, went down as one of my all-time favorite groups.

I'm proud of these guys for going out on a really high note with what they accomplished this season. There's a lot of really sad faces in that locker room right now, a lot of tears after that game. But I told them, each and every one, you need to walk out here tonight with your head held high for what you helped this program accomplish.

And when we do get that NCAA Tournament win, these guys are going to get a lot of credit for that, for really laying the foundation for what this thing needs to look like. And they did a lot of great things. And I'm really, really happy that I had the opportunity to coach these two guys.

**Q. I know it's probably raw right now, but just what are the emotions you're feeling right now?**

KEISEI TOMINAGA: Of course it's sad that we lose, but it's also sad that I can't play for Coach Hoiberg anymore or play with my teammates. That's the most sad thing right now.

JOSIAH ALLICK: For me, just at the moment it's just a lot of frustration. Just with myself and just how we came out and laid an egg tonight. Obviously my heart goes out to Husker Nation. They've been supporting this team for decades now. And they came out and they made this a home environment. I mean, we didn't get the job done.

Me, especially, I think I had like three or four missed layups, just like little bunnies. That's eight points right there that could have been closing the gap, making this a game down the stretch, closing it going into halftime, giving us some of kind of momentum.

Plenty of rebounds that I just wasn't involved with that -- obviously they do a great job offensive rebounding, and I didn't do enough on my part to just help out even if I wasn't directly involved.

I mean, I know how badly everybody not only wanted to be



in this position but to make a run in March. I mean, just a lot of frustration right now.

**Q. Obviously they hit a lot of shots from deep, but what made them so hard to defend, in particular, Josiah?**

JOSIAH ALLICK: As you saw, they kept going to that horn stagger play basically the entire second half and were just kind of picking this apart, either driving us one-on-one. Or when we sent the help they were kicking off and obviously shot like 56 percent from 3 tonight.

When a team has just physically imposing, just ball handlers and slashers like that, that are also shooting at a high clip, it's a hard train to stop. And we let them kind of get going in that first half, so they came out in the second one feeling comfortable.

Even though we were making plays, they were responding every single time. So it was just kind of too little too late once we found our the groove in the second half.

**Q. How do you reflect on your decision to come back home for one more year? Now looking back obviously you'll have time in this moment. But what will you take away from this season that you had back home?**

JOSIAH ALLICK: Like I said, I just know how much this team means to this city and to this state and to all the Huskers outside state lines. And I just knew the opportunity that was here and the type of team and staff, and just kind of momentum they had from the previous year.

And I wanted to be a part of that team that kind of gave something back to this community. I don't regret my decision for a second. Obviously I'm frustrated as hell that I didn't do enough to get that done, but I've loved every second of being back home and getting to really get a deeper understanding of this community and just the support this year, just how special Husker Nation is.

**Q. Coach, you mentioned how these guys were the foundation for this season. How can this season be a foundation for future seasons going forward?**

FRED HOIBERG: I think last season was the one that set the tone for this year with Griesel and Bandoumel. I thought they helped flip the culture for where it needed to be.

I think that helped us get Josiah and helped us get Brice and helped us get Rienk. And getting back to this point for the first time in a decade, it's where we want to be, but now

we've experienced it.

The team we played tonight experienced it last year and lost in the first round. So they had experience from being in this tournament. And it's different, all the hype that goes into this time of year.

And for us now, we hope to have a good core coming back to our team next season, and obviously we need to add. We need to get more players like we've built our roster the last couple of years that our fan base can be proud of every time they step on the floor. And I'm confident we'll do that.

It's there. There's no reason this team can't have sustained success. This can't be another decade before Nebraska gets back in the NCAA Tournament. We need to be there again next year.

This is the fun time of year. It's really the only fun time of year. Now that we've experienced it, the guys that will be back, I think, hopefully will handle it the right way.

Not that we didn't this year. We ran into a buzz saw tonight. No doubt about it. That team is hot. They're white hot with the way they're shooting the ball. The only loss in the last seven is to Florida. And I think they were up 22 in that game.

That team, they put you in hell of a tough bind early in the year when they weren't shooting it well. When you look at the numbers, being in the mid 300s in 3-point shooting. That hasn't been the case the last month of the season. That's why they've won six of seven with the one loss maybe playing as well as they have the first half.

It's something where we can look back on this hopefully when we do get over the hump and say that these last two years have really helped us build a program the way that it needs to be built. And we're going to get back here and, like I said, hopefully get us to the point where we're winning games at this time of year next season.

**Q. I'm not sure a lot of people in this city were familiar with the level of support for Nebraska basketball. What did you make of the turnout from the fan base tonight?**

FRED HOIBERG: It was PBA South out there. It was unbelievable walking out there and just hearing the support. And Keisei hit a couple of shots early. It was going crazy out there.

I agree with Josiah, that's what really stings about this, is they would have kept coming. And they would have been

back here Sunday. I think more people would have come down and supported us. We're so appreciative. And it would have been great to share that special moment with them.

They really did appreciate this group. That's why they did come out in full force and with huge numbers.

Anytime our bus drove with the police escort, it was lined with Husker fans. It was fun. It was fun to see -- we've had it all year. Am I surprised? No. Because that's what it's been like. You see it across the board in every sport. Husker fans travel. And they want to see winners.

I'm confident that we're going to be here and we're going to continue on with this. Hopefully next year we get a win and go on and keep them coming.

**Q. What has Keisei meant to you the last three years, Josiah this past year? And what did the end of the game tonight mean to you just seeing their emotion as they walked off the floor?**

FRED HOIBERG: Those guys mean everything to me. With Keisei, to see his growth over the last three years from when he came in very raw, didn't know the language very well, and to see him become a vocal leader for our team -- you see what he does on the court. His play speaks for itself. But what he has done from a leadership standpoint to how he has ingrained himself in the community, he's one of the most popular players not only in Nebraska but in the country.

You see people from all different fan bases just enamored by him. I guess when you're 6'1" and you're not very athletic, you're kind of seen as that underdog and people root for the underdog.

I just love the kid. I told him in the locker room, he now gets to go represent his country in the Olympic Games. How cool is that, for Keisei now to move on to the next phase of his career? That's where it starts.

And then hopefully get an opportunity with the way he shoots and the way he puts the ball in the basket to play in these types of arenas for a long time. He's just got that skill set that's so unique, especially with analytics the way they are now.

Josiah is another guy that has an unbelievable future in front of him. I told him this in the locker room. Kevin McHale said that kid's a pro. He can play. He can play at any level. The way he plays, he has a unique game to where it translates because there's a role for a guy like that kid.

For what he did from a leadership standpoint, holding everybody accountable, setting the tone every day in practice, just overjoyed that he came back and helped us accomplish a lot of really special things this season.

**Q. For Keisei and Josiah, they both brought so much energy this season and you're going to lose that, obviously. Going into next season, how do you replace that and that energy, is that even something you can replace given how special those two players were to you?**

FRED HOIBERG: I had worries that we wouldn't be able to replace Derrick Walker, Emmanuel Bandonmel and Sam Griesel. I thought we did a great job identifying the right guys that could help us get back and even take the next step. That's what we talked with our team, take the next step; going into next year, take the next step. Now it's time to win this time of year. Those guys helped in a huge way.

But they are, those guys are infectious. They bring it every day, and but we got a team full of those guys. We're going to miss those guys a ton. We're going to miss them every day, but we'll get some good ones in here and that starts -- portal's open. This thing starts now.

Used to be able to breathe a little bit when this thing ended. You don't get to do that anymore. It's right back to work. You're already making calls and doing that type of thing. We're going to meet with all of our players individually over the next couple of days and figure out how to best construct the roster to help us get over this hump.

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