

National Invitation Tournament: Tulsa vs New Mexico

Wednesday, April 1, 2026

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Hinkle Fieldhouse

Tulsa Golden Hurricane

Eric Konkol

David Green

Miles Barnstable

Semifinal Pregame Press Conference



ERIC KONKOL: It's great to be here and represent the University of Tulsa and be in Indianapolis in what I've told our team is really the basketball epicenter of the world this weekend.

What a cool event to be here with all the different tournaments, NCAA Division I, II, III, of course, the NIT. It's been a special season for us led by these guys and their teammates.

Really looking forward to playing a very good New Mexico team, and being a part of the NIT. It's got great history, as does Hinkle Fieldhouse. All the things that are wrapped into this weekend, we're proud to be a part of.

Q. You obviously played for Coach a handful of years back. This is your fourth stop. During your collegiate career, what made you want to come back and play for Coach Konkol, and how do you feel like -- or what has been the catalyst for the year that you've had?

DAVID GREEN: What made me want to come back was we have a good relationship, me and Konkol. He knows me. Knows my family. And you know, he pursued me, the coaching staff pursued me, and was on me about getting the extra year.

So I felt like with all their persistence that it would be a right decision to come here and have my final year be here.

And I think the driving force behind us having a good year is just the camaraderie we have as a team and the fact that everybody is in it for the same goal. Everybody want to win. Nobody care who gets the credit. So I think that's the biggest force behind it.

Q. I'll ask both of you guys: At what point in the season did you think you had something pretty special?

MILES BARNSTABLE: Me personally, I was really surprised at the team and excited for it even in the summer, especially when we were getting into August and kind of starting the school year. I was really surprised with how good we were playing with each other and how much talent we really had on the roster.

Me personally, I think it's probably the best team I've ever been a part of, and I kind of could see that right in the beginning and I could see that if we did come together like we have that it would be a really special year for us.

DAVID GREEN: For me, I didn't really do my homework on my teammates before coming here. So I really just made a blind decision to trust Konkol and what he had going and the guys he brought in.

But as we started going and I started seeing who we brought in and how they complement each other, I was like, yeah, we have a chance to be special if we just stick together.

Q. Miles, your story is amazing, starting at a DIII school, taking them to a Final Four. You've been an All-Conference player at the Division I level. When you look around and you're now in the Final Four of the NIT, is this what you envisioned or is this way beyond your wildest imagination when you got to college?

MILES BARNSTABLE: No. This is -- I did not envision this at all. Like if you would have asked me at all where I think I'd be, my first year of college, this is not even close to what I'd say. I didn't -- like I think about this a lot, actually.

Like it's just so crazy from where I started to where I'm going to finish my college career and how cool it would be to be able to get to the Final Four my first year and then end up at another Final Four in the NIT. It's just so cool to

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me.

Q. David, most graduate seniors would, if they have an injury like yours where you pop your shoulder out, won't come back and just focus on what's next. But you came back and you're finishing out, you know, with this team. What kind of was that driving force to do that?

DAVID GREEN: I think it was just the fact that, you know, the guys were playing so well. The two games we were out -- I mean, I was out. So I just felt like it's only right for me to come back and try to give whatever I had left to my team. I didn't want to go down to the same team we had already lost two in the quarterfinal.

So it was just like, I just wanted to win. I just wanted to keep going. I didn't really care. I know I'm going to be taken care of. I have good training staff, good coaches, they care about me. They wouldn't do anything to put me in a position to hurt me, so I figured just come back and give what I got.

Q. You've had a week to get to know their personnel, New Mexico's personnel. Almost like a Bowl game prep period. How well do you feel you know New Mexico's personnel and how do you feel about the matchup?

MILES BARNSTABLE: We're feeling pretty good about it. We feel like we're pretty detailed in what we need to understand and just being able to execute what the game plan is for us, and just we're feeling pretty good about it.

DAVID GREEN: What Miles said. I think we have a good understanding of how they play basketball, how they like their tendencies. It's just about executing the game plan Coach put together for us and playing hard.

ERIC KONKOL: Yeah, we've had a lot of time to get ready for New Mexico, as they have for us. We spent a lot of time just trying to give the guys as much opportunity to be as fresh as possible. They are a very competitive group, who they would be excited to play.

New Mexico poses a lot of issues just based on how they organize their offense and defense. It's much more of a player-driven scout than even a play-driven scout, although there are action that is we need to address but they are a really good basketball team, but, frankly, anybody that's playing this time of year is good.

Q. I was talking with Coach about the three-point shooting before coming in here and he said he thought, you know, summer, preseason, you guys

could be a pretty good three-point shooting team. Is there any competition amongst you guys about who is the best three-point shooter for Tulsa?

MILES BARNSTABLE: I mean, I don't thinking there's really a true competition between us. I think we really all just know we're that good of shooters that, like, if we did compete, I don't think there would be one clear-cut guy where you could say he's the best shooter.

DAVID GREEN: I'd give it to MB, Miles Barnstable; the best shooter on the team.

Q. How is New Mexico similar to you and how are they dissimilar to you? They have got some similarities and some differences. So how are they similar and how are they different?

ERIC KONKOL: I think where they are similar is they play a very unselfish style. Hard-playing, competitive guys. They have got a mix of shooting a number of spots, play-making in Albury, Tenette; those guys can get downhill.

I think where they are different is the scoring with Buljan. He's averaging almost 20 and 11 in the last five games. He's doing a lot of it right around the basket and getting fouled.

That's just a different aspect of their offense that's compared to us.

Q. Obviously the point guard position has been huge for you this year, and probably a little bit unexpected that Tylen was going to be your starting point guard, particularly this late in the season. Could you just talk about how he's handled being thrust into the starting point guard role and what growth you've seen from him this year?

ERIC KONKOL: Well, I give great credit to our staff, our assistant coaches and the way that they evaluated, and the plan that we put together to try to provide depth, so that if there was injury, there was enough versatility to absorb it.

Tylen we evaluated as a guy that -- with limited opportunity, was productive at his previous stop. We saw him as a combo guard that could be a point guard or a 2-guard to play a little bit of both and play with a number of guys because of his size and versatility even defensively.

He's a confident kid. He came in right away in the summer and we wanted to compete. It was something that we tried to find in a number of guys is that competitive edge, that chip on their shoulder, if you will, and he had it.

And so it's not surprising to him one bit that he's had success this year. He fit very well with the shooting on our team because he is a downhill driver. He can get fouled. And he's a capable shooter himself.

Q. I'm so glad he asked about Tyler Riley because he doesn't really look like other point guards, and he doesn't play, you know what I mean, like other point guards. Do you think that's kind of a curveball that gives you a little bit of an edge from game-to-game because he just plays the position different than you typically see.

ERIC KONKOL: I think in this day and age of basketball, it's rare that you have the pass first, second and third point guard anymore. You've got guys that have a way of scoring. Because scoring is so up, just, again, the stats show in the last four years, the 25th-best scoring team four years ago would now be 100th. And so you have to find different ways of scoring the ball.

And he's big. He is strong. He's an impressive physical guy, and he's an attacker. And so that fit really well with the rest of our personnel because he puts a lot of pressure on you around the paint.

Q. Coming here to Indianapolis, Hinkle Fieldhouse, where you said you practiced once, when you walked in, what did the guys think? Was it like a Hoosiers moment?

ERIC KONKOL: I asked -- only about a quarter of our team have seen Hoosiers. I'm going to play a clip for them tonight.

I thought about measuring the hoop and the free throw just to make sure that they -- just like the movie.

I'm a basketball junky. I always have been. This is an really historic thing. I mean, the NIT has been around since 1938. Hinkle Fieldhouse I think since the '20s. The guys know that I geek out on this stuff and talk about it to them.

But they walked in and it's such a unique place, just the way it's structured with the shortened zones and how deep and then the windows, and you can just feel history here. We talked Hoosiers, for many years, until 1997, Indiana had one classification and the guys were amazed by that.

We tried to make sure that the guys realize, we're just a small piece of this basketball history; we are within our own program, but to take advantage of every moment because this is really, really cool.

Q. The thing that I would say is a little different between New Mexico and y'all's road to getting here is you had that overtime win and a close win against Wichita State where they have beat all their opponents by double-digits. What does that present to you guys?

ERIC KONKOL: They are a really good team, and I think they have proven it the entire season.

But they are playing their best basketball right now. I mean, they are playing against really good teams. I think they won two games by 20 and another one by 15. They are playing so efficiently. They are really clamping down on defense.

I think it says, just to the strength of New Mexico's ballclub, we're going to have to play really good basketball. We can't come out and have a C or even B minus effort. We've got to play really well. We've got to do our best to limit them, their offense, their penetration, their three-point shooting, we have to keep them off the glass.

I thought our guys showed a good bit of grit, as David alluded to, we didn't have him, All-Conference guy for two games against two very good teams, and we were able to find a way, and that says a lot about the depth of our team. But we're going to have to put together a really good basketball game tomorrow.

Q. You were part of the last Tulsa NIT Champions, all the way back in 2001. A, what do you remember about that? And B, how special is it for you now 25 years later to be leading this program with a chance to get back there?

ERIC KONKOL: Well, you're dating me, Matt. But I have incredible memories from that time. When I came to the University of Tulsa as a young, aspiring coach, first of all, I remember how welcoming the people were in the athletic department, Bruce being one of them back there. I'm dating you, too, Bruce.

And the administration, the community, the way they wrap themselves around our team, I remember a young team that had just come off an Elite 8 with a lot of guys back, a lot of young players that were thrust into bigger roles.

I remember the adversity that we faced throughout the season. I remember the heartbreak of losing in the conference tournament championship game at home. And I remember the speed of trying to turn that around and play UC Irvine in the first round.

I remember that group of guys, how competitive they were

and how excited they were to keep advancing in the tournament.

And then I clearly remember going to Madison Square Garden for the first time and playing our best basketball against Memphis and the championship game against Alabama. I'll never forget cutting down the nets and not getting to sleep that night and getting on the bus at 8:00 in the morning. It was an unbelievable first year of coaching for me. I remember feeling like, Man, let's do this every year.

But to come back to the University of Tulsa with a goal of trying to get this thing back and be the city's team, be something that the people talk about, being an event in the town, there's something these guys have done for our program this year.

And to be here, again, is a full-circle moment but we don't want it to be circular with an end. We want to keep pushing forward.

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