

# NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Round - Howard vs Kansas

Thursday, March 16, 2023

Des Moines, Iowa, USA

Wells Fargo Arena

**Kansas Jayhawks**  
**Coach Norm Roberts**

**Gradey Dick**

**KJ Adams, Jr.**

Media Conference

Howard 68 Kansas 96

THE MODERATOR: Pleased to have with us Assistant Coach for Kansas, Norm Roberts. Coach, impressive win.

NORM ROBERTS: Thank you very much. Howard has a good team, they're good, they can shoot, they have length. They played faster than I think even we thought they would.

In that second half there wasn't a foul called for about five minutes and it was up and down, and our guys were begging to come out, and I think their guys were just as tired.

**Q. Gradey, your first career double-double. Were you aware of that? How do you feel doing that on the big stage?**

GRADEY DICK: Yeah, it's obviously my first one so it means something, but I think I kinda knew toward the end of the game. But I was kinda trying to use the face guard to my advantage and get some rebounds where guys could really see me.

**Q. KJ, could you comment on Gradey's play? And both of you, it was a fast up and down game. Was it great being out of the Big XII Conference and playing a game like that?**

KJ ADAMS, JR.: Yeah, the Big XII prepared us for moments like this and games like this, and Gradey probably had a little breather.



They weren't face guarding him as hard as teams usually were, so he got a little breather in. He just makes good shots, and that's what he did today, and got on the boards.

**Q. KJ, I know you like to get up and down and today was clearly an up and down game. What was the fun factor for you out there today?**

KJ ADAMS, JR.: Just being out there with my guys. This is one of the biggest stages you will ever play on, so being out there with my guys, and of course when you go up and down fast pace and fast scores and just the environment is amazing.

**Q. Gradey, your first NCAA Tournament. What was the feeling like during warm-up and everything leading into this game?**

GRADEY DICK: It was great. I mean, this is -- growing up in Kansas and going to a lot of open practices when they were in Kansas City, it made me want to be in there one day. That was my goal.

To actually be here and get my first taste of March Madness, it's special to me and my family.

**Q. To the guys, when did you find out Coach Self wasn't going to answer the call today because he's still recovering?**

KJ ADAMS, JR.: We found out probably this morning. He's just day by day, taking it time by time and doing the best he can to make it out here.

GRADEY DICK: Just what KJ said, back him up. Day by day. He's doing doctor's wishes, and hopefully we get back and hear from him first thing and what he liked out there and what he didn't like.

**Q. I was wondering in a game that fast paced do you get more tired than any other game this season?**

GRADEY DICK: There was a part of it where I was pretty exhausted, but those are the most fun games when you are going up and down, and anything can happen. We just



need to -- when times like that happen, we need to buy into the defensive side and including it, for sure.

**Q. Gradey, early in the game Howard was shooting light out from deep, at one point they were 56% from the floor in the first half. What changed for you guys defense defensively that lead to tougher shot for them?**

GRADEY DICK: I think they have four guys over the season that have shot over 100, so we knew they were going to come out blazing. I feel like we had to, you know, adapt to the game and really just try to run them off the perimeter and I feel like we did a better job throughout the game.

**Q. Coach, a lot of transition play both on your side and for them. Was that part of the game plan or something you guys adapted to on the fly?**

NORM ROBERTS: No, we always want to play fast. We're better when we play fast. Juan had a game that's not really like his type game. He doesn't turn the ball over like that. I think he got fatigued, he made a couple of bad passes and we made a couple of wrong adjustments, too. We like to play fast, they got up and down and we knew if we could rebound the ball, which we didn't do a great job of that today but if we rebounded the ball we could get out and have some opportunities. That happened today.

**Q. Gradey, how special is it to be a Kansas native and obviously you have a chance to help your program repeat back-to-back national championships. How special is it to have this big of an impact on this team as a freshman?**

GRADEY DICK: It's super special. It's always special when you play at Kansas but like you said me being from here I think means even more to my family and see my siblings go through here, I've been on campus since I was little. The fact that I get to be in the shoes to play for this university is a dream come true.

**Q. Coach Roberts, did you feel like today you were more animated, if that's the right word, compared to the Big XII tournament? Were you more personally fired up because of the importance?**

NORM ROBERTS: Probably a little bit, probably. To say I wasn't then I would be wrong. I probably was more animated today just because we knew what they were capable of doing and we didn't guard it right in the beginning and we let they will get off to many easy looks and got beat backdoor. Those are things we had discussed and said we didn't need to have happen so I

probably was more animated today.

**Q. What's today's update on Coach? How is he doing?**

NORM ROBERTS: He's doing good. It's all day-to-day on how he feels. The doctors decisions. And he's been able to spend time with the guys and practice and that type stuff. So he's doing good.

**Q. Gradey, you did a tremendous job today rebounding. How do you find yourself to be in those spots to get those pretty much game-defining rebounds. Those are the start to your runs. There was one when you got the offensive rebound and dished it off for an assist. How did you find yourself in the right spot in the?**

GRADEY DICK: Throughout the season I've got great advice from my Coach, who played here and he knows what for shots not falling how to find ways to affect the game and today it was falling pretty good, but at the same time I was trying to see how the defense was guarding me if they were face-guarding me, that gives me an advantage to see the rim and full view so they can't if they're looking at me so it was a good advantage for me.

**Q. KJ, Gradey, y'all got -- some of the guys who don't get to see the floor as much got in at the end of the game. Talk about what they contribute and their importance to that team culture?**

KJ ADAMS, JR.: All the guys, especially Bobby and Joe all have a good energy that helps the team no matter what. If it's practice or playing in the game they always help us in energy points and just knowing the game and helping us when they're on the bench and when they're out there so it's good to see them get a little bit more time than they usually do.

GRADEY DICK: It was great. We got a whole team that wants one goal, and that makes the team great. Throughout the season those guys have been helping us and I feel like we've been striving to be one the whole season and they're doing a good job of that.

**Q. Coach, what was the best part of Kevin McCullar, Jr.'s game to you?**

NORM ROBERTS: Everything about how Kevin plays. Kevin plays to win. He does all the little things, be it cutting to the basket, offensive rebounding, making the extra pass, and he's a terrific defender.

Kevin would be if you put a quote by him, he's a winner,



he's a winning player. He makes winning plays all the time and it's not always making a basket. He makes winning plays.

**Q. Guys, following up on that, the way he thinks about the game is there something different about his mental approach on offense and defense, Kevin?**

GRADEY DICK: When you have his intelligence and Coach saying he knows how to play the game and he sees a lot of things not all basketball players see and we see that throughout with his experience in college basketball and scouting film he knows the answers and stuff like that. That's just a great piece to when I'm struggling with something throughout the game I know who to go to and ask for advice.

KJ ADAMS, JR.: I think Kevin is a master mind basketball. He's obsessed with coverages and defense and knows how to get in certain areas a lot of people don't think about, he's always on top of that stuff. He's just a floor general and when he's on the floor. He makes everybody better and helps everybody know their assignments more clearly.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, gentlemen. Best of luck.

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