

# State Farm Champions Classic: Kansas vs. Michigan State

Tuesday, November 9, 2021

Michigan State Spartans

Tom Izzo

A.J. Hoggard

Gabe Brown

Press Conference



Kansas - 87, Michigan State - 74

TOM IZZO: My big worries was with what's his name out they would go with smaller with more guards, and kind of our strengths is in our bigs as far as numbers and there's is in their guards, and their guards did a number on ours. I thought we played pretty well. We're down -- I mean we're up one with three-something left, and then we're down seven, and then in the second half we just kind of, every time we made a run we took a dumb shot or we made an ill-advised play and they came down.

And give them credit. Ochai was really good. I thought he played really well. But the game's won and lost on a simple thing like we can't make a free throw and the turnovers. And I said the turnovers would be a big key in the game. It was a big key. Free throw shooting, I don't know, me and my staff should take a lot of abuse for that because that's something you should be able to control a little more than we controlled the way we shot it.

So you get 10 points on the free-throw line and eight more turnovers you're probably not going to beat a good team. I thought his guards played very well. Ochai played really well.

I thought our bigs did a good job. Marcus did a good job defending him. He just falls in love with the three-point shot. He's 5-7 from the two and 0-3 from the three and in East Lansing everybody wants me to let him shoot the three, and he is a pretty good shooter, it's just not where his bread and butter is.

So he gets seven rebounds, Hauser gets seven. I thought Julius Marble was a bright spot for us. A.J. played pretty well. I thought Max came here with Miles Bridges and he went 2-12 or something, and Max had some good looks, he just missed some shots. And I thought Tyson struggled a little bit too. Foul trouble hurt him a little bit in the first

half.

But there are probably more good things than bad, but when you shoot that poorly from the free throw line and turn the ball over, there's no excuse for that.

## Q. (Question about rebounds.)

TOM IZZO: Yeah, I think we were 5-7 or something and he took that one and then they went down and hit a three in five seconds. I thought they got a lot of loose balls, but they're playing with a lot of six-foot guards that are as athletic as the day is long. And like I said, give them credit. They did a great job. I think it hurt us with the kid out instead of helping us because of the number of guards.

## Q. I know that you're disappointed with the turnovers overall, but Hoggard really asserted himself and took control in the game. What did you kind of learn from him after the body transformation in the off-season to assert himself on this stage?

TOM IZZO: Yeah, I was really happy with A.J., he pushed the ball on the break. He defended pretty well. I think he took a big step forward. Tyson has been playing awfully well. But it wasn't that he played poorly, poorly, it's just, the guy averaged like 17 points a game and he came off a couple of those ball screens wide open and just didn't shoot it, and I don't know why. He's very good shooter.

So we'll have to shore that up a little bit. And we got to get another sub, Akins, as far as our guard play, I think we kind of wore down a little bit. We were in a little bit of foul trouble the first half and I think we played Christie, wore him down, and then I get a T and that was probably a turning point too, which, a little bit, but I thought it was identical to a play earlier. That's the way it goes.

## Q. You've had success and had a veteran guy like they had tonight having a great game, maybe your best player as a freshman, and so the difference in that moment, does it show up in these game moments?

TOM IZZO: I thought Gabe played pretty well too. I don't think we got him enough shots. I really thought their guy

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did do the job. But, again, when you're cutting it to four or cutting it to three and then you go to the free-throw line and miss two, miss the front end of a 1-1, those things, they couldn't have survived it either, I don't believe.

And I thought the other thing that I was disappointed in, I mean, we out rebounded them pretty good, but they got a lot of loose balls, the 50/50 balls. I thought they got a lot of them. And I think some of it, sometimes we were playing with three bigs because we had guys in foul trouble and not the team to do that against, especially the way they're playing right now.

**Q. You mentioned the other day, especially with the young guys, how you were going to see how they react to this sort of environment. It feels like it was a little bit of a mixed bag. Some did okay, but some didn't. How would you say overall that was? Max specifically, it looked like he got some good shots early. They just didn't go in.**

TOM IZZO: Yeah, you need some to go in. He missed some good shots and I think it affected his defense. I think he got tired too. Playing 31 minutes, I didn't expect to play him 31 minutes, and guys went around him, he learned some things. I thought A.J, I mean, Jaden, he's got to learn that's got to play some defense before he plays offense, and that will come. He's athletic enough. He did at least go to the boards hard.

And Tyson, another new guy on the block, I thought did he some good things. He just passed up some shots. It is a big stage for those guys and they're veterans. They did a better job.

I thought Harris played pretty well for them. He just kind of ran their team. I don't even know how many he scored, 3-7, three rebounds, four assists, no turnovers.

The turnover thing was, I was surprised we turned it over 11 times in the first half and were down one with two minutes left in the half and they got us down seven, but that was kind of a big turning point too.

**Q. Is there a positive to opening the season playing a high-quality team like this even if it's a loss?**

TOM IZZO: I don't know. I've done it 27 years straight where at least the first five games we usually play the Knicks, the Celtics, the Lakers and -- no, I always think it's a positive. I think it's what I have to do to make my program No. 1. I also think it's, you know, I'm concerned in this age of social media whether kids can handle it. It would be nice to get eight wins and then everybody's feeling good and everybody's telling them how good they

are and then you get your butt kicked but at least you feel good.

I think this is better. I don't know if kids can handle it as well. It's the way I'm going to do it until I'm done. I think it's a big plus. I think it's a privilege. There's 353 teams or 349 that would have died to play in this game tonight, and that's what I told my guys, that you didn't have to do this. You got to do it. It's a privilege.

I'm not totally disappointed. I think there were some positive things that we can build on. I was just a little surprised on the free throw shooting. I mean, that was a big part of this game, guys, if we make those free throws in the first half, it's probably an even game at halftime. That changes the whole game and then we're playing catch up the whole second half.

And then we took a couple of bad shots, but, hey, we had 63 shots up with 16 turnovers, it's awesome, out-rebounded by 7 is awesome. Get to the line 16 times and I think we missed two or three front ends of the 1-1 so that's like getting there 19 times.

And then we run into a team that made all their free throws. They did a hell of a job, so give them a lot of credit. So yeah, it's a positive.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

TOM IZZO: I don't know. I got to look at the film before I tell you. But I didn't think a lot of them were forced. I thought there was some poor decisions on our part. Maybe the film will show something different.

There weren't a lot of guard-to-forward entry passes that were picked off. It was a travel, stepping out of bounds, things like that. So until I look at the film, I don't know how to answer that.

But I do think that those two things, I mean, if we can shore those two things up we shoot 46 percent, we shoot 35 from the three, and some of our best shooters, I mean, Joey missed a couple late, in and out. Gabe, I mean, Max missed a lot of good shots, you know.

So to shoot that kind of percentage against a really good defensive team that was athletic, shoot it okay from the three, not great, but okay considering Joey missed a couple at the end and Marcus missed three in a row, I didn't think we shot the ball bad.

I think Gabe did some really good things. I was pleased with Gabe, pleased with Hoggard, pleased with Julius Marble. I thought those guys did some things. It doesn't

surprise me about Max yet. It doesn't surprise me about Jaden. A little surprised, I thought Tyson, you know, he'll be fine. He's been practicing really well. Those two guys are a good 1-2 punch, but I can see where I'm going to have to play them together more, and we haven't really even worked on that, and we run into a team, find out a couple days before that they're going to be smaller than we thought. They were small to start with. So I didn't think we handled that great, but give them credit, they did.

**Q. You mentioned that you thought Gabe played well, but you want to get him more shots. Did you think it's assertiveness thing that he has to take things in his own hands or you got to execute better?**

TOM IZZO: I think we got to execute better. He tried to take it to the hole a couple times. I think two charge calls that he, or at least a charge and a travel. He had two. Gabe had, yeah, two turnovers. But Gabe is 10 times better than he was last year. He made a beautiful drop-off for that three-point play. He's put the ball on the floor a little better, guarding a little better.

If there's one negative there, our wings did not rebound very well, and that's been one of the things we've done a good job of, and especially him, and because he doesn't rebound real well he doesn't get to the free-throw line, and not getting to the free-throw line where Ochai was 8-8 and Gabe was 0-0, and Gabe's a 90 percent free throw shooter. So we got to get him to the line more, so that will be more on him than us.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

TOM IZZO: It was very difficult, I'll be honest with you. He said to me after the game, I mean, I think he was really excited about Pettiford, and I don't think he thought he was going to play. Coleman-Lands didn't play because he was hurt, so we didn't think he was going to play. We knew what Remy Martin, but we had to get tape from Arizona State. We knew what Yesufu was like. He didn't even play as much as I thought he was. On tape he's a load too.

But how they were going to use him and whether they were going to play two or three of them together you couldn't see that and couldn't scout that. So, yeah, there was a little bit of truth to that. That was hard. And I think Bill did a good job, to be honest with you. But I don't know if he'll be able to have a steady diet of that.

**Q. You talked about the point guard situation. When you bring someone new in, even if they are an accomplished point guard, does it take a little time to get used to the system?**

TOM IZZO: Yeah, and I think that's kind of what happened with Tyson for us. And for him, although Remy Martin kind of was an All-American, so a little different there.

**Q. They made a concerted effort to really feed the post a lot. Did you expect that?**

TOM IZZO: I thought it was pretty damn good. The kid's a load down there. I wish Marcus would learn something from him, but you don't have to be a three-point shooter. Marcus is pretty good from down there. He didn't have to take a back seat to anybody. He just takes a back seat because he thinks that that's the way he's going to impress somebody. He's going to impress somebody by -- I thought when Marcus posted he did a hell of a job. I thought defensively Marcus did great job. Because we weren't going to double down like we did against Purdue, because of the three-point shooters. I have no problem with the defense. A guy gets 4-11, gets two rebounds, I feel very good at the job Marcus did there. Just convincing him that he's got to put his butt down there like McCormack puts his.

**Q. When did you feel this game turned?**

GABE BROWN: I would say first half we was up one. We was up one or down one maybe and two turnovers they took a seven, eight point lead going into halftime.

**Q. You guys cut it back to three there, they called that timeout, what happens on that?**

A.J. HOGGARD: I would say a lack of effort from all of us. Me with the turnover to give them a second dunk, just communication on defense on the back lob, for the lob we got before we got run-out dunk, just communicating, self-inflicted errors that we had that we can tighten up. That's why you play in these games you learn things and learn where you are.

**Q. Are you guys still trying to figure out I don't want to say roles but how everything works with each other for this group?**

GABE BROWN: I would say no. I mean, it's going to be nights when I don't have it and there's going to be nights when A.J. doesn't have it. We play team basketball. If I get shots, I get shots. But at the end of the day it's a team sport.

**Q. When the turnovers start kind of piling up like that, I mean, how can you attribute why they -- obviously it was more in the first half -- but is it mental thing, focus, what would you attribute that issue to?**

A.J. HOGGARD: I just think just focusing in this on taking care of the ball. Sometimes being lackadaisical, being casual as Coach would say, just taking it for granted. Sometimes trying to go for home runs, coming off screens casual. Like I got poked at the end of the half, it kind of set us back for that seven-point run that they made. So I would just things taking more careful with the ball and being locked in and focused.

**Q. When you look at this game in the big picture right now, when you watch it back, how do you come out of it feeling?**

GABE BROWN: I'm blessed. Like I told the guys, a lot of people don't get this type of opportunity. We got to play the No. 2 team in the country. I'm blessed. I'm looking forward to a great season for us.

**Q. What would you see positive maybe? Coach talked about that there were things that he saw that you'll be able to build on?**

GABE BROWN: I feel like we were positive out there. We did have little stints where we were out there and A.J. got a couple and ones, yelling, just the communication, just everybody being up in their chairs, I mean they did a good job like that. So we did have some good things going on.

**Q. What did you see from Max today, your first game, big stage, missed some shots but what did you see from him and what was his demeanor and conversations you may have had or anything?**

GABE BROWN: Never got down on himself. That's what I love about himself. He never got down on himself, kept going, kept pushing. That's Max.

**Q. Playing in a first game in this sort of thing do you think he was pressing at all or just the feel of the moment, did you feel the moment, did you feel the lights and the opportunity a little bit?**

GABE BROWN: I mean, yeah, when you're a freshman you do see the lights and it do get big out there, but I feel like they adjusted and they got a long season ahead, so they're going to be good.

**Q. A.J., driving the ball, was that something you thought you would be able to do and be successful like you did tonight?**

A.J. HOGGARD: I would say something that came in looking forward to getting downhill and make plays for others and make plays for myself. So just me attacking being attack mode, it did especially open up like it did

today just like it did with me being aggressive and also we me coming off looking for others as well so I think it opened up a bit of both.

**Q. How beneficial is it playing the No. 3 team in the country, but they had six-foot guys all over the roster, how much do you think that's going to help you guys when you get to the nit and grit of the Big-10?**

GABE BROWN: We're going to see that later on so it's good to play a team like this. Good to have guard play and big play at the same time. So we're going to see a team like this later on.

**Q. (Question about the foul call.)**

GABE BROWN: Yeah, I mean, I'm one person that I can't be on bench for my team, I got to be out there doing little things for us. So it was a momentum play. I didn't think it was a foul, but it was a foul and I feel like my guys when I was out they stepped up, so...

**Q. (No microphone.)**

A.J. HOGGARD: I thought Marcus did a lot of good things. When he's unstoppable in the post I would say, I think he brought a lot changing shots defensively, I thought he brought a lot to us, like Coach said earlier, sometimes he got caught up in the moment shooting the three. I feel he can make the three, but I think he just sometimes has to play within himself and just go to where he's unstoppable.

**Q. What was the moment like for you coming out and seeing the fans here because you didn't have that last year.**

A.J. HOGGARD: It was big for me just kind of in my backyard, so I wanted to come out here, play good, get a win for my team. Failed to get the win, but I just feel like it was fun, good atmosphere to play in, get adjusted for the season, a good start, a lot of things we can learn from as a team, things we can learn within ourselves. Self-inflicted errors, like I said we had a lot of those and just a big moment for all of us, something we strive and dream of playing in this growing up as a kid when you're being recruited and when you're younger it's the first thing you watch college basketball it's the biggest thing on TV so it was a fun moment for me.

**Q. Coach was asked about playing these sort of games early in the season as opposed to playing whoever and now we're 8-0 everyone patting you on the back. You've been through this before, how much more of a benefit is it to play against a team like this that's one of the best in the country and know where**

**you are and where you got to get?**

GABE BROWN: I mean, it's great because it shows where you're at. That's one thing why you come to Michigan State you play these kind of teams so it shows where you're at. If you're playing smaller schools, you don't really get a chance to really showcase where you're at with higher-level competition, March Madness-type of players. So that was good for us.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

GABE BROWN: A.J. did a great job of controlling the team. He helped us in scoring, he helped us rebounding, he helped us in assists, he did a lot of good things. Of course he had a couple turnovers, that's part of basketball, that's part of being a point guard, he has things he needs to work on, but overall he did a great job.

**Q. (Asking about Tyson) How fast is the game moving maybe in that first half for you guys, seemed like you guys were amped up?**

GABE BROWN: Yeah, we were amped up, but it's just basketball, emotions died down later on. Tyson, I told him to keep his head. Every game not going to be your game, you're going to good in foul trouble, you're going to do certain things, so I told him to keep his head up, he's going to get back out there and do a good job.

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