

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: Second Round - Miami (FL) vs Purdue

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Purdue Boilermakers Coach Matt Painter

Media Conference

MODERATOR: The coach of the Boilermakers is here, Matt Painter. Matt, please talk about the match-up and then we'll go to questions.

MATT PAINTER: Yeah, obviously it's going to be a very tough match-up for us. Miami has a talented team, well coached. To put together a team that's this good in a short amount of time, it really speaks volumes to the staff. Jai has done a great job with those guys. They have very good lead guard in Donaldson, who obviously was at Michigan. Malik Reneau was a fabulous player at Indiana. Very hard to deal with, great size, great skill, great motor. Udeh is a guy, great defensive player, great around the basket. Good shot blocker. They have a lot of good pieces. They complement each other well.

The main thing, obviously, with them, you've gotta be able to keep them out of the paint, which is a difficult thing. Shelton Henderson is one of the best freshmen in the country. Just a bulldog, just tough, driver. Skill, plays hard.

Allen is a guy that hasn't shot it well, but he's a really good shooter. He's better than his numbers show. He's a good player. Saw him at Mount Vernon when I was recruiting somebody else.

But gotta be able to keep them off the glass. If they're going to get those second-chance opportunities and they're going to get in transition because we don't take care of the basketball or take bad shots, you're just feeding it right into their hands. They're very good in transition. They're very good off the glass.

But they just have a good team. It's a very good team, obviously very good league. So they've been challenged, they've been through it this year. And we're looking forward to competing and being in St. Louis and hopefully



making it to the second weekend.

Q. Coach, this is going to be a little bit of a long question, so I apologize. Over the last 10 years or so, the individual accomplishments have really piled up, Braden with the assist, Zach, two-time National Player of the Year, Carsen, then Fletcher, three-point, and even dating back to Caleb Swanigan. I think he set a record for double-doubles in the Big Ten. The one theme of those guys is that they've all won at a high level at Purdue.

I guess when you're out recruiting them, what characteristics are you looking for maybe more so than just their physical abilities?

MATT PAINTER: Yeah. You know, the love of basketball, just being passionate, and I think what comes out in an evaluation that's really important is just their competitive spirit, the fight they have to them.

You can figure a lot of things out through your phone calls and checking in on them, kind of where they are all the time. If they're always at a gym, they're always going to a workout, they're always talking about basketball, you want guys with great balance in their life, but there's also a part of you where you want guys that are consumed. And it means a lot to them, and that's the big piece of it.

And then we really jump to the skill. We've always been able to get good size, and I think all those guys that you mentioned, that really helps us. We've had really good size, but we've also had guards when Cline and Carsen made that great run and the shots they were making in the tournament, like it really helped us recruit guards going forward, to be able to get somebody like Jaden Ivey after that and then obviously getting Braden and Fletch and all the guards that we've been able to have.

So that's what you're looking for. You're looking for that fit, but you also figure out some things when you've been somewhere 21 years. It's no different than dating. You figure out who you can sign. Everybody wants A.J. Dybantsa, right? You're not getting him. Like, you just gotta be able to understand, like, okay, who can we get here? Who do we have a great chance to get and who fits? And you gotta have that balance.

The thing with Purdue is education has always been a big piece of it, too. Not to mean every single one of our guys is going into business or engineering or pharmacy. But it still has to be a big piece of it. And then they gotta want to get their degree from Purdue. If they transfer now, they gotta make that decision and say, hey, now I'm not going to get my degree from Purdue. So just trying to get that good balance and get that fit.

Q. In the short preparation for a match-up like this, do you look to your senior leadership with Fletcher Loyer, Braden Smith and Trey Kaufman-Renn who have played against Donaldson and Reneau in the past to help educate the other guys on this roster and their tendencies in the past?

MATT PAINTER: Yeah, our staff does a good job just like their staff would do a good job of putting clips together and kind of seeing where they are. It's more of sticking to your rules and having discipline. So I think that's the more important part of having experience of being together through good times and bad times and then just being able to -- you know, the game a lot of times is up and down. Like it's just a game of runs. Sometimes it's not and that's against you. Sometimes it's not and that's for you. But I think more than anything of just sticking with our rules, doing your job and playing to our strengths.

Q. You guys see a lot of different kinds of two-big stuff in the Big Ten, teams that will play two bigs but do different things with them and around them. I know it's a short turnaround, but you're also familiar with Malik. What do you see in the way Miami uses Udeh and Reneau together that maybe is distinct to what makes them successful?

MATT PAINTER: Right. Well, Reneau can attack you face-up. He can also back you down. He also can play out of the post. And with that, when you overdo stuff and you get your size off of Udeh, I mean I think that really causes problems, causes a lot of problems, because now he's down there against a guard rebounding and he normally gets those.

But it's having awareness with that two-big lineup of trying your best. Sometimes you gotta double and then trying your best to have a great double so they can get it out of there and they can't score right away and you can get back and put size on size.

Sometimes, like, as a coach, you can over-scheme, and when you do, you stop them from scoring, but then you don't stop them from rebounding, and that's what those two bigs present because they present problems scoring the

ball, but they present the rebounding piece of it. And then he's such a good rim protector. And so to have that size at the rim causing a lot of problems, changing shots. So then offensively you execute really well, but then their ability to block shots or change shots, that also causes problems.

Q. Matt, couple questions for you. What do you make of kind of a lot of the Mid Majors? I know you talked about the schedule yesterday and I'll get to them in a second. A lot of them weren't successful in the opening round second straight year. Why do you think that's been the case that some of these schools that predominantly have been good in previous years have struggled so much this year?

MATT PAINTER: I don't know. Obviously I don't dive into the tournament like that, because I dive into Miami, right? You watch the highlights, but you don't watch the games, because if I have a chance to watch basketball, I should be watching my next opponent, right?

But, no, we were at Southern Illinois, and very fortunate that the last three years that we were there I was two years an assistant, one year as a head coach, we went to the tournament all three years, but all as at-large. Then the next three years when Chris Lowery took over, they went to the tournament three years, so a total of six, and he won the valley tournament once. So five out of six years you got at-larges. Now, it was a different time, right? You're talking 20 to 25 years ago.

But the ability to now is the exempt tournaments have, more and more of them just have two games. So like now the ability to try to get in there as a Mid Major, because that's what you want. You want to play the High Majors and now you get them on a neutral court. Like, you'd get them in an NCAA Tournament on a neutral court.

So just trying to get those opportunities more than anything to better your team and get them ready and get them prepared for this tournament. But also, if you don't win the tournament, your conference tournament, now being able to get in. Are you worthy enough?

I'm not a proponent right now. I've tried to listen to everybody. I'm not a proponent of expanding the tournament. I think there's way more risk involved. And you're going to draw a line somewhere, no matter where the number is. And I'm just not. But if it did, it would have to include more Mid Major teams at that point, in my opinion.

Q. You kind of were pragmatic about your scheduling with the Mid Majors. What's the solution in that case, because obviously I think a lot of people would agree

it's good for the game. So how would you the Mid Majors be able to provide or showcase their talent if they aren't able to get a lot of High Majors to the schedule?

MATT PAINTER: The point to my thing, the High Major people are not setting the rules. We're just looking at it from our perspective, from an institution perspective and a conference perspective and we're always going to do what's best for us. And when those guys say those type of things and now they get jobs at the High Major level, they're simply going to do the same thing that we're doing. Like, that's all I was trying to make the point of.

But High Major schools, half of their nonconference is Mid Major teams. It doesn't make sense when they say they won't play us. They might not play you, but that doesn't make -- do you understand what I'm saying? Like, we played five Mid Majors. We played six High Majors last year. We also played Akron, Kent State and Oakland, who had a good run in the NCAA tournament a couple years ago. Akron's made it; Kent State has been really good.

So like when you're trying to set our schedule, we want to play those teams that are really good Mid Major teams but obviously we're playing them at home.

Now, we've also played through the years -- when you've been somewhere 21 years, you have a lot of data. Like, we have played at Ohio, Ball State, Loyola. We have played at Indiana State. We have played at Evansville. We have played at Eastern Michigan. There's probably a couple others, and I'm not talking about the neutral games you play. At Indianapolis. We have played Indiana State. We have played Ball State. And then when you talk exempt tournaments like we've played other Mid Major people through the years.

Now, it's not a lot. So when those guys say, hey, come play us here, it's gotta make sense to do it. So our schedule this year, like when we play Marquette at home and we play Iowa State at home and we play Auburn neutral and Memphis neutral and Texas Tech neutral and at Alabama, like now, like we play three really good Mid Major teams that have had success, been to the NCAA Tournament. And so like, that gives you a Top 10 schedule. And so why should we branch out and go play one more game on the road against a Mid Major team when that already gets me an 8, 9 or 10 in the country in strength of schedule?

Q. Coach, to your credit for building a program overall these years with the reputation of retention, which is rare to do and impressive in a number of ways. With what Coach Jai Lucas has done this year, building a

roster completely from scratch, how impressive is that in its own distinct way?

MATT PAINTER: It is impressive. He has some connections there. Donaldson is from Florida. Malik Reneau is from Miami. Also, Shelton Henderson is from Houston, signed with him at Duke, then obviously went with him there. He was a big reason why he went to Duke.

So you have those connections, and that's what helps us all, right? Having those connections and being able to get some of those guys to stay home, get some of those guys to follow him. And that's what you want to be able to do.

The issue is if you have to do it every single year. Now, if some of those guys are seniors, some of them don't go pro, now being able to keep those guys. It used to be a seven or eight-man nucleus. Now you're just trying to have, like, a three, four, five-man nucleus. So now when you go into year two, now you have that nucleus to build from.

The guys that amaze me the most are the guys that can turn it over every year and still be damn good. Like, that is really hard to do. And we have a couple guys in our league that are really good at it. And like the next year you're like, man, look at all they lost, and they're still one of the best teams in the country. And that's difficult.

And that's something that we might have to end up doing some day. We're going to keep trying to do it the way we are, because that's been successful, but it's still not enough data at this point. We're still in the infant stages of where we are, and we don't have consistency with the rules. So it's really hard to navigate, also.

Q. Matt, you've talked about your longevity at Purdue and coaching and all that, but when you are 10 year-old Matt Painter and you're shooting in the driveway or the park, who are those NCAA March Madness guys that you are thinking about you wanted to be like or they inspired that dream?

MATT PAINTER: Right. I grew up an Indiana fan. So I was always rooting for Indiana. I know that's sacrilegious now.

That was like -- the first thing that I remember is Indiana winning the National Championship when I was six years old. So then, like, you just kind of followed it ever since then.

But I grew up on Ball State's campus. So I thought Ball State's players were cool. Like, as a little kid I would go to the games there. So you'd follow Indiana and you would



follow college basketball. Seeing NC State win it that one year, that was really cool. I liked Georgetown. I liked Patrick Ewing and just their dominance and the way they played and the way they took it to people.

Like, but I grew up watching the Big Ten and seeing, before cable hit, like you would have the three channels, then you would have that one fourth channel that was kind of fuzzy. That's where the Big Ten channels, Channel 4. And so we would always watch the games and watch the Big Ten games.

When I had a chance to play in the Big Ten, like that was very, very surreal for me because I wasn't somebody, I grew a lot in high school. I wasn't that great of a player when I was younger.

Q. Given the fact you guys have been to the Sweet 16 the last two years, how much does that experience help and help you guys in facing a Miami team?

MATT PAINTER: Obviously the more experiences you can have, you would think helps you, but I think once it gets down to it, you have to be better than Miami. And the fact that some of their guys haven't been in this position, it's still just one game, right? And it's on a neutral court and you gotta compete and be more efficient on the offensive end and then be tougher than them. That's hard to do. They have a very, very good team. Like I said, they're well coached. But you would like to think that the experiences that you have, and that's what you do as a coach. Like you try to give them, whether it's European trips or exempt tournaments or a tough schedule. You know it's going to be a grind in our league just like it's a grind in their league.

A little different now, because you don't have -- it's not your dad's Big Ten. Everybody plays each other twice, and it's balanced. So it's a little different, but for the most part, you're just hoping that your experiences really help your team.

Q. Yesterday, or last night's game, Braden was aggressive early, I think he took four shots in the first five minutes. I know he was really good at taking what the defense gives him, but what does him being aggressive in the offense and maybe getting some of those early shots, what does that open up for you guys offensively?

MATT PAINTER: Yeah. We always want him to be aggressive, but sometimes people blitz him, they take the ball out of his hands, and that's where he has to do that, just that and get that ball out of his hands and get them in rotations and get them moving. It depends on are they switching? Are they playing in a drop? Are they flat in

their hedge? Are they high hedging? Are they corraling it and making him pass? That's what we tell them. And obviously some teams you know exactly what they're doing, but some teams mix up their ball screen coverages. So we let his instincts take over, and if they're going to play deeper, he has to look for his pull-up. He has to look to get past the help. It just depends on what we're running, the angles we're running.

But I thought it was great. I thought he played a really good game and took the shots that were there.

MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach.

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