

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

Sunday, March 22, 2026

St. Louis, Missouri, USA

Enterprise Center

Purdue Boilermakers

Matt Painter

Trey Kaufman-Renn

Fletcher Loyer

Media Conference

Purdue 79, Miami 69

MODERATOR: We have head Coach Matt Painter with us, Fletcher Loyer and Trey Kaufman-Renn.

Questions for the Coach.

MATT PAINTER: First of all, congratulations to Miami and their coach, Jai Lucas, for just a fabulous season, man. For a first-year coach to have that kind of improvement and wins and be able to piece a team together, they gave us everything that we can handle. It was difficult to keep them off the glass. It was difficult to keep them out of the paint.

I thought our guys really tried and worked to defend them. Their two leading scorers were 10-for-30 combined. I thought that was pretty good. The problem was we struggled to get some of those misses, and we had to do a better job in that area.

But I thought our guys really stepped up. I thought C.J. Cox really helped us at the end of the first half by making those three threes. That was a big piece of the game.

I wouldn't say we were reeling, but we were struggling a little bit at that time. But Fletcher's efficiency is just like off the charts. To get 24 points on 7 shots, only have one miss is really kind of unheard of in terms of his points per possession.

Just very, very efficient offensively. If you look at our guys and their shooting percentage, like we should have been in the better position. We just didn't rebound as well and we didn't get offensive rebounds.



But I loved our resiliency to hang in there and keep trying to make the next play. And obviously when you get a little bit of a lead and you can make your free throws, it really helps. So going 21-for-22 could be the key stat of the game outside of Fletcher's great performance.

Q. Matt, you touched on Fletcher making those shots, but what's it like to have him on your team being a great shooter, obviously the all-time three leader. What does he mean to the team to keep them going?

MATT PAINTER: Yeah he does a lot of intangibles, a lot of little things. A lot of times coaches look at the meat and potato of things. They don't understand the little pieces that helps. Like he takes the ball out of bounds. He's a good post feeder. He understands scouting reports, good communicator. Good leader. Obviously he's a great shooter, a great basketball player. So there's just a lot of things.

You look at those guys' minutes, you look at TK's minutes along with Fletcher and Braden, it is their time. Doesn't mean we're not going to sub them out here and there but it made a whole lot of sense not to take him out. C.J. going out, we tried to give him a break in the middle but he's too valuable for us to take out in this game.

Q. Two-part question, one for Matt and one for the players. Matt, do you have an update on C.J. first of all?

MATT PAINTER: Yeah. He hyperextended his knee. So we'll kind of see how treatment goes and everything to see what his status is. That's just what our trainer told me.

Q. For Fletcher and Trey, how big was the resolve when C.J. went down that this team kept the pace up and didn't let them come back and get within one possession?

TREY KAUFMAN-RENN: You know, it's great. We knew at the beginning of the year that's how our team was built. We have a lot of guys who can come in like you said when C.J. goes down, Gicarri came in and gave us a big lift.

There's not that much drop off especially in tournaments



like these when maybe one or two guys aren't playing well to begin with. To have other people that can come in and pick them up is just really important.

FLETCHER LOYER: Yeah, I think a lot of credit to Gicarri staying ready. There's some games down the stretch, maybe me, maybe it's Omer, C.J. We got a lot of guys that can do different stuff for us and credit to him being ready and know what's going on and ultimately getting huge stops down the stretch.

Q. To have so many guys who have been around the block so many times and seen everything, when you get into a struggle like this, how invaluable is that, particularly when there are guys that maybe don't want it to end, they're down to the last lap and they don't want it to end?

MATT PAINTER: Yeah. Sometimes you can feel like certain things when you play, when you first start playing and you get into the emotional state of the game. So like no matter how you feel, you can still do your job. And that's what you want, and that's what you want a focus of, them understanding what they're supposed to do and then just playing through their instincts.

Young guys sometimes don't kind of get that. They get off of that. So the experiences that they've had in the NCAA Tournament, and just battling in the Big Ten for four years. We have unbelievable coaches in our league. So you're getting tested every single night. And these guys have been through it. But that's what you have to be able to do.

I thought we would have had better numbers today if we could have rebounded the ball better. Like we were doing some good things but we just weren't getting some of those rebounds. But these guys were doing their job, and that's where it shows up. It shows up in close games. It shows up in the Tournament, and that's what you need. It doesn't mean you can't get beat because we all can get beat. But I'd rather have that consistent experience on your team and having that trust.

Q. Fletcher, it looked like in the first half Miami was really getting a lot of good stuff in the paint. That kind of dwindled in the second half. What was the difference for you all in that category?

FLETCHER LOYER: Yeah. We were just giving up layups. Obviously a team that likes to drive and likes to dominate the paint, you can't let them get easy ones.

So defending with our chest, cutting them off and then being in gaps, so we gotta make them kick it out. Not just easy offensive rebound put-backs and easy drives to the

rim for dunks and layups.

Q. The other day we were talking about the big cellphone, getting the call to Purdue and today 500 wins. What does that milestone mean to you and can you believe that's come?

MATT PAINTER: Yeah. I think the one thing that gets lost at Purdue because we don't sign McDonald's All-Americans is that our players are really good. And that's what you want, right? You want to be able to piece teams together, and our staff's made improvements through the years in terms of finding guys that fit, finding skill. Obviously we've had a great experience of having good big guys. Right now we have a really good point guard. We have a guy that can really shoot the basketball. TK is a very, very unique player in the different things that he can do. And it's a really good balance.

That's what when you go through and you recruit, like you're not drafting people. Like they gotta say yes, too. So like learning how to pivot when you don't get maybe your top guy or the guy that you think, and just keep working towards getting the guys that have that high competitive spirit, that are about winning, that have a high skill level.

It's their passion. These guys have put in -- I know coaches talk about it, but they've put in so much in all areas to be the best that they can be. And that's how you end up getting a lot of victories, because you have really good players that are committed.

Q. Congratulations, first of all. For Coach and for one of the players, could two people speak on Shelton Henderson and just how you feel he played a freshmen doing what he did today?

MATT PAINTER: Yeah. He's great, man. We had him at USA basketball. He's a stud. He could play for the football team and the basketball team. He just runs through people and we always talk about having a strong chest and taking it. And he just pushed everybody back.

He's a good player. He's an NBA player. He can rebound the basketball. He can defend. He can drive the basketball. But he was fabulous.

How we matched up, he was the reason they were getting the ball in transition right there, because I switched some things just because I didn't want certain people to have to deal with his physicality, because it's really hard at that slot. When they go smaller, he's hard to keep in front, but then TK can now physically handle. Our guards, it gets hard for them. It gets really, really hard for them. Then shots go up and you gotta box him out.



But, no. I've been a big fan for a long time.

TREY KAUFMAN-RENN: No, I mean, everything Coach Paint said. His ability to get in the paint and have that kind of shoulder bump and then finish through contact is incredible. He's just a really good player, and it's crazy. He's a freshmen, right? Yeah, he's a freshman. Like you said, he's going to be a really good player.

And then I was talking to him on the free-throw line a little bit and seems like he's got his head on straight with just doing all the little things for his team. So much respect to him.

Q. Fletcher, you had three shots early and you hit all three of them. Obviously you hit your first six. Then you got three shots over the next like 30 minutes and they were spread out and you hit all three of those, too. How hard is that to do, to not get shots all the time but to make every shot you get?

FLETCHER LOYER: I think it's just putting in a lot of work, putting in a lot of time and trusting myself. But a lot of it comes down to keeping your legs ready to have that burst and speed. But also trusting your teammates to find you when you're open.

Q. Matt, just Braden Smith had some struggles shooting the ball, but obviously he's been such an elite facilitator for you guys for years now. What did you see from his game today, and clutch was it when he was making those free throws late when he wasn't making shots?

MATT PAINTER: Yeah. To be able to put that behind you. Anytime guys don't shoot well, it's frustrating, and now can you still make -- we had a game, I think in the Tournament, he did the same thing, he didn't shoot well where he made five free throws down the stretch. I don't know which game. Sometimes you play four games in a row, it gets a little lost.

He had a tough night to be frank with you. He had eight turnovers and that's very rare and he didn't shoot well. But he still makes plays for us and that's what great players do. You make the free throws down the stretch and you put things behind you and move on.

We have a good team. We have good balance, and Braden is the guy that he makes us go and he sets things off. But I know he's frustrated, but, you know, we were able to win and advance, and now we can play another day.

MODERATOR: And play you will. You've got Texas next. Congratulations on today. Enjoy the rest of the Tournament.

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