

# NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: Regional Semifinal - Alabama vs Michigan

Friday, March 27, 2026

Chicago, Illinois, USA

United Center

**Michigan Wolverines**  
**Coach Dusty May**  
**Yaxel Lendenborg**  
**Trey McKenney**  
**Roddy Gayle, Jr.**

Sweet 16 Postgame Media Conference

Michigan 90, Alabama 77

THE MODERATOR: Money we are joined now by Michigan Head Coach Dusty May. Please start with an opening statement.

DUSTY MAY: I want to applaud our guys for the second half effort they had, especially considering the first half. We played well, went on a little run, and then finished just completely butchered the last two minutes of the first half.

We were down on ourselves, and we came in, and we regrouped, and our guys had a different level of focus and intensity in the second half.

I thought we played much smarter, much harder, and much more connected as a group. When you can hold a team like Alabama, who, you know, they're the leading scoring team in the country, one of the most efficient every single year, we held them to .88 in the second half DER. It was a testament to our guys with how hard they played.

THE MODERATOR: We'll take questions for the student-athletes.

**Q. Yax, just six years ago, about this time, you were playing your first serious minutes of organized basketball. Today you had this game in the Sweet 16. Just what are you feeling right now?**

YAXEL LENDEBORG: Overwhelmed with joy. This is



pretty much a dream come true. I didn't think I would be this far in life in general, enjoying myself with a bunch of random guys that I met for the first time this year.

So, I mean, I feel really blessed. Sometimes I'm at a loss for words when I think about where I am right now. I owe it all to my mom. She really drug me out of the hole that I was in. I continue to get blessed. We kept our faith strong, and we're moving on for the better.

**Q. Roddy, you and Trey outscored their bench tonight 33-6. Can you talk about the kind of lift you felt you guys gave coming off the bench?**

RODDY GAYLE JR.: I just feel like me and Trey's responsibility to come in the game and give those starting guys some energy, some juice. That's just kind of what I try to bring to the game every game.

It just happened to be offensively it was just kind of going for me. I just tried to make winning plays, and at the end of the day, if the ball falls, the ball falls, but I just try to give it my all.

**Q. For any or all of the players, from the first half to the second half, what did you guys -- what switch did you flip? Did you get more -- it looked more physical, more inside, more rebounding. What was the difference?**

TREY MCKENNEY: I felt like in the first half we let them, you know, get a lot of open three-pointers. I think in the second half we were early in the gap and then we got out, and we made them shoot tougher shots. I think that was why the result was at the end of the game.

YAXEL LENDEBORG: To add on to that, I would say we tried to pretty much get into an offensive match with those guys. You know, we're not that kind of team. They're a way better offensive team than we are. Once we started slowing the game down, being a lot more physical, and trying to dominate the paint, we started finding more success.

Our defense started coming alive, and that really helped us out. It helped our confidence.



RODDY GAYLE JR.: Yeah, I say that our personality is really on the defensive side, so we really got to that. Also, playing the first half we kind of understood what kind of game it was going to be, so I'm really proud of how our guys adapted to the circumstances.

**Q. Roddy, when you see Yax go off like he did -- I think, Yax, you had 10 points in the first eight minutes, two steals, a bunch of assists. When you see him doing things like that, what goes through your guys' mind?**

RODDY GAYLE JR.: I mean, you got Yax playing like that, just the kind of competitiveness he had today, like, I think he's the best player in the country without a doubt. He's like that, we're the best team.

I feel like we need that Yax. We need that from him. I know that he's going to be able to provide for us.

**Q. Yaxel, can you just talk about Trey a little bit and the spark that he gave you and what he's done as a freshman in this tournament?**

YAXEL LENDEBORG: Man, I've been hearing a lot about like a freshman wall, you know, that some guys run into. Guys that are pro like Trey McKenny, there's no wall for this guy.

He's developed so much this year. He's always been mature, but just his, you know -- the way he can read the game. The game has slowed down for him a lot more, today especially.

He came and provided big-time minutes. Since LJ went down, he took that responsibility to be the second point guard on the team and run the show. He did a tremendous job today, man.

I wish he would stop going up soft with some layups sometimes, but other than that, he's doing a really, really good job, man.

**Q. Yaxel, the start of the second half you had a step-back three and held the pose for a moment. Was that a message? Were you lost in the moment? Was that a message to your teammates, what you talked about at halftime? Was that a message to Alabama? All of it maybe?**

YAXEL LENDEBORG: Honestly, I kind of felt a little disrespected having a freshman guarding me. Yeah, so it was just keep attacking the guy. I kind of had the hot hand at that moment, so I just kept trying to be aggressive and continue to try to find shots either for myself or my team,

the team to create.

I think that's the first time I made somebody fall since, like, middle school or when we were playing in the park. I just had to take that moment in and I was just super happy. I don't know if I showed it enough, but super happy that that happened.

**Q. Yaxel, you mentioned your mom. What's it meant to have her be able to watch you play throughout this tournament run?**

YAXEL LENDEBORG: It means the world to me. None of this would be possible if it wasn't for her helping me out and believing in me more than I believed in myself.

The majority of the times when she's here and she's in the stands, like, I get a lot more aggressive. She has this certain calling that she does whenever I get the ball. I can hear nobody else in the stadium but her. It puts me in attack mode, honestly.

There was many times today where I was looking past the ball. I hear the noise, and it's, like, I must have an opening that I don't see, so I just go. If something happens, something happens.

The majority of the time something good happened today, and I'm going to continue to keep playing hard whenever she's here and continue to make sure that she gets to watch me play in college as long as she can.

THE MODERATOR: You can head back to the locker room. Appreciate it. Let's start for questions for the Head Coach.

**Q. Dusty, you guys are the fourth Big Ten team to knock out an SEC team in this tournament. Why do you think that has happened? What does it mean, if anything?**

DUSTY MAY: You know, college basketball has been cyclical forever. Hopefully this is a long cycle for us in the conference.

I think now that the playing field has been levelled out as far as finances and things like that and the environments in the Big Ten are second to none, the brands and now I think we're developing a different type of basketball identity with the West Coast schools joining us.

I do think some of the newer coaches have brought a different flavor. I think at times it seems the Big Ten is kind of cut and paste. You know, you turn on one game, and it looks pretty much like the other three that are going on at

the exact same time. Just wearing different color jerseys.

I know our league is incredibly tough. The coaches are off the charts, but I want to give the administrations a lot of credit. There's a bunch of well-run athletic departments in the Big Ten.

**Q. Kind of a similar question, but this is now the Big Ten is guaranteed four of the Elite Eight. One team is still playing. You were just kind of talking about this a little bit, but are there some advantages that, especially with the way the rules have changed -- are there advantages that the Big Ten has now that you've noticed because it's also happening in football?**

DUSTY MAY: You'd have to catch me off the record to answer that question (smiling).

**Q. Dusty, is March Roddy a thing at this point? How gratifying was it for you to see him have that kind of success?**

DUSTY MAY: When we need it the most, he brings it. It's a real thing.

I look at those guys, the veterans that came back: Roddy, Nimari, Will, and now LJ being out. They've probably sacrificed and given more than anyone else. Much like our staff, they've given a lot more for team success.

That's one of the reasons we really appreciate each other. The guys that we brought in have all improved, and they've embraced those guys and the dirty work and invisible plays that they make every day to allow us to win.

So, you know, next game there's probably going to be a couple of different guys step up and make plays. Obviously, Trey and Roddy were incredible tonight. Trey McKenny's poise for a freshman, his maturity, and then obviously his shot-making and scoring. You know, he did it all.

We needed it, because it was a game where our frontline didn't have their best stuff, for whatever reason, and those guys will play much better on Sunday, because they don't ever have two bad games.

**Q. From the first half to the second half, did you feel like you guys had to get back to your identity defensively, but also physically inside? It looked different than the first half.**

DUSTY MAY: What I noticed, and obviously I haven't watched the film yet, early on Philon and those guys made some extremely difficult shots. We over-helped on a

couple of corner threes and against most teams that would have been good enough. Our help under cover against Alabama, they get it off quick. Those guys are 6'8" in the corners. Mallette hit one and Jemison hit one.

Then we started getting a few shots on Philon. He was shooting tough shots, step-backs off the bounce. He shoots a lot of threes off the dribble. We started getting some stops. I think because he had it going early we had our competitive juices going and fouled him a couple of times at the rim when we had help behind us and we had our shot blockers doing their job.

We put him at the line so many times and we butchered the last two minutes of the half, which gave him a couple more points. I think we play with much more discipline in the second half. Because we weren't making those errors, we were able to get lost in the fight, and once the game got going, I think we went seven minutes without a media timeout.

I don't think we could have went 70 seconds in the first half without committing a silly foul in the first half.

**Q. Coach, you talked about the defensive discipline and the players talked about upping the defensive physicality. You guys are really flying around, challenging every three. I think you got two or three blocks on three-pointers. Was that the point of emphasis at half, too, to get out on those guys?**

DUSTY MAY: Once we settled into the game. And Alabama is tough to guard, as we all know. I do think they were surprised at our urgency to get back to their shooters, because we didn't have the same type in the first half.

There were two or three plays that jump out in my mind right when they happened I thought, that's going to have a lasting impact on this game. And it was Elliot's two blocked three on Wrightsell, and Roddy blocked another one.

When that happens, as shooters, you typically, when you get one or two blocks you start looking around instead of focusing on what you need to be looking at. I do think that had an affect on their shooting, especially the last eight or ten minutes.

**Q. 11-2 lead, Bama jumps out quick. Really fast off the dribble in the rotations. It seems like, though, in the second half of a lot of your games against really good teams, about the 13, 15 minute mark, they fade. They're dying on the vine. Is it physicality? Is it your training, endurance? What is it? There's a pattern there I'm seeing.**

DUSTY MAY: It's a combination of all those things. The physicality certainly is a big part of it. I do think Matt Aldred does a great job in the weight room, especially late in the year at keeping these guys fresh while also paying attention to their conditioning and all the scientific stuff behind it.

I also think we're older. We have some old, mature guys, and Alabama is playing several freshmen. They lost one of two elite playmakers. I mean, Holloway and Philon usually share the duty of creating offense for their team and creating those advantages and making plays, and they've lost 50% of their busted play, open-floor creation.

Now Amari Allen is in a different role, and I think Philon just has to do so much, and he gets 35. I thought we did a pretty good job overall on him.

**Q. Dusty, get back to the idea of sacrifice that you like to talk about with this team, and Trey in particular, could you maybe argue his ceiling, his potential is as high as anybody on this team. What do you think of him, just what it's meant the way he has blended into the whole?**

DUSTY MAY: It's been impressive of how someone comes in with his accolades and reputation and fits into a group. Yeah, I say those four returners have sacrificed. He's sacrificed just as much. I don't think there are very many teams in all of college basketball that he wouldn't be starting on. Probably one in the entire country and that's ours right now. Some of it has to do with rotations and who plays well with what guys and whatnot.

He's had a great year. Like they said, he hasn't hit a wall. He's so mature with his approach, with his day-to-day. Yeah, just happy he's on you are on team, because he played really well. That's the bright side. You hate to say a bright side with LJ getting hurt, but Trey has had a much different role and bigger opportunity to do more, and he's capitalized on it.

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