

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

Friday, March 27, 2026

Washington D.C., USA

Capital One Arena

**UConn Huskies**

**Dan Hurley**

**Alex Karaban**

**Tarris Reed Jr.**

**Solo Ball**

Sweet 16 Postgame Media Conference

UConn - 67, Michigan State - 63

DAN HURLEY: The game was almost exactly what we expected, except going up 19, I don't think that was on my Bingo card, is that what people say now? Just couldn't have more respect for Michigan State. Just to share the sidelines with Coach and that program was an honor.

Just so proud of these guys. Tarris and Solo and then Cap at the end over there just willed up to the victory. Just thrilled to be advancing. It's always great when you get to stay in town and be one of the last two teams standing.

**Q. We've been talking about the free throws all season. Tell me what's going through your mind there with a chance to put the game away.**

TARRIS REED JR.: I know I missed my first two, and they felt good. Really being able to have the confidence. Like I said, I feel like I put in the work. The guys around me were like, T, trust. We see you do free-throw game every day. You put in the work every day and we see you at the free-throw line.

So I took a deep breath and took my time at the line.

**Q. Alex, what goes through your mind when you're stepping to the line like that with a one-and-one with your game and season and college career on the line?**

ALEX KARABAN: I don't think that much on the free-throw



line (laughing).

I'll tell you, I've been through a lot of experiences. I've been through a lot of highs and lows. The main thing is just trusting the work. I work so hard every single day, and I just know the preparation is going to prepare me for these moments.

So really just having trust in the work and confidence in myself.

**Q. Alex, you guys have been involved in games like this all year where you had to make the plays the last couple of minutes to seal it. Does that give you guys a lot of confidence now that you're in this situation? You kind of felt like it would, like it would come back to be a benefit. Has it?**

ALEX KARABAN: Definitely. We knew they wouldn't give up. They have so many tough guys on that team. A lot of guys have been loyal to the Michigan State program. So we knew they'd battle back.

We've had experiences too where teams battled back, and we just stayed together. Really just trusting one another, trusting the experiences we've been through as a team, and just believing in the team and keeping our own bubble on the court.

**Q. Alex, twice they cut it to one, and you hit 3-pointers, with eight minutes left or so and the second one inside the final two minutes. Coach talked about you guys willing the team to win. Is that how you felt it went for you tonight, just kind of refused to lose basically?**

ALEX KARABAN: Definitely. That's definitely the mindset. I refuse to lose and really do anything to help this team win. The main thing in the huddle that really stuck with me is Coach saying, Go out there and fire, have no regrets at the end of this, when Michigan State started making their run. That just really stuck with me.

Just going back to having my work pay off and really if I see a glimpse of an opening, I'm going to let it fly, just like Solo is going to let it fly, Braylon, all these guys on our team. So I think that's pretty much what it was.



**Q. Can you take me through some of the emotions and what you were thinking as you went up with that first 3 and then maybe a feeling of relief after you saw it go in?**

SOLO BALL: Yeah, I know I got an open look, and we just have so many great plays that we can go to and great screeners. T. Reed was just able to get me open, and I had a wide open shot. That's how much space he creates on the court, how many screens he can set and how much attention he draws.

He just makes it so much easier for shooters on the outside, me, AK, Braylon, and all the perimeter guys that are able to shoot as well. It was a great feeling to have that going for sure.

**Q. For any of the three of you, obviously you guys played an exhibition game prior to the season starting. Was there anything in that game that maybe you saw at that time that you felt like you can be able to exploit in this particular game?**

THE MODERATOR: Ask Tarris to take that one.

SOLO BALL: He didn't.

TARRIS REED JR.: I didn't play in that game, but I watched from the sideline. I know a lot about Michigan State. I played against them my whole career, knowing they're a really good transition team on the glass. I felt like going into this game we knew what we had to do, and that was really control the glass and stop them in transition.

The first media, they had seven rebounds, or seven or eight offensive rebounds. Being able to lock in on that side of the court, rebounding and defense, and I felt like that's what was going to win the game.

THE MODERATOR: We'll ask Alex for his perspective on the court in both of these.

ALEX KARABAN: On the court you definitely see the physicality that Michigan State plays with, the pace they play at, and how relentless they are.

It was a good prep for us, I'd say, but at the same time, they've gotten so much better since that game, just like us. They've had young guys step up big time.

I think it was a good glimpse on what type of team Michigan State is.

**Q. Alex, you take that big lead into halftime, and**

**Michigan State cuts it back. What was the message in the huddle about weathering that storm?**

ALEX KARABAN: We punched them first, they responded, and it's really just how are we going to respond? How are we going to respond? We put in so much work. Our practices are intense for a reason and really prepare us for these type of moments to respond and really stay together as a team.

Making sure that we didn't separate, making sure that we didn't allow Michigan State to break us and really just have trust in our preparation.

**Q. Alex, I'm sure you've heard this a million times, but you've played in a lot of college basketball games. Over your career, has your approach leading up to games, has that changed? Have you felt like year over year you've been able to add things to your pregame, whatever, approach mentally, physically, that's helped you especially as you've gotten older and kind of taken on a leadership role more as well?**

ALEX KARABAN: Yeah, I think throughout my years, I've definitely had to adjust to my role for the team, but I think a big part for myself this year especially is really just getting into meditation before games. I really try to breathe and really just try to control my emotions and just control my thoughts more. I think I didn't do that enough last year. So this year I really wanted to head into it and just really ground myself more.

My main focus right now is to really lead this team, help these guys out, make sure everyone is themselves and confident. Picking guys up if they make a mistake or continue to support everybody out there on the court and really just do whatever it takes to win.

I feel like that's kind of the main thing that's involved throughout my career. When I first came in here, guys were doing that to me. Now it's just my turn to do that to younger guys and just other teammates.

THE MODERATOR: We want to thank and congratulate Alex, Solo, and Tarris.

We'll take questions for Coach Hurley.

**Q. In Tarris and Alex, just how comforting is it to have two seniors who you can go to early, go to late, and just ask so much of throughout?**

DAN HURLEY: That's what this time of year is all about. You've got to have great upperclassmen. You have to have great juniors, great seniors, veteran players that are



not going to blink and just can handle the pressure of the moment and also can bounce back from maybe a stretch.

I think to start the second half Tarris had some opportunities that he left on the table. And he didn't get off to a good start in the second half, but then he was able to stabilize. If it's a younger player, maybe they just keep unraveling.

And AK was able to make that in-game adjustment. I don't know how many shots he'd taken at halftime. My message to him is, if you're going to go out in this tournament, you've got to go out on your shield. You've got to go out firing, or you're going to have a lot of regrets.

You can only do it with older players at this stage of the tournament.

**Q. Alex Karaban has won 16 games in the NCAA Tournament. The only two others were Christian Laettner and your brother.**

DAN HURLEY: Oh, Bob, and Laettner? How many did they have?

**Q. I think he had 19, and Laettner had 21. What has Alex meant to this team, not just to the program, but for you what he's been for the past four years now?**

DAN HURLEY: He's a calming influence for me. I'm waiting for you to laugh. It's like having an associate head coach that is in the locker room, that lives in the apartments, that is in the dining, that is in the weight room, that's peer pressuring his teammates to do extra. It's like having a top assistant that's on your team and always around your players.

He's that mature with his approach. I'm just glad that, again, the decision to come back for this last year, that he's been able to play as well, and his last kind of run has been fun. Obviously he's improving his draft stock, and he's established himself as the biggest winner and the most decorated player in UConn history. That's hard to do at a place like ours.

**Q. Coach Hurley, you're one win away from potentially a third Final Four or potentially a third championship in four years. How much does that motivate you and the guys, and how much do you think the championship DNA from those other teams still runs through this team?**

DAN HURLEY: I think there's definitely -- because it's recent enough, there's definitely a belief, and there's some key contributors, that junior class, AK, obviously a lot of the

staff. There's a lot of continuity and confidence from that.

I don't know. I think you just get your mind focused on the preparation that we're going to have to put in for Duke. I didn't see any of that game. I could hear it in the locker room.

I think what you try to do is just focus on that next opponent and not think too big picture.

**Q. Malachi just seems to be playing maybe his best ball of the year, and at the right time too because obviously Silas may be not a hundred percent. Can you talk about what he's been giving you? Not scoring, but just about everything else.**

DAN HURLEY: That guy's tough. It's probably when his career is over and he's done playing, he's a future coach because he's got such an incredible way about him, and he's a smart guy and a tough guy. He's a real unifier with the group.

We've got a lot of guys vying to be the most beloved guy in that locker room, and I think that's why we've got such a great culture. It's a locker room filled with great people.

What's impressed me about this team this year, you look at what we did in the nonconference. We were hurt, key injuries, and we had as good a nonconference performance as anyone in the country, playing without Braylon, playing without Tarris.

And to be able to get to the Elite Eight with Silas being 70 percent, 70 percent, just gutting it out, without Malachi, we'd be cooked. We might have lost the Furman game.

**Q. Did you feel like you missed an opportunity in the first half? Like you said, the game kind of went as expected --**

DAN HURLEY: No.

**Q. But you get to that big lead, does that make it a little easier to not get frustrated, to kind of settle down because it did play out?**

DAN HURLEY: I think, when we watch other games, I always say to myself, when a team gets a big lead halfway through the first half, I always say like it's too early. Like almost the lead was -- and just that program -- that coach, that program, those players, Elite Eight team last year. If they had any luck making shots last year in that Auburn game, they were in the Final Four last year, and great shots.

We knew they were going to make a run. There was some self-inflicted things that went on with us out there, but we knew they were going to make a run. We knew we were going to have to make plays down the stretch, get stops, make big free throws, make big shots because to beat the Michigan State Spartans, we weren't winning going away, although that would have been nice.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

