

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

Friday, March 27, 2026

Washington D.C., USA

Capital One Arena

Michigan State Spartans

Tom Izzo

Coen Carr

Jeremy Fears Jr.

Sweet 16 Postgame Media Conference

UConn - 67, Michigan State - 63

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by head coach Tom Izzo, Coen Carr, and Jeremy Fears.

TOM IZZO: It's very hard to be disappointed and yet proud in the same statement. I give them a lot of credit. I said they'd come out and punch us in the mouth, and they did. I feel like they deserve a lot of credit for that.

I feel like they weren't shooting the ball well these past couple weeks. It's important that we stop the 3s early, and they hit the first two they took. So it was an onslaught there with six out of seven 3s they made. Give them credit.

Give our guys credit. We bounced back and picked away. The goal with six minutes left was to be under ten, we were to eight, cut it to six. Our goal in the second half was to play much better. We just kind of wore down. I played Jeremy so many minutes and Coen, but it doesn't get away from the job that these two and the two seniors have done for me, my program over the last two years.

A lot of credit to Danny, his team. I like his team. Got an inside guy that can score, and they've got some guards. But I thought our guys played their ass off, I really did. I thought they played hard as hell after the first ten minutes. Why we were down, we looked a little nervous, and that's got to fall on me.

There's some bright things in the future and that's what I'm going to look forward, to learn from the mistakes. Appreciate the job that UConn did and appreciate the job



that my guys did to come back. That's it.

Q. For both of you guys, what most will you remember from the senior group this year?

JEREMY FEARS JR.: The fact that they spent their dues here, four-year guys. They came in and busted their ass every day. Like they helped guys get better. They led Cam, led Jesse, helped Szymon last year. They helped guys who came into the program for a short period of time, and they helped themselves too over time. They got better all four years, just like anybody who sticks around this program year after year, you get better.

COEN CARR: Seeing everything change around college basketball, you see guys that have been here four years, they lead by example. That's something I want to do, just helping everybody, and all the new guys that come in, just helping. And teaching everybody everything they need to know about Michigan State.

I'm really blessed to have some OGs like that, so yeah.

Q. Not the first time this year you've been behind, but how tough is it to come back and overcome a deficit like that without having an empty tank at the end?

JEREMY FEARS JR.: Credit to them, they came out, they hit shots early. We turned the ball over. We missed a couple easy baskets. Just basketball, and at some point you can't flip a switch or be down a lot and then expect to win a game. We're fighting, fighting, fighting the whole game. Maybe if we were neck and neck, we give ourselves a better chance at the end of the game.

They played great. They hit a couple tough shots, and we missed shots. We just didn't do our part early. That falls on us, especially me. Like I had too many turnovers, missed easy layups, and the team needed me, and I didn't really answer at the bell for the guys.

TOM IZZO: I wouldn't say that, but go ahead.

COEN CARR: Yeah, what he said. They hit every shot they needed to hit, especially in the beginning. Like he said, when you go down 19, you kind of spend all your energy coming back, and then you lose a little bit at the



end like that.

It's just tough when you know you could have maybe prevented some things and things like that. I feel like all the younger guys and all the other guys that still have time, we're going to learn from this one.

Q. Jeremy, I think the defense started to change when you had that interception that looked like a slip, that you read and had the interception on that one. Did things start to change for you guys as a team at that moment? Did you start to figure things out? Secondly, as you made your comeback, looked like you rallied around Coen Carr and his willful injury. Can you talk about how that progressed, and did you rally around him?

JEREMY FEARS JR.: I would say early first half we gave up too many open shots, and they knocked it down, layups, drive and kicks. Then I don't know if the interception, what point it was, but I know the last five minutes of that first half, we had a great couple -- we had a great segment going into halftime. We made a smaller run.

But credit to Coen. Coen made some big-time plays down there. He had some layups, some and-ones, and some big-time finishes when we needed it. He really stepped up, junior guard wing for us. That's what we needed. That was a spark. And Coop answered the bell later second half a little bit, and Jaxon got going. I definitely think Coen was the spark when we needed it.

THE MODERATOR: We want to thank Coen and Jeremy for joining us here in the interview room. Congratulations on an outstanding season, all the way to the Sweet 16.

Q. Tom, it felt like it took a while to look like yourself, like settle into the game. When did you sense -- it's been a while since I've seen your guys not look comfortable and settled. Did it feel like that to you?

TOM IZZO: I would say that's a good statement. Listen, you don't want to call out guys, but Jordan has struggled a little bit lately because he's a freshman. I don't even know, they played one freshman who was a McDonald's kid that we recruited a little bit in Mullins. He hit one big 3, but it wasn't like he had a great deal either.

Then I thought that -- where you've got to give them some credit is they hit the first two 3s, and they were complete breakdowns on our part, things we've done over 15 times, and our seniors just didn't react to it. Then you've got to give them real credit when Stewart comes in, hasn't played in a month, and he knocks down a 3.

Meanwhile, we were missing some shots, missed a couple layups, missed a couple free throws.

But I thought they wore us down a little bit. Danny kept throwing those guards in there, and I don't know how many minutes Smith played, but he dogs you. Jayden Ross is a helluva player. He's 6'7" and athletic. He was 0-for-2, but defensively he's very good.

So what they did, I think with those two or three guards, they just wore us down a little bit. As Jeremy said, he made a couple mistakes there. When we were down one and we had the turnover, that led to a touchdown on the other end. You can't do that in this game against good teams.

Mark my words, they're a real good team, but we didn't look like ourselves. We started coming back a little bit with eight minutes left in the half. Then we came back a little, and then they went ahead then. Then we said with four minutes left, let's see if we can get this thing under ten and make it realistic, and we did pretty quickly. Finished some things off in the second half, but it wasn't enough.

Q. This week you've reflected on your career a lot and where you've been. After this game, where do you see yourself in five years?

TOM IZZO: Trying to win a National Championship, plain and simple. That's it. Those things usually start after your last loss. Nowadays it's a little more screwed up, but not at Michigan State.

After our last loss, we all talked about what we've got to do next year and how we've got to learn from this. It is -- I've got to give UConn a lot of credit, but man, we didn't look like ourselves early. You're right. That's got to fall on the coach. I've got to get them ready to do that.

So I plan on -- I don't know, I'm feeling good. We all talk about retirement. Why? What the hell am I going to do? The minute I don't feel good, the minute I don't feel like I'm giving my AD or president or school every ounce of energy I have every day or that energy drops, you don't have to worry about it. I don't steal money. I won't steal anybody's time.

But it's sure as hell not going to be now. I've got some things to accomplish. I'm going to make damn sure that -- I said a couple years ago that I'll find a way to get back there. We've knocked on the door twice. We haven't gotten back. We'll get back.

Q. Tom, this might sound funny after 35 games, but what did you learn about your guys tonight after they

got down 19?

TOM IZZO: There was a disappointing part, if I have to be honest. The disappointing part was I just couldn't believe. My young guys -- although Cam played pretty well early, but young guys are supposed to make those mistakes, but old guys aren't.

But then like hardened guys that they are, because they've been through the wars and they've been through the years here, they reared their real heads and fought back against a really good team, and they showed me a lot of character. They showed me a lot of why I love them and why it's so important to me to have relationships with guys. That's what I got out of tonight. That's the most I got out of tonight.

Q. In your opening statement, you said something about -- sorry about that. In your opening statement, you said something about the future's feeling good and looking good. Can you expand on that a little bit, what you like about it?

TOM IZZO: In this day and age, everybody -- you know what, I got seven or eight guys coming back. I've got a good recruiting class. Whether we go or get another one or not, that will be yet to be seen. I'm going to the portal right away. Tomorrow I'm going to the portal. The only difference is the portal at Michigan State is different than the portal at most places.

I'm going right to my frickin' locker room, and I'm going to talk to each and every player right there. I'm going to make some decisions about what we're going to do that I feel very comfortable with. Then I'm going to make sure that every one of them call our four freshmen that are going to be coming in next year and set the table on what's going to be expected and how we can, not do better than this year in a lot of ways, but how we can learn from maybe the mistakes we made.

In saying all that, the better team won tonight. He's done a helluva job. He's got some guys that have played for National Championships. I really like his team. They've got toughness. They've got shooters. They've got guys inside.

But we didn't take a backseat to anybody. To be down that much against a good team, and not only fight back, but take the lead, and then stay right there. It's why some of these programs, like his, like mine, like Purdue's, that's why I think they're special because, you know what, he coaches them hard. He cares about them. It will be a helluva game, Duke and Connecticut, and I think both Duke and Connecticut deserve to be there.

We made a run at it, fell a little short, but all in all, I've been blessed to have an incredible couple years with those seniors, Coop and Jaxon, and then Nick Sanders. He's been -- if you know what our scout team had to do, he's been so unbelievable. I'm the luckiest guy in the world. I'm just not lucky enough to be playing on Sunday.

I'll get to play on another Sunday. Hang around. I appreciate you all. Thanks a lot.

THE MODERATOR: We're lucky and grateful to have been joined by you, Coach.

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