

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: Regional Semifinal - Texas vs Purdue

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San Jose, California, USA

SAP Center

Purdue Boilermakers
Coach Matt Painter
Braden Smith
Fletcher Loyer
Trey Kaufman-Renn

Sweet 16 Postgame Media Conference

Purdue 79, Texas 77

THE MODERATOR: We will begin with a statement from Coach Painter.

MATT PAINTER: Obviously an unbelievable college game. Texas was fantastic. I thought both teams deserved to win. Tramon Mark was big-time. We were taking up his space, making it difficult on him. He kept making tough shot after tough shot. They have some weapons, and so, like, one game it could be Pope. The next game Swain, the next game Mark. You have to make some decisions.

I thought Tramon Mark was fabulous. Swain made a hell of a play at the end of the game. We were bottling him up, staying home so they couldn't shoot a three, and he gets an old-fashioned three-point play.

Our guys kept their composure. We got a good shot there at the end. Braden, I thought he executed well, made the right read, and took the right shot. And perfect timing. That's what you want. You want a chance to get a stick back. If you don't, then you go to overtime.

TK was around the basketball, and it's one of those things that happened, as coaches, you want to fill your defense, and you want the best defenders out there. Sometimes your best offense is a missed shot in those situations. You see it happen a lot, but we've also seen it where you do that and then guys make shots. You feel like, it doesn't matter as a coach either way. It's really, really difficult.



But I thought Sean did a hell of a job. They made a lot more threes than they normally make. Just a really good college game. But I thought Texas was fabulous. I thought our three seniors here really hung in there. I thought we got good effort off our bench, did some really good things.

We executed. We were only 4 for 20. Fletch made his first two threes and then we went 2 for 18 from three. To be able to win the game and go to the Elite Eight, but if you look at the stat line, we out-rebounded them by one, but that last rebound being pretty damn important.

But any time you can get in a game like this against athletes and length and only turn the ball over four times, it's pretty impressive. I thought our whole team did a great job of executing and taking care of the basketball.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open it up to questions for the student-athletes.

Q. Fletch, talk about the two guys on your left and right, about you seniors riding it through and what they mean and what all you guys mean to this team.

FLETCH LOYER: Yeah, these two here mean everything to us. They're two of our best players. They're two of our hardest workers. So to see them go out there and perform and keep their head up after a couple of missed shots or a couple of fouls or when things don't go their way, that's what winners do. They're two winners.

I couldn't be happier to play with the four years with them.

Q. Trey, I wanted to ask you, what was going on in your mind on that final play? Were you setting up for a potential rebound that entire time? For Braden, when you saw the shot wasn't going in, did you realize that Trey was going to be right there to tip it in? What was going through your mind at that moment?

TREY KAUFMAN-RENN: No, I mean, I think when you give the ball to Braden, he can go by anybody in the country. We have plays designed for him to do that. I thought he got a good shot.

Then Coach always says that it's not -- a lot of times it's not the first shot that goes. They're the tip-in at the end of games. He said that my four years here, so it's kind of cool to actually experience that.

No, I just tried to get myself in position to get a rebound or a post if his defender cut him off.

BRADEN SMITH: Yeah, no, I was standing under the rim, and I just saw it. I was, like, please get in there, please get in there, and it did. Obviously, like, I didn't make the shot. It came off the hand. The only thing I have to do is get it up there. I can't get it blocked. So there's opportunities like that for them to get the tip-ins and do those things.

Honestly, it left the hand, I thought it was in. I was hopping kind of like excitedly. I was, like, yeah, that's in. Then it took a weird bounce, and it was off. I was standing under the rim, and Trey tipped it perfectly. I was, like, thank God. Like, thank God that went in, so...

Q. Take us into that play. If you're allowed to reveal what it's called, have you run that specific action the entire night, just pure iso? What's the setup knowing game on the line, but ball is on the tee so to speak for you?

BRADEN SMITH: It's a play that we have. I'm obviously not going to say it, and you probably wouldn't even understand the terminology because there's about eight words in that play. So that's one.

It's just for me to get to my right, because I do feel if I get a little bit of a head start, a little bit of an advantage any way I'm going past anybody. Obviously, I thought it was a good shot. I thought I got there. Like I said, I thought it was in. Obviously it didn't, didn't fall. Trey was there, and obviously that's his job, and that's my job, and it worked out. Thank God he was there.

Q. Braden and Trey also, to have three seniors up here, how valuable is that continuity, the familiarity playing with each other in an era when there are so many freshmen and so many turnovers -- roster turnover in college basketball?

BRADEN SMITH: I think it benefits us more than anybody in the country having that. Like, we've played together for four years. We know our strengths and our weaknesses, and we understand what gets each other going. Honestly, I respect these two guys so much. They got on me for my performance, and I want that, because they would want me to do the same for them. They hold me accountable.

I think that's what I respect the most about Fletch. No

matter what, I had a terrible first half, and honestly not a great second half, and he was still, like, bro, keep shooting. That's your shot. You're the one that's going to go make these plays and do that for us.

It's just stuff like that that means so much. Then obviously Trey, silent leader, but he's going out there playing. He puts his body on the line every single time. Just does all the little things for us.

TREY KAUFMAN-RENN: Everything Braden said. Just having so much experience on a team, you hope it's moments like these at the end of the game, it's tied, one-point lead, two-point lead. When you have so much experience, I think you stay composed and then you execute. When you have either younger teams or teams where there are so many different guys from different schools, you just don't have that connectivity, synergy, whatever you want to call it.

I'm glad to be part of it. I wouldn't trade it for anything else.

Q. Braden, were you going to take that all the way no matter what? What was your look on that play?

BRADEN SMITH: Personally I was just trying to be aggressive. Like I said earlier, just not get it blocked. I felt like if I get that right seam, like I said, I feel like I'm getting past anybody, and I feel like I did a decent amount this game.

For me it was just try to be aggressive and stay confident, because I work on that shot, and that's a shot that I've shot in my four years here. For me it was just try to get there and obviously don't go too early for them to get an opportunity, but enough time for us to get a shot off and then if it does miss, a tip-in. That's really all it was.

I'm just glad these guys trust me to go out there and make that play right there at the end.

Q. Then for Trey, just the emotion of that moment when that ball goes in.

TREY KAUFMAN-RENN: I mean, I'm just excited we won the game. I don't know. I mean, I was kind of nervous. Man, I got to go back on defense now. I didn't know how many seconds were left.

No, it was cool. I don't know. It's really cool. We're going to the Elite Eight, so...

Q. Fletch, it looked like you were doing some stuff with a wrap or whatever, and you came back in the game. Were you -- back spasms? Do you mind talking

about what was going on?

FLETCHER LOYER: No, I'm fine. Staying loose, staying warm. It was a heating --

Q. Have you ever had a game winner, and if so, when is the last time it happened?

TREY KAUFMAN-RENN: Yeah, I had a game winner versus Indiana last year. I don't know. I was informed that there was 10 seconds left, so I guess it wasn't a game winner, but I'm counting that, so...

Q. Was this maybe the first time you ever experienced winning a game in the closing seconds?

TREY KAUFMAN-RENN: No, I'm sure sometime in elementary, middle school, high school I hit some game winners. I don't know. To be honest, I don't know the exact number.

Q. Trey, the degree of difficulty on the tip, it was kind of backhand. Obviously you're fighting for rebounding position. How difficult was that tip-in?

TREY KAUFMAN-RENN: Yeah, I mean, you just try to get a hand on it. You know, it's not like it's a shot you practice every single day, although I do practice some crazy shots every day.

But, no, I just tried to get a hand on the ball and give us another chance. Like I said, I'm glad it went in.

THE MODERATOR: We'll now open up the floor for Coach Painter.

Q. Four years coaching Trey. He's pretty thoughtful guy. What's it been like coaching him and to see him have a moment like this near the end of his career?

MATT PAINTER: It's great. He has to process information and know what's going on before he can perform. He wants to get everything set, and then if something bothers him, it will hold him back a little bit.

I always compare it to watching TV and listening to the radio. He's like a second behind. He's a big-bodied guy anyways, so now that quickness at his position is even more important because he'll face some face-up guys and some guys that can move a little bit better.

No, he normally has that match-up because the way we play him in the pocket and in the post. He's great. Some guys are low-maintenance, and he's absolute no maintenance. He wants to get his degree. He wants to be

successful. He wants to get to the NBA. That's about it. That's about it.

All these guys here, they make your job easy. They'll spoil you.

Q. How much value do you see in the continuity not having roster turnover and how much did that show in a game like tonight?

MATT PAINTER: It shows throughout the season. We still have our issues, like everybody else too, just because we have continuity and we still have three-game losing streak or not finishing the season great and not even being in contention. We're the No. 1 team in the country preseason. We weren't even in contention to win our league. You know, the team that won it ran away with it.

That's hard for them. These guys are winners. Champions get off the canvas. To be able to now win seven straight all in neutral court since we finished the season and had our fifth home loss, which we don't lose much at home, you know, these guys have responded. A lot of times you say the right things, but now you got to be able to do the right things.

But, no, it makes your job easier when you are talking to someone who has been there for four years or five years. It makes it a lot easier, because what you want to have more than anything is that you want a players-led team. That's always the best team. That's what we have. These guys are very selfless, but they have a big voice in what we do and how we go about things, and they have a lot of pride in that.

Q. You're a student of the game. Talk about what this is, how hard it is to get to the Elite Eight and how important it is to you, the program, and your players.

MATT PAINTER: Yeah, it's very difficult. You know, just to win a game. Give Texas credit. They were the only team that rolled into the Sweet 16 with three wins. Everybody else had two wins, that's a hard thing to do, and about had four.

You know, you start in June, and you put that time in, and you're building your team, and you're trying to get better. Sometimes you can go on an international trip, and that normally helps, but you're building up. You're trying to taper to your best ability to play the best right now. Mentally and physically be at your best.

The problem is everybody else is too, and that's what makes it so difficult, because it doesn't matter what the seed number is before their name. It doesn't matter if

they're ranked. It doesn't matter that Texas lost four out of the last five or we lost four out of the last six or whatever. You get in the tournament, and you start playing well. I mean, that team there got beat by a team that didn't go to the NCAA Tournament in the opening round of their conference tournament. We obviously won ours.

You just try to get to that point to where you're playing your best basketball, but it's hard. Right now we feel great. We're one possession better than Texas. That's it. Like, that's it. You know, you walk out of that gym, you didn't say, hey, Purdue is way better than Texas, Texas is way better than Purdue. You're like, that's a good college basketball game. Both teams deserved to win.

Q. Matt, Fletch hits the first two threes early, and then you guys are 2 of 18 from deep the rest of the way. How do you make sense of that? Then what does it say about your team that you're able to still win a game when you shot that horribly?

MATT PAINTER: For us, if we had made more threes, we would have been in a different position. But it's something that we struggled with. When our offense isn't there, it affects other things. Even though Tramon Mark is making plays and Swain is making plays, I didn't think it affected us today, that we were getting some looks and we didn't knock them down, and it affected other areas of the game. It did affect the game, right?

You make three or four of those threes, it's a total different game, but that's -- we've went back and forth with Illinois this year as the No. 1 efficient offense in the country. Illinois is really, really good offensively. That's kind of been the thing. Oh, man, we got -- our offense has got to carry us here, but in the NCAA Tournament, that's not the case, man. You're not going to shoot well in six straight games. You're just not. That's just not happening.

Who are you when you don't shoot well? Like today was a big statement for us, because we've had some games like this, and it really affected us, even though in some of our losses we played well offensively. It's good to see us be able to grind this out.

Q. First Sweet 16 game at SAP Center since 2007. How would you describe the atmosphere tonight and how much of an impact did the fans make tonight?

MATT PAINTER: I thought the atmosphere was great. Obviously it filled in as the game goes. You know, when you are the first game and you're dealing with Arkansas and Arizona having a good chunk of tickets, like when do they get to the game, right? By the end of the game, normally you have your full house. Sometimes by halftime

you have your full house. It just depends.

In those early games that's difficult as those tickets have all been -- that's why they do it in sessions there, because they want better crowds. But you know, some fans for particular schools could care less about another game. They just want to see their game. You know, when you're that first game now, like our fans now, I would guess our fans stay and watch this game. That happens a lot in the second game in these situations.

No, I thought San Jose was great. The city is fabulous. It's really cool.

Q. You mentioned earlier how difficult it is to get to the Elite Eight. What kind of vibe do you expect Saturday? As big as this tournament is, the Final Four is sort of the marquee event in this sport. You have a chance to get there now.

MATT PAINTER: Yeah, it's something we talk about like with championships, like trying to win the Big Ten. A lot of people want to just talk about it in totality, but you got to get yourself in position to win a Big Ten Championship. This year we didn't.

Now you got to get yourself in position -- you can say, hey, we want to go to the Final Four. Well, you better win three games to put yourself in position, so you can't even worry about it. Just have to worry about that first opponent, and then you move on if you are fortunate enough to win. Now we've put ourselves in this position, so we'll watch this next game.

No matter what, we're going to play an unbelievable college basketball team in this next game.

Q. Matt, when Trey makes a play like that, he does that quite a bit, of course, how much of that is just he's stronger than everybody else, lower body, and how much of that is quickness, smarts? Where does that come from?

MATT PAINTER: Well, any time you have size and you're a rebounder, like he's done a much better job rebounding for us this year, and obviously Oscar fouled out, so we moved him to the five and subbed in our four, Jack Benter.

So now you're just trying to give Braden space, because it can go either way. Where are we going? Are we going with Fletch on a pin-down? Are we going to go inside for TK in a post-up which they've doubled? So you're in a short clock.

Any time you get in the short clock -- we've had a lot of



really good big guys, and if you get into a short clock and you give them the basketball and they double and you can't get something right away, that time is going to elapse. You're going to feel like a fool as a coach.

Even though we've done it at times because guys are -- like Zach Edey or Biggie Swanigan and those guys are so big and can pass like that. They get you in good situations.

No, just trying to get him on the loose. And then the one thing we told him was nobody is a safety. Nobody gets back. We talk about it a lot. We're always, like, you know, if that clock is low, don't get back on defense. Make sure everybody gets to the glass, and then obviously Trey made a huge play and got the tip-in.

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