

Big Ten Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Wednesday, March 4, 2026

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Gainbridge Fieldhouse

Purdue Boilermakers

Katie Gearlds

Lana McCarthy

Tara Daye

Postgame Press Conference

Oregon - 82, Purdue - 64

THE MODERATOR: Joining us for Purdue is Coach Katie Gearlds and student-athletes Lana McCarthy and Tara Daye.

Coach, if you would make an opening statement.

KATIE GEARLDS: Just congrats to KG and Oregon. They were really, really elite in the first half on the offensive glass, and we didn't make a whole lot of shots there.

Really super proud of my team in the second half the way they competed, the way they didn't back down. Love the competitive joy and competitive passion they played with each other in the second half.

Q. Lana, how do you reflect on your first Big Ten Conference tournament after being left out of the postseason last year and getting a first taste of that?

LANA McCARTHY: I think it was a great first experience. I'm super happy to be here. Just feeling so grateful that I'm able to play in my first Big Ten Tournament. Obviously I wish it went a little differently. I would loved to go a further and get another shot at Maryland, but I'm grateful for where I am.

Q. Tara, what was it like this year just bringing this group along and knowing that this team had essentially a generation of players that had missed out on things that you'd gotten to experience, two different schools, and getting to experience that conference play?

TARA DAYE: I feel like just being a newcomer, you always



want to put your best foot forward. KP, Lana, Mads, McKenna, they gave us something to play for. So it was definitely motivating.

Q. Lana, when you kind of reflect on your second year at Purdue, where do you feel like you've made the most growth from your freshman year, and where do you feel like you can still improve moving forward?

LANA McCARTHY: I think my biggest areas of improvement have definitely been IQ and on the court. Coming in as a freshman and being able to get that playing time, being able to play against some of the best post players in the country really taught me a lot about where I can grow, what steps I need to take in order to be great. With that same experience, just being able to see myself succeed and being able to know that what I do is important and I'm good at what I do.

Q. In that third quarter is where you guys just really went off. How did you adjust and make those things that really made the difference where you got to outscore them 25-17?

TARA DAYE: I think just coming out of the halftime, we just wanted it more. We had to clean up a couple of things. We really focused on getting stops on defense, trying to score and then not go bucket for bucket with them. That was our goal coming out of the halftime.

Q. Katie, does this game in a way sum up your season as far as --

KATIE GEARLDS: Some of it, yeah.

Q. Two different halves --

KATIE GEARLDS: Actually, something I think I said to the staff about a minute ago, it just kind of was this microcosm of kind of the way things were for us. We make eight shots, 8 of 33 or whatever it was in the first half. I felt like they weren't -- not all of them were rhythm shots, but a lot of them feel like they were open. I'll go back and watch them again. You say this all the time, I feel like we've got some really good shooters on our team when their feet are



set. And it didn't go in.

I thought we felt confident coming into the game, watching the previous game against Oregon and kind of the self-inflicted turnovers that we had. We did a good job of taking care of the basketball for the most part today. Just the ball didn't go in.

Then third quarter you find a way to go 11 for 15 and win the quarter by eight. Had a chance to -- I think we cut it to 11 and had a chance a couple times to get it to under 10 but just couldn't quite get over the hump. Every time we got close, I felt like Katie Fiso made a jumper or turnaround baby hook over her left shoulder. That kid was pretty elite today.

Q. I thought you guys did a really good job the second half of the game putting the ball in the paint. That's something you talked about at halftime about attacking that?

KATIE GEARLDS: I thought if we could, even in the beginning of the game, we wanted to be intentional about throwing the ball inside. KP and Lana picked up a couple fouls, so it was hard to kind -- disrupted some rhythm there. I thought they did a really good job in the second half of getting deep on seals, and Oregon decided to play them one-on-one a few times, and they were able to take advantage there.

It's hard to imagine, as much as we want to play it inside, that we only shot 13 to their 29 free throws. That one is really hard to swallow just because of how intentional we were about throwing the ball inside. So I'm excited to go back and watch and see where we've got to get better with those guys of finding a way to not just score, but put pressure and get the other team's post players in foul trouble.

Q. I just wanted to ask what's the next phase in the development of Lana, of Kendall, and of your bigs after facing a player like Etute who just seems so strong and so quick on her first move?

KATIE GEARLDS: I think Etute is a very, very good player. She's elite getting in and out of a ball screen, but all day every day I'm riding with Lana, KP, and Ave.

Q. What do you think was the show with defending the left side when their guards would get penetration on the left side, do you think?

KATIE GEARLDS: When we talked about it at halftime, I thought at our place our guards were very, very good. A lot of sense of urgency getting under ball screens or getting

over the top of ball screens where we needed to, and our bigs didn't have to come up to switch onto Fiso or switch to contest. Then Etute's rolling a guard to get an offensive rebound.

I thought in the second half we were a little bit more physical getting through those ball screens, and that way it really kind of slowed her down a little bit.

Q. Hila has really been struggling from three the last eight, ten games. Just to get the lid off the basket for her and have that kind of performance there in the second half, how can she build on that?

KATIE GEARLDS: Nobody in our locker room stopped believing in No. 8. There wasn't a kid that shot more on days off or shot more outside of practice trying to find a rhythm. It comes with a lot of grace. You look at -- I know she's 21 years old, but she's a freshman and in our country for the very first time, away from her family for the very first time. I can't tell you the last time she saw them.

When you think of someone who is a true Israeli, Hila is a true Israeli. She kept her head down and kept working, never made excuses, and I was really, really happy to see the ball go through the net for her today.

Q. When you look at where this program can continue to develop and continue to grow, what are the most important things you need to do to continue to push this thing forward?

KATIE GEARLDS: I think the biggest thing is just keep moving the needle. I think we made progress this year. Obviously not the progress we want to keep -- obviously keep playing in the Big Ten Tournament, find your way into the NCAA Tournament, those are the next steps.

But finding yourself on the outside of the Big Ten Tournament this year and then finding a way to get in and really facing what we faced -- I mean, we're out there with potentially three starters on the sideline in those white T-shirts. Taylor blows her Achilles first day of practice. We anticipated her being our starting 3. Taylor Feldman goes down with a back in the summer and tries to fight through it. We anticipated her being our starting point guard. And Mads kind of has the freak thing.

So not ideal situations, but I can't think of a team that I would want to roll out there with any more than those girls and those women in our locker room because they never made excuses, they just kept working.

I know the wins don't show it, but there's not a doubt in my mind that this was probably one of the most fun teams that

I've coached here just because of their competitive spirit and their competitive joy and love for each other that carried over every single day, and for that I'm really proud of them.

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