

Big Ten Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Thursday, March 5, 2026

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Gainbridge Fieldhouse

Michigan State Spartans

Robyn Fralick

Grace VanSlooten

Kennedy Blair

Postgame Press Conference

Illinois 71, Michigan State 69

THE MODERATOR: We welcome Michigan State to the dais. Coach Robyn Fralick, and student-athletes Kennedy Blair and Grace VanSlooten. Coach, if you would make an opening statement, and we'll turn it over for questions.

ROBYN FRALICK: A tough loss for us tonight. I thought -- early in the game I thought we really did a good job but didn't create a big enough gap when we were really playing some good basketball. Just some mistakes and ability to translate things we're working on, we need to do a better job of.

Credit to Illinois. I thought they played a good game. We fought back and gave ourselves a chance there at the end, but we've got to play better throughout the 40 minutes.

Q. The monster game that you two had, can you speak of the play of Rashunda and Inés? Even though they didn't get a lot of points, they were good on the defensive end and how that impacted your game tonight.

GRACE VANSLOOTEN: I think Spider and Inés give us a lot on the defensive end. Inés brings height and length and quickness for how tall she is, and Spider is just a great on-ball defender. Not every night is your scoring night, but I think they still provide a lot on the defensive end.

KENNEDY BLAIR: Yeah, specifically Inés does a great job of cutting off the ball. She does a great job of being available, and that's something I see often. I think she does a really good job with that. Same with Spider. She's battled some injuries lately, but she's a great leader and shows up every day. She throws her body around for us.



Both of them do a lot of things that aren't going to show up in the box score, but they impact us in ways that not everybody sees.

Q. Grace, you're a captain, Kennedy, you're one of the play makers on the floor. Even though your shot wasn't falling through the first three quarters, how did you guys keep the team up and at it so you could stay in the game?

GRACE VANSLOOTEN: It's frustrating to see your shots aren't falling, but you don't ever want to lose confidence. I think, if you just keep shooting, eventually one of them is going to go in. I think that's kind of what we did, we just stayed with it. It's tough to get to the basket when your shots from outside aren't necessarily falling, so I think we overall did a good job of that.

KENNEDY BLAIR: I think another thing is the shots that we're taking. When we get easy shots, then we're generally going to make them. So I thought they forced us in the hard shots early, and that's something that's significant in the shots that we're taking, especially when teams are going under on ball screens, it's hard for us to get the score the way that we want to.

Just adjustments that we need to make. I think that we'll probably have a better shooting night our next game. Hopefully we can just find ways to get easy shots and just get everybody going.

Q. For Grace, while not the result you were looking for, I remember just a little bit ago in 2021 you were playing as an Eagle for Notre Dame academy. What does it mean to be playing so close, just a few hours away from your high school and your hometown in a Big Ten Tournament?

GRACE VANSLOOTEN: Yeah, it's super cool. I think it's part of the reason I came to Michigan State. It's close to home, an hour and a half. I get to see my family, and my dad was here. It's always fun to have your family at games.



Yeah, just super important. I still talk to a lot of the people from Notre Dame. Just really grateful for my time I spent there.

Q. Kennedy, I've been following your game all year. It seems like a lot of times you're the straw that stirs the drink -- your energy, your ability to get downhill. How motivated are you to lock in for whatever comes next from this step for the rest of the opportunities you have for the rest of the season?

KENNEDY BLAIR: I mean, I show up every day, and I'm going to work hard no matter what. I feel like I've shown that over my last two years. There's not many kids who can say they came in as a walk-on, and they're doing the things I'm doing right now. That's just a testament to who I am as a person.

I know our season's not over. We still have a lot of meaningful games. I think that's just who we are as a group. We all work hard for each other, and I think that we play hard for each other, and that's something that you're never going to take away from me specifically, and for everybody I know Grace is one of the hardest workers I have ever played with. That's just something we have to do.

We've got to be able to learn, though. That's something over the next couple of weeks that we have to be able to learn from the film mistakes. I had seven turnovers. That's way too many. We're losing games because I'm turning the ball over way too much. So something I can grow on and something I need to watch on the film.

Q. After processing tonight's game, what's one or two lessons that you as a coach are going to bring into wherever the NCAA puts you on Selection Sunday?

ROBYN FRALICK: I think we've got to get better fluidity in what we're doing. That was a big focus for us this week. Then when the game lights go on, we have to be able to translate that.

Then we just made too many mistakes. I think the first half, like silly travels and we follow 3-point shooter right before half. Just things like that that comes down to a one possession game.

We're just too many games in to be making those mistakes. I would say, if you want to win, you've got to eliminate losing. We just had too many of those things in these level of games. We've got to minimize that.

Q. Of course the past three seasons you've had different teams, but in your eyes, what do you think

has been the biggest obstacle that's stopped you from winning here at the Big Ten Tournament?

ROBYN FRALICK: I'm not sure. Every team's been different. Matchups have been different. You know tonight I definitely know we can play better. There's certain times that maybe you play well and lose. I know we can play better. So that's on me to find a way to make that happen for the group.

Yeah, that's a good question. It's something that I'm going to have to -- as a staff, we've got to figure out how to get it done.

Q. It seemed like both teams were in a really nervy spot early on in the game. How do you push through and coach through a group and a team when it seems like both teams are maybe overwhelmed for one reason or another?

ROBYN FRALICK: I thought to start the game we were dominating the game and we're up two. So we have to be able to, when we're in a space of the game where we're forcing turnovers and really playing good basketball, we should have a bigger lead. We have to finish on the other end. We have to take care of the ball. We have to be able to execute with that.

In these games, when you have momentum, you have to create momentum through the score too, not just with plays. To start the game, we should have done a better job with that, and I thought that kind of stalled us out a little bit in the second quarter too.

Q. When you scout Illinois and you know how young they are and how many 19-year-olds they have out there, come March do they play like they're older than they actually are when you see them on film? Can they make a run in March, in your opinion, being as how young they are?

ROBYN FRALICK: They have a good team, and their young kids are good players. I think less about years or experience, and I think more about level of play and level of player. Their young kids are good players. They've been playing well at the end of the season.

The Big Ten is full of a lot of really good teams. In our league, I also think you grow up pretty fast because the competition night in and night out. They've got a good team. Their young kids have been good all season. I thought they played well tonight too.

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