

# Big Ten Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Thursday, March 9, 2023

Chicago, Illinois, USA

United Center

## Illinois Fighting Illini Coach Brad Underwood Terrence Shannon, Jr. Coleman Hawkins Dain Dainja

Postgame Press Conference

Penn State 79, Illinois 76

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by the Illini head coach Brad Underwood, Dain Dainja, Coleman Hawkins, and Terrence Shannon Jr.

BRAD UNDERWOOD: My hat's off to Penn State. They beat us three times, so we obviously haven't figured out what the sauce is to beat them.

It's frustrating when you shoot 57 percent in the second half and lose. I thought we had a little different approach trying to get the ball in the paint. Dain and Coleman, I thought, were electric. Dain missed a few early.

But trying to take advantage of that, Coleman's 8 of 12 or whatever -- I can't read -- 8 of 14, I guess. They go to booty ball, and it's really, really hard to guard. When you can keep the possession of the ball for 12, 13 seconds, 10 seconds, and just keep backing up and you have no recourse in how you guard it because you can't touch them, it becomes very challenging.

If you double, ^ you sprays it. So they have the rule in the NBA that eliminates that, but they don't in college.

Obviously Mike is an unbelievable coach. He's done a great job. Wish him luck in the NCAA Tournament.

**Q. Coleman, what has made this team so difficult for you guys to defeat?**

COLEMAN HAWKINS: I think it's just the matchup, I want to say with Pickett, but we let guys like Funk impact the



game, Lundy, so you can't really say it was that.

I think, yeah, like Coach was saying, just backing you down, backing you down, you can't really do anything about it. You can't touch them. You wall up, they call it. Then you try to help and spread out to a three-point shooter.

So it's just difficult trying to find that in between where you can still guard the booty ball and still guard the shooter. So I think that's been the toughest part of playing them.

**Q. For Coleman and Dain both. You guys were both pretty effective in post-ups against their smaller lineups. What worked then and maybe what didn't make that as sustainable?**

DAIN DAINJA: Can you repeat the question?

**Q. What worked with you and Coleman's successful post-ups against their smaller lineups, and then what maybe just didn't make that as something you go to late?**

DAIN DAINJA: We tried to get it in the paint early. It was a few bunnies that I had missed early, but I found my flow. I think just like, why we stopped, just because of the lineup they had in. We needed some threes late in the game.

COLEMAN HAWKINS: I think it's just our length. This is no disrespect to Pickett, but he's kind of like a free safety out there, so we kind of wanted to exploit that, kind of make him want to guard.

When we get them guarding, it's harder on them to run their offense and make shots because they're doing it on both ends. So I think just me and Dain's length as well, I don't know how tall Pickett is, but I should be doing that and I haven't really done a good job of posting up all year.

I mean, when it's a guard and a four, five, you should be able to score in the paint like that.

**Q. What do you think you can tell some of the younger guys on the team now leading into the next tournament**



**just a week from now? What do you feel like you can tell them to prepare them for the next one-and-done opportunity?**

TERRENCE SHANNON JR: Just get this game out of their head. Get back in the gym, take the days off that we have, use that and watch film, see how we can get better. Just get prepared for March.

The lights will be brighter, and if we lock in and play defense the way I know we can, we'll be fine.

**Q. Terrence, was it just the missed free throws late, or was there something else maybe missing execution-wise for you guys?**

TERRENCE SHANNON JR: We lost some guys because we weren't trapping the post Pickett, and we lost some guys. And when we did trap, we didn't rotate pretty fast. So those were pretty big momentum changers.

And Dain's technical foul. That was a really big momentum change, and we were kind of on the run.

But we didn't play good enough. We didn't shoot good enough to win. But I feel like we played hard. We just had a couple mistakes.

**Q. Walk us through what happened on that technical, what the explanation was for you.**

DAIN DAINJA: I had scored, and it was really -- I just celebrated. I didn't see him. I had my eyes closed, so I didn't know he was right in front of me so I ran into him.

I tried to talk to the ref about it, but he said things about concussions and stuff like that.

**Q. Terrence, you touched on that play being a big momentum swing. How difficult was that for you guys when it could have been six right there, and even seven if Dain makes that, and instead it's four?**

TERRENCE SHANNON JR: That's big because Dain just got an and-one. He made the free throw, and then Funk shot and made two free throws and it was their ball again.

You said it for yourself, it was a big momentum changer. We could have went up six and got a stop and then went up eight. So you never know. We still could have won, but it is what it is. Next game.

**Q. Coach, the game was tied at 56, and things just kind of fell apart there at that point a little bit. What did you see during that swing right there?**

BRAD UNDERWOOD: They made shots. It's about -- it was -- you know, they do a great job of guard-on-guard screening and getting a matchup that they like, and then Pickett just literally takes the ball and pounds nails until he gets it where he wants.

Ty Rodgers helped on one and gave up a three, and you fight that decision. Do you want to double? He was 4 of 10. They were just twos.

But then we had a couple opportunities. We got fouled. We missed a couple in the paint, and all of a sudden it's a little bit of a run.

**Q. Brad, this team was swept by Wisconsin and Rutgers, and there's very strange matchups in this league where one team seems to have someone else's number. What was it about Penn State, if you can think of anything, that gave you guys trouble this year?**

BRAD UNDERWOOD: They're really old, the oldest team in Power Five, and they've got a really good player that is a matchup problem. They're extremely well coached.

Like I said, we've swept teams too. So it's just -- it's all about matchups, and they're a tough matchup for us. Any mistake we made defensively, they have -- and we've never guarded Funk. So Funk's had 126 points. I don't know what he's had against us, but we haven't guarded him very well.

**Q. After the last couple games, what's the key to getting the most out of Matt in the NCAA Tournament in the next week or two?**

BRAD UNDERWOOD: He's a 23-year-old grown man. He's a veteran. He's been there, done that before. He was very, very good early, and there's no doubt we need him to be excellent as we move forward.

Like I said, we've beaten great teams, and we are one. We need him to be very, very big part of this.

**Q. Penn State's one of the worst percentage-wise offensive rebounding teams. Tonight they get 10 offensive rebounds, 11 second chance points. Is that something disappointing or luck of the draw, bounce of the ball?**

BRAD UNDERWOOD: We blocked three or four shots that Lundy got back in the first half. I think all of his rebounds, except one, I think, were off blocked shots. That's a little bit of luck.

Again, that's not what we do. They end up with 11. We end up with 10. And you want to eliminate those, but the way the ball bounced today.

**Q. How much do you need to address late-game offense? There have been some close games where you guys haven't been able to execute down the stretch? They went on a 17-4 run. How do you see that going into the NCAA Tournament?**

BRAD UNDERWOOD: Better be better. Better execute. I mean, it's -- we tried ball screens. We've obviously been without Jayden. He helps in those moments getting us into stuff. That's not a knock to Terrence. We were pretty good against Michigan doing it.

So, again, it was more our defense tonight than anything. I'm more worried about what we're doing on the defensive side than the offensive side. Coleman missed a couple of bunnies. I'll go back and look at the film to see what our looks are, but it's a young team that has had at times challenges executing, and that's no secret.

**Q. I was going to ask you something else, but you just said you're more concerned about the defensive side. I guess my question is is there enough there on the offensive side that a run in the tournament is possible?**

BRAD UNDERWOOD: I don't know, we were 25 down at half to Purdue in their building and found enough offense to do okay. We've beaten UCLA. We've beaten Texas. We've beaten a lot of good teams in this league. I think there's plenty there.

I think it's really hard to night in and night out, we've built our program on how do you win when the ball doesn't go in? That's where we've struggled the most is -- there's no secret we're last in the league in three-point shooting. And Matt's a big part of that, and Coleman's a big part of that.

Luke has obviously helped, but we've got to make some threes. But we obviously just shot 57 percent and lost, so I'm a little more worried about what we do on the defensive side when that ball doesn't go in.

The NCAA Tournament becomes a grind. You've got to have guys who can make baskets. We do have that. Matt's a terrific isolation player, as is Terrence, and we'll give it a whirl next week, wherever they tell us and against somebody that's not in the Big Ten.

**Q. What is the key to this team living up to the potential we've seen in the NCAA Tournament?**

BRAD UNDERWOOD: It's finding a little bit of consistency. I think it's finding a little bit of positive momentum. It's creating an energy that's -- you know, young guys that keep growing.

I'm excited. This team can go as long and as far as they want to be. We've proven that. I thought we played pretty hard tonight.

Again, give Penn State credit. It was more them than I think it was us. You have those nights. We start getting a little balance with Dain. I thought he was terrific tonight. And we start getting with Coleman and Terrence and get Matt going and we've got pretty good shots with Luke, then I think we're -- get RJ going. I think we're in pretty good shape.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

