

# Big Ten Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Friday, March 10, 2023

Chicago, Illinois, USA

United Center

## Northwestern Wildcats

## Chris Collins

## Brooks Barnhizer

## Boo Buie

### Postgame Press Conference

Penn State - 67, Northwestern - 65

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by the Northwestern Wildcats, head coach Chris Collins, Boo Buie, Brooks Barnhizer.

CHRIS COLLINS: Congratulations to Penn State. I didn't think it was a beautiful game to watch, but I thought it was an incredibly hard-played game by both teams. Neither team really could get anything going offensively. Certainly we couldn't.

I thought we left a lot of points on the table in the first half, in my opinion. I thought we had some shots around the rim. We had some open shots that maybe we could have had a little bit of a lead there.

We hung in. It was a long game. We hung in. We had the ball late there. We had our opportunities. Lundy, give him credit, he made the big three there in overtime when we had the one-point lead. We kept fighting. Give our guys credit. We got a quick two, Brooks got a quick two. We extended the game. Boo made the first one, missed the second one. Ty got it, got it out to Chase, and we had a shot to win it.

Really proud of my team. Proud of our effort. We've got to play better. When you get to this time of the year, you've got to play better on both ends if you want to advance in these tournaments. Hopefully this will be a lesson for us.

Penn State's going to be an NCAA Tournament team, and these are the teams we're going to play as we figure out where we go on Sunday. We're going to go home. We're going to get rested. We're going to get right, and we're going to be ready to go Thursday or Friday.



# MEN'S BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT

## CHICAGO 2023

PRESENTED BY  
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**Q. Brooks, you had told me when you committed to Northwestern, you wanted to go somewhere that didn't have a history and help it gain one. I guess how special has this season been for you to come here and have the impact you have in helping Northwestern become an NCAA Tournament team?**

BROOKS BARNHIZER: I think it's been really special just because like kind of like the makeup of guys that we've gotten, just how close knit we are. I mean, it's always been here. It's just kind of been like we've got to have that push to kind of get it over.

I feel like this summer is where it all really started. We all came together and kind of told each other it's going to be this year. It kind of stings that we didn't get this one tonight, but I know there's a lot of positive ahead for us, and we've still got a lot of ball for us. So it does mean a lot.

**Q. How do you guys regain momentum after taking this loss headed into the Tournament to hopefully go on a run?**

BOO BUIE: We just came off a stretch where we won five in a row, and then we lost three in a row, and then we went on the road and got Rutgers. We just take it one game at a time.

We're going to go back, and we're going to watch film. Like Brooks said, everything is still in the positive. Our season's not done yet. We're playing for an NCAA, we're playing in the Tournament and a chance to win some games. That right there is motivating alone.

Yeah, just like any other night, though, you win some, you lose some, but you've got to come back with the same attitude. Nothing changes. Just you've got to get better.

**Q. Brooks, there was a stretch there in the second half when both Chase and Boo were on the bench, and you went on a 5-0 run to cut the lead to two. What were you seeing out there, and what was it like to have the offense to be going through you for a bit?**

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BROOKS BARNHIZER: I saw our two leading scorers on the bench, and I knew we needed some offense from somewhere. It was a play where I kind of came off a screen. On the first one he was pretty low. I got a pretty good look at the second one because I hit three came off, so I was on the second one because I hit the three and it kind of came off and I was able to sneak and get to the basket. It was just being aggressive with two of our leading scorers out. That's pretty much what it was.

I think it cut the lead from seven to two, kind of got back in the game. So it was a big stretch. It wasn't enough, but it was a good run for us.

**Q. Boo, you guys ended most of your -- almost all of your possessions with a shot attempt, only four turnovers and 66 attempts from the field, yet the shooting just wasn't there. Was that more Penn State's defense taking away looks that you wanted or just a cold shooting night for you guys?**

BOO BUIE: I'll give credit to Penn State. They did a good job of trying to get the ball out of Chase and I's hands. I think, just as a team, including Chase and I, we just didn't make shots overall. We missed a couple shots that we usually make, and if we had made those, we would have gained a little bit of a lead, and things probably would have went our way.

We've been a team who hasn't turned the ball over a bunch. We just weren't making shots tonight.

**Q. Boo, was there anything they were doing differently from last week in materials of like their pick-and-roll coverage defensively that kind of made it difficult? It looked like they were collapsing on like all middle drives?**

BOO BUIE: You could ask Coach this, but for the most part, I feel like they guarded me the same. I actually thought last game they were a little bit more aggressive as far as how far they were going to stay with me.

Yeah, it was pretty much the same.

**Q. Boo, Camren Wynter was the leading scorer in the first matchup with you guys, and you guys essentially neutralized him. Was that part of the game plan, or do you think he was just not getting the looks?**

BOO BUIE: No, I think we just did a better job coming in, dialing in. Our last game our defensive rotations weren't really that good, so guys were getting a lot of open, wide open shots. I just think we did a better job of rotating and just better defensively overall. So he wasn't able to get

those looks.

**Q. Brooks, you had 15 points, 11 rebounds. It didn't go your way tonight. Can you talk about what this moment means to you and how it's a culmination of your growth this season.**

BROOKS BARNHIZER: It means a lot. I just try to play hard when I'm out there. It's just kind of how the game went. I kind of stayed in there a lot. It's important, but ultimately we didn't win. So it's kind of like really the main thing that I was kind of worried about.

It's cool to see, but we've still got to do a lot more. It was cool to see, though.

**Q. Chris, this was a good display of your defense. I'm curious how much you think adding Chris Lowery had to do with your defensive performance this season.**

CHRIS COLLINS: He's done a great job. Defense is something we've always stressed. If you look in my ten years, we've always been pretty good with our defensive numbers. But I think he's brought an aggressiveness and kind of a grit and a toughness to our defense that I thought we needed.

I've talked about it a lot. I did a deep dive at the end of last year about what are some things we needed to do to get better in materials of getting over the hump and being this caliber of team, and I felt like our toughness needed to improve, and we needed to guard better and be physical. I think those are all areas that he really brings to the table. That's what he's always been about with his teams.

Again, we forced 15 turnovers tonight. We've never really been a team that forced a lot of turnovers until this year. A lot of it has to do with him adding a little grit and aggressiveness to our D.

So he's done a great job, and rightfully so. He was honored by being the top assistant coach. I think it's a great honor, and he's been a great addition to our staff.

**Q. Boo's last free throw, was the plan for him to intentionally miss that to get one last shot? And then Chase that last look, it looked like he might have slipped a little bit, or what did you see?**

CHRIS COLLINS: We were actually going to make them. We had 4.7 seconds. That's a long time. I feel like 4.7, you can easily -- and we could extend the game if we made them both and got it to one. They had just missed a free throw, and they had been struggling from the line a little bit.

I felt like, if we could get it to one and they missed another free throw, that we would have five full seconds to maybe get a shot. So we were going to make those two and try to get a turnover, try to get a quick steal.

I feel like five seconds is a long time. You can almost get about four dribbles. But he didn't make it. Give our guys credit, they got in there. Ty Berry made a great hustle play, kicked it out to Chase. It kind of looked like he was a little bit off balance as he caught it, but it looked like it was on line from my vantage point. Looked like it was going in, in and out.

Fitting way for that game to end. Neither team shot the ball well tonight. I thought it was kind of a rock fight. Two teams playing really hard, but neither offense could really get going.

**Q. Coach, early in the second half, you went to a lineup that didn't have Boo or Chase. Can you kind of explain what was the thought process behind it and how you felt about that lineup?**

CHRIS COLLINS: I just think they needed to -- I thought they were pressing a little bit. Penn State had gone on a little bit of a run. I thought we were just getting a little bit -- those guys were pressing. I just felt it was -- just needed to give them a quick breather.

It wasn't going to be long, but sometimes come over and sit down on the bench and kind of regather yourself and get yourself ready to go back in the game.

I was really proud of that group that was in there. Brooks hit those five quick points. I thought Nick Martinelli did a really good job tonight. I thought Robbie, this was the best he's played in a while. I thought his energy level, he made four big free throws there. Ty didn't shoot the ball well, but I thought his energy was there.

It was good to see that we could still be okay with those two guys off the floor, but then they came in and kind of were ready to take us down the stretch there the last eight minutes.

**Q. Chris, Brooks comes in last year. He's from a basketball family. I think he was trying to kind of catch up off of a high school injury and never really got going. What does he add now as a sophomore with some experience and almost a sixth starter for you off that bench?**

CHRIS COLLINS: Yeah, it's great to see his confidence grow. That's who we recruited. You guys, a lot of you

guys know he's an Indiana scoring machine, son of a coach, he's a competitive kid. He's averaged over 30 points a game in high school. So he's used to putting the ball in the basket.

He was hurt about halfway through the season last year, and it was frustrating for him because he wanted to be out there. He was kind of playing catch-up. He never got into the rotation. I give him a lot of credit. He worked his tail off and stayed with us in a day and age where a lot of people would probably walk out the door.

He knew he was in the right spot and he could be a good player. I think he's showing now that he's going to be kind of a stalwart of who we are going forward. He can score. He can rebound. He's very unique. He can post. He can handle the ball in pick-and-roll. Just excited to see what he can become.

Hopefully not wait too much into the future. We can get a great performance out of him in the tournament.

**Q. You mentioned how this is a bit of a rock fight, similar to the Senior Night loss nine days ago. What did you take away from a night that you may not have taken away nine days ago, given this is a tournament team, same type of game? What was the difference you take away?**

CHRIS COLLINS: I thought we defended them much better tonight than we did last week when we played them. I think we gave up 13 threes last week when we played them, and we fouled two three-point shooters. So that's really like giving up 15 threes.

I thought we did a much better job tonight of our rotations. We contested shots. They're going to make some. They made seven. I think we fouled one. Fouled Funk one time. So kind of eight made threes there, which is not great. You want to keep them under ten, if you can.

Then we did a pretty good job on Pickett. He got 15, but I thought we made him work hard for it. They're very difficult to defend. Everyone talks about it. They're unique with how Pickett plays and they surround him with shooters. Obviously they're very confident right now. They've won, whatever, four, five in a row, playing really good basketball.

They've won close games. Two in the buzzer, and now we had a shot. So you've got three of those wins right at the end.

So I thought there were positives from the defensive end. We've got to be better going into the NCAA Tournament. 31 percent is not going to cut it. Our four main scorers --

Boo, Chase, Ty, and Brooks -- shooting about 25 percent from the floor. You're not going to beat NCAA quality teams if we can't get our guys going.

It's on me. I thought we had some good looks. Give Penn State credit. I thought they did some things well, but I also thought we had some looks that we just didn't knock down.

We're going to get home. We're going to get right. We were excited to play here, being in Chicago, having a chance to play on Friday night. It didn't come our way tonight. There's still a lot to be excited about. It's been a great regular season, and now Sunday, we'll find out where we're headed, and we're going to have a great attitude. Wherever we go, we'll be ready to go on Thursday or Friday.

**Q. I'm probably going to put some words in your mouth here, but getting to the Tournament the first time, hard as it was, I think you would say that getting back was harder and that maybe required more of your players just to win, to win any game, let alone enough. Now they're at that vulnerable place where the next time they take the floor could be the last time they're all together. You know what that's like. What's your view of that, of them, and of getting back yourself?**

CHRIS COLLINS: Obviously I've talked about it over the last couple weeks, when it looked like it was going to happen for us. What these guys have done this year, the way they've rallied around each other, the way they've rallied around the coaching staff, I mean, everyone knows coming into this year there was a lot of negativity from the outside noise about where we were, where we were headed, what was going on with the program.

We never wavered. I talked about it. It was really hard to build it the first time because, when something's not been done in 80 years, it's not like there hadn't been people that haven't tried their hardest, and we were able to do that. That group was awesome. Then we let our momentum slip. We kind of had to start from scratch again.

So to build it twice at a place that has no history for basketball is pretty special. It's something that means a lot to me because you can't do it alone. I didn't score any baskets. I don't play defense. I'm just a coach. I'm trying to lead these guys and motivate and get them in the right direction.

But this is a special group of guys to basically block out the outside noise and say, you know what, we believe in each other. We believe in our coaches. We're going to go out there, and we're going to show that we can do it, and they did.

What I want them to do now is, when they find out on Sunday, we need to go, and we need to be loose. We need to play with reckless abandon. We need to be locked in. We need to play our defense. We need to shoot our shots. There's no reason for us to be tight, to be on our heels in any way.

I want these guys to go out and play the way they've played a majority of the season with 21 wins. I'm looking forward to that.

The Big Ten, guys, it's a long -- we've now played 21 Big Ten games. It's a grind. It's fun, but it's a grind. The level of competition, the physicality, the coaches you face, the players you face. I think it's going to be exciting for all of us as Big Ten teams. Nine, ten, whatever teams get in, to kind of say, you know what, let's put the Big Ten on the back burner, and let's go out and see if we can make some noise against the rest of the nation. I'm looking forward to that ourselves this week.

**Q. That's sort of my question, but I'm holding an mic, so I'm going to ask a question anyway. You know your group well enough to know that you don't have to guard against letting doubt creep in. Now you're heading to a bigger stage, but you've lost four or five. Is there anything you need to say to them at this point?**

CHRIS COLLINS: I don't think so. I think, if you look at every team, I think Purdue lost four or five at one point, and they're the best team in our league and not would the league by three games.

I think in this league you're going to lose some games. You saw that in the standing. It's how are you playing? You look at this four or five, we lost by one possession at Illinois. We lost at Maryland, who was 10-0 at home. Nobody beat them. We lost at the buzzer against Penn State. And we had a shot at the buzzer to win tonight.

So we're right there. It's not like we're getting -- we're no playing very poorly. We didn't make shots tonight. We struggled offensively. We fought it. I like our attitudes. I like how we're playing. I think we're relatively healthy all things considered.

We're going to be in a good frame of mind. We're going to be confident. We're going to be ready to go. I know our guys are looking forward to it.

We're disappointed. We were excited about this tournament, being home, being in Chicago. We had a great turnout tonight. Students are here. We wanted to do

our part and advance and keep playing, but it didn't happen. Now we've got to go home and turn the page to the NCAA Tournament.

Sunday is going to be special. I want these guys to enjoy what they've accomplished. It's historical, a lot of things they're doing. They need to enjoy it, and then we'll focus in once we find out who we're playing.

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