

Big Ten Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Saturday, March 11, 2023

Chicago, Illinois, USA

United Center

Purdue Boilermakers

Coach Matt Painter

Zach Edey

Braden Smith

Postgame Press Conference

Purdue - 80, Ohio State - 66

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by the Purdue Boilermakers. Head Coach Matt Painter, along with Zach Edey and Braden Smith.

MATT PAINTER: I thought obviously today was a tough game. This is Ohio State's fourth game. This is our second game in as many days. I think it kind of showed there.

But you can kind of see the heart of Ohio State, and those guys really played well in this tournament. We were fortunate to play them after they've already played three games and we've only played one.

I think you can see the future of Ohio State with Okpara, Gayle, and Bruce Thornton. They've got a great class coming, and they've got a great coach. They lost a lot of close games this year, and some people got them. But I think you can see the future of Ohio State and how good they're going to be.

That was tough for us. That was really tough. Roddy Gayle had an unbelievable first half. Bruce Thornton's a tough cover. You can see he does a lot for those guys. You can see his legs, he didn't have the same pop he's had in this tournament. And then Sueing obviously shot the ball well in this tournament. This was a great win for us.

So to get into the Big Ten Championship where we were last year and Iowa beat us, just happy for our guys. Hanging in there. It's kind of new guys, right? Mason Gillis has a great game for us. David Jenkins has a great game. David Jenkins gave us a great lift at the end of the first half,



MEN'S BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT

CHICAGO 2023

PRESENTED BY
TIAA

to be able to finish them off and hit the big three, his second three of the half.

I thought Brandon Newman really stepped up and played well. He did a good job guarding Bruce Thornton, he didn't turn the basketball over and just made some key plays for us.

The storyline of the game is they only have one center. So we had that matchup the whole night. I felt bad for Trey Kaufman-Renn because he normally gives us about 8 to 12 minutes right there and does a really good job, but since we just had that matchup all night, Zach was going to have an advantage and we were going to be able to get to the free-throw line. It just makes a lot of sense just to get him the basketball, get them in foul trouble, get to the free-throw line, and try to steal as many points as possible.

Q. Braden, you said after the Illinois game, it's awesome when shots go in. You've now hit six against Illinois from outside, seven yesterday, seven today. Is this maybe more indicative of what this team is as in shooting from the perimeter?

BRADEN SMITH: 100 percent. We all can shoot. We knew that coming into the season. Early on, we haven't shot it well. We're starting to figure it out, so it's obviously really nice when you're making shots too. Being able to have that kind of sets the tone.

Q. Matt is usually an even keeled coach. When Brandon Newman had that five second call and gets him animated, what's it like to watch him and the energy in that moment?

ZACH EDEY: He's pretty mild mannered, but he can definitely get on you. At the end of the game, he was super tense. You can feel that. And he's going to say something. There's definitely a few words I can't repeat to the media that he said.

Q. Zach, you finished with 14 rebounds but only have one in the first half. What did you see that was different between the two halves, and was it short of a product of Ohio State's bigs just getting into foul



... when all is said, we're done.®

trouble?

ZACH EDEY: I think I attacked the glass the same way both halves. It doesn't matter if the ball is coming to you or not coming to you. Rebounds, at the end of the day, they're kind of like a thing of chance. You can get to the perfect rebound spot, you can get to the opposite side, you can get to the weak side, but sometimes the ball will just not bounce your way.

I think I just kind of stuck with it. It was, what, 13 rebounds in the second half?

Q. Braden, you had a driving layup towards the end there. You're kind of always looking for that shot, probing. When did you decide to actually take it all the way?

BRADEN SMITH: I just saw the help, what they do with Z. It's kind of my first look to see what Z's doing. They had two guys hitting him, so the lane was there. So I was able to just go get a layup.

Q. Zach, when you're being guarded one-on-one like that, just what goes through your mind? How unusual is that? How much easier does that make life on you?

ZACH EDEY: Yeah, it definitely makes the game pretty simple for me. I've just got to score the ball every time I touch it. There's kind of like a point halfway through the first half when one of our coaches, P.J., kind of came up to me, this is just one of those days you've got to get 30.

So I just kind of stuck with it. I executed the game plan. I just tried my best to score the ball every time I touched it.

Q. Zach, that was kind of like an NCAA Tournament game, right? They were playing small, you guys are down eight, things are kind of spinning, right? Anybody say anything that you guys seemed to kind of gather yourself there? There's 8:18 to go, you're down eight points, and you guys seemed to kind of figure it out. Anybody say anything?

ZACH EDEY: Not particularly. I think they were hitting a lot of shots we kind of wanted them to take. They were making a lot of really tough plays. It seemed like every shot they put up was going in.

So we just kind of stuck with our game plan. We trusted our game plan above all else. It's worked all season, so we stuck with it. I think we had eight points in the last ten minutes or something like that.

Q. Zach, one of the interesting things I thought you

did in the game was you moved a step closer to the basket late in the second half. You're pretty good about feeling out your opponents. Is that something where you said, okay, I can move closer to the basket, which made a big difference?

ZACH EDEY: Yeah, I'm always trying to get closer to the basket. In general, if you're closer to the basket, it makes it easier. A lot of times I can just go into my hook shot or maybe it's a one dribble hook shot as opposed to three or four dribble moves I have to make. So I'm always trying to get as close to the basket as possible, and at the end of the game, I was able to.

Q. Braden, a lot of the talk amongst fans and some media is the basketball being different sometimes. Is there a difference for you? Do you feel that? What is your mindset when you have a different basketball?

BRADEN SMITH: I think that's just more of an excuse really, personally. I think just a basketball is a basketball. You've just got to get used to it and get in the flow of the game. So really just adjust from there.

Q. Zach, tomorrow you'll either get to face Coach Shrewsbury or a third shot against IU. What does each possibility mean for you? Maybe internally, do you have any preference?

ZACH EDEY: I have no preference. Obviously you kind of want to play both teams. You want to see Shrews. I always want to see him win, unless it's against us, because he helped me so much my freshman year. I want to see him win, but I also want to play IU.

It doesn't matter to me. I think they're two great teams, and I'm excited to watch the next game.

Q. Matt, we talked a lot this year about what Zach Edey does on the court. There was a play where he saves a Braden Smith pass and gets an offensive rebound on the other side of the paint. What is he, other than just 7'4" big? Everything he adds.

MATT PAINTER: Yeah, great mobility. He has a really good nose for the basketball, and he's different than most people his size in the fact that he can rebound out of his area, then he can give multiple efforts. A lot of times guys that are that big, they can make the play, but then they can't make the next play.

He just kind of stays with it. Not all the time, because he gets stuck sometimes, especially when he gets sandwiched down there.



Q. Matt, this season has been relatively wide open across the country in terms of there's no dominant team. Where does this league fit in terms of the hunt, which starts next week, if you will?

MATT PAINTER: Say that last part again.

Q. It's been a kind of wide open season nationally in terms of no dominant team. Where does the Big Ten fit in that hunt that starts next week?

MATT PAINTER: It's kind of hard for me because I don't watch all the other leagues as much as I watch our league, but I think from top to bottom we have a very good league. I think you just saw that. That was a 13 seed that we just beat, and you look at the talent that's out there on that court, and they don't have -- you know, a really good player in Brice Sensabaugh and a really good player in Zed Key.

They just didn't have it all together the whole season, especially with so many young guys that they have. But I think from top to bottom, we're one of the best teams in the league -- I mean, in the country, if not the best team -- we've got to be able to push through, and we've got to do our part.

That's what I always talk about. Whether we're trying to win the Big Ten ACC Challenge or trying to win in the NCAA Tournament, you can talk in theory or talk in whole all you want, but when you're involved in it like we are, we've got to do our job.

Everybody always talks about getting to a Final Four or getting to Elite Eight, winning a National Championship. You'd better win your first game. Then if you're fortunate enough to do that, better win your second game. So there's steps to everything, and anybody can beat you, but yet you can't fear anybody. You've just got to go out and compete.

Q. Do you believe that you guys have done enough to be a Number 1 seed tomorrow or that you could with the game tomorrow?

MATT PAINTER: I think it could go either way. Obviously the people that are involved have all had great seasons and done the same things that we have. If you look at it, obviously we have different conference schedules and different nonconference schedules. So then you've got to really chew on that and break that down, which I have not.

So like it could go either way. I don't think you should look at it like as a success if you get a 1 seed or it's a failure if you get a 2 seed. We're in great company, and we've earned the right to be in the discussion. Now the only thing

that we're worried about is trying to win this next game.

If you keep just doing your job, everything else takes care of itself. If we win and we don't get it, so be it. Who cares? That's not the goal. That's not what you put on your resume. You put on your resume whether you go to a Sweet 16 or go to a Final Four. The play is what's important for us. We've got to play better tomorrow than we played today, and that's the goal.

Q. Do you feel like you guys are playing a little looser just from my observation since the Ohio State game? It feels that way. Is there any sense to that since you guys won the Big Ten Championship?

MATT PAINTER: We've had stretches this year where we haven't shot the ball well. I think that's what comes off more than anything. We have guys that can shoot the basketball. Today we didn't have high volume threes, but we were 7 for 15, but we were getting it in there a lot. He shot the ball 25 times. Some people aren't going to allow him to shoot the ball 25 times.

When we do that, we're going to have more cracks at it from the perimeter. I think that's where you see it is guys feeling a little bit better about themselves. The greatest shooter in the world goes through a slump. That happens. It's basketball. That's why they say defense and rebounding travels. Sometimes your jumper doesn't.

Anybody who's shooting the ball on a regular basis for us, I'm confident they can make them, and that's just the attitude you have to have.

Q. Looking ahead to tomorrow, of course none of this matters if Penn State wins, but if IU wins, as you look back, what were the differences in those two games, and what needs to be different should you meet IU in the final?

MATT PAINTER: In the first game we played them, it was the turnovers in the first half. Their pressure bothered us. In the second game, it was Jalen Hood-Schifino.

Q. Coach, your opponent Sunday will either be a former colleague and a friend, or it will be Indiana. It's a program that you've been familiar with since you were a younger man. What emotions come to mind when it comes to facing either one of these opponents tomorrow? What's at stake?

MATT PAINTER: Well, obviously I think Zach said it best, we root for Micah. Obviously we don't root for him when they play Purdue, but he's meant a lot to our program in two different stints as an assistant. He's grown our

program. He's been a part of it, making us better, and we learned a lot from him.

He has some experiences that our staff hasn't had, being with Brad Stevens at Butler, being with Brad with the Celtics. Those experiences and just the overall success they've had with the Celtics organization and with Butler, I have a lot of respect for Butler and how they do things and the coaches that they've had through the years.

So always constantly trying to learn from that. Obviously I grew up an Indiana fan. A lot of my family went to Indiana. Went to '87 Final Four to follow them and things of that nature. So obviously I go to Purdue, so my allegiance changed at that time.

No, got a lot of respect for them. I'm not somebody that demonizes my opponent. I'm not that guy. It doesn't mean I'm not competitive. It doesn't mean I don't go after it. But if that's the case, we haven't played very well against them, simple as that, but you've also got to give them credit for that.

We had the upper hand on them for a while there. I think we won 9 out of 10, 10 out of 11, 11 out of 12, something like that, but the last two years, that hasn't been the case. Mike's done a great job. If you said two years ago we're going to hire somebody and he's going to get us into the NCAA Tournament twice, I think you'd be pretty happy with that.

Obviously they've got a great team that can go a long way in the NCAA Tournament. So he's done a really good job. They've got great players. We've just got to get ready to play them if they win.

Q. Matt, obviously beating a team three times in a season is difficult, but each time you've played Ohio State, it seems like a new team just personnel-wise. How much more difficult is that when it's a new look each time?

MATT PAINTER: This time wasn't their best lineup, but it was their best version. Like you get to a certain point in the season where people understand about sacrificing and doing things that affect winning. I think with their youth and their injuries, it took them a little bit longer. Then when you lose closer games, it affects you differently.

Then obviously the way they've played here in this tournament just shows you how good of a coach he is, first of all, and the pieces that they have, even when they're shorthanded. Like how does this look with Zed Key out there and Brice Sensabaugh? That's a tough cover. We were struggling to guard them today. You add those two

pieces, and you're really going to struggle.

So, the first time they were ranked 24th in the country and had the second best offense in the country at the time. With smoked them by one. Then the next time -- you know, we're just fortunate to win. We just lost at home to Rutgers. Fletcher makes a huge shot. We have a good defensive possession at the end of the game, and we're fortunate to get out of there with the win.

Then when they come back there at the end, you're playing at home and building on things, but still it was a game for a while until we separated midway through the second half. Like I said earlier, their future is bright. If you know basketball, you definitely understand that Ohio State -- some people got their licks on them this year, but that's going to come to a screeching halt. They have a very, very good young nucleus.

Q. Obviously no one else has a Zach Edey, but a lot of teams don't play through the center like you guys do. What is it like to prepare, to scheme, to practice, to rep? What is that like as the coach?

MATT PAINTER: It's different. We're all copycats. Like I said earlier, like a lot of people always talk about some of the things that we do and the things that we run. We learn from our losing, and we steal from others. Those are the two things we do. You watch a lot of basketball, you don't have to be original. You can just steal from other people that are successful, if it fits your personnel.

So we talk a lot to other people that have bigs and watch a lot. You know, watch Gonzaga, watch North Carolina, watch Wisconsin, watch the people who are traditional, or any big in the country that's dominant. Just watch and see how people double them, see how they attack, see what they do, just trying to pick up on things.

We've had a lot of guys, so we've made a lot of mistakes through the years. I always say quit making the same mistake and eventually you run out of them. But it is different. I think being different is good. 30 years ago everybody ran the Kansas break, and so 80 percent of the people that you would play ran the Kansas break because Kansas was so good, or the North Carolina break, however you want to look at it.

Now it's a lot of ball screen motions. It's a lot of driving. The NBA influences to a degree, not whole, because we're not as skilled as those guys. But now things open up. There's not as much post-ups. There's more driving. There's more ball screens. And that's just the way it is. And we've all become better defensively against that.

But yet when you're a little bit different -- some people don't believe in the post. There's legendary Hall of Fame coaches that don't believe in doubling the post because they don't want to be in rotations and they don't like the rebound balance. But you've got to mess with him in some capacity. If you stay one-on-one, you've got a really good post defender and you got the right refs on the game who aren't going to call it.

You can go watch this tape, the last night's game or the next game. If they call it by the letter of the law, nobody would play. They've got knees, they've got two hands, they've got stuff. The other coaches, I understand totally how they are. You can get a game against us where it doesn't get called, then you'll get a game where it does. That's where the NCAA Tournament, we really got those calls in the first round, then I thought St. Peters was just tougher than us. I don't think St. Peters was fouling us, I think St. Peters did the best job against us and fought us tooth and nail every single possession.

That's what you've got to do. You've got to give everything and anything to deal with his big ass. Sorry, that was kind of locker room. I shouldn't have said that. But it's true. And that's how they feel, and they don't feel it's fair, and it's not. That's like playing with Glenn Robinson in college. There's nights when he's got it rolling, you're at his mercy. So if they're going to call the fouls the way they should, he's going to put himself in a really, really good position.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports