

Big Ten Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Saturday, March 16, 2024
Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA
Target Center



Purdue Boilermakers

Matt Painter

Zach Edey

Braden Smith

Postgame Press Conference

Wisconsin - 76, Purdue - 75

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Purdue, head coach Matt Painter, Zach Edey, Braden Smith.

MATT PAINTER: Congratulations to Wisconsin. It was a hard-fought game. I thought we did a great job in the second half and overtime rebounding the basketball. They outrebounded us by one in the first half. We dominated the glass in the second half.

After that, I thought the big stat of the game was just it's kind of our magic number. If we get 14, 15, 16, 17 turnovers, I know it's our only fourth loss, but all four losses that number is right in there. Just got to do a better job across the board of taking care of the basketball.

You can go and look at individual plays or all the way through the game, just needed one more stop somewhere, one more score, one more free throw, whatever it might be, to kind of put this game out of reach and get to that two possessions late in the regulation or late in the overtime.

Give the credit to them. I thought Chucky Hepburn played really well. Didn't turn the basketball over, had 22 points on 12 shots.

I thought we did a good job on A.J. Storr, even though he had 20, it took him 23 shots to get there.

Wahl had been someone who scored against us the first two games. He didn't here, and kind of neutralized him.

I thought Klesmit was real solid and made some plays for them.

But we have a good group. We have a good team. We'll respond from it, and we're really looking forward to playing the NCAA Tournament.

Q. Braden, you're sitting next to now the all-time leading scorer at Purdue. Obviously it's still a loss for you guys, but just what Zach's meant to you, this team, and this program as a whole.

BRADEN SMITH: It's unbelievable. We're all super proud of him. He's worked his butt off to get here in the first place. He's a great teammate.

The thing here is, at the end of the day, he won't take credit for himself. He'll always point to us and say he got here because of us and we were helping him. Awesome accomplishment for him.

Q. Zach, you guys, after every loss this year, have won six games or more afterwards. How does this veteran group deal with the mentality of taking the loss and bouncing back so quickly from it to just continue on?

ZACH EDEY: I think it's been a big area growth for us, compared to this year from last year. Last year it would rattle us and check our confidence. This year we know who we are, we know what type of team we are, and we know what we can do.

I think, when you take a loss -- like this year it doesn't shake us at all. We stay true in what we believe, and what we believe in ourselves, and that's kind of like that veteran presence of being kind of through a full season as a team together.

Q. Braden, you worked all year to get back into this position where you're a 1 seed again. I think this team has done a great job blocking outside noise all season long, but you know next week is going to be 16 seed versus the 1 and what happened last year. How eager are you to get back into that situation and kind of right a wrong off of what happened last year?

BRADEN SMITH: I don't think we're really worried about



what happened last year. I think we're focused on now. That's in the past. I said it multiple times, they beat us that day, and they played better than us, and I don't think it will happen again.

We're all super excited and ready for this next upcoming week.

Q. Matt, you already mentioned the turnovers. They tend to come in bunches. There haven't been a lot of losses, but in all four losses, the turnovers have come in bunches and they've led to a lot of points. Is there any common thread there among those games? Anything you're seeing in those sequences?

MATT PAINTER: The sequence in the second half, that flurry, like we just weren't concentrating, just running some of our stuff and literally throwing the ball before we're looking for the receiver. You run a lot of stuff dry in practice with no defense. So like, are you really concentrating? Like when someone's defending, you throw the ball to the offensive player as much as you throw the ball away from the defensive player. So it's that combination, right? You just don't whip it because they're being guarded.

We just had about three turnovers there where we just threw it to Wisconsin. You've got to give Wisconsin credit. I liked their pressure. I thought Chucky was really good on the basketball. The other guys did a good job of just trying to push out some of our things.

I didn't think our details in starting plays was great there for about a handful of possessions. We got pushed out a little bit too far. The one thing about it, if they want to push us out too far is that, when we do throw the ball inside, it's a long run. So it helps us as much as it hurts us too. So it's not something that we really care about because, if we're going to make a post feed from 25 feet, if you want to go mess with the basketball, you're 20 feet away from him. You're 25 feet away from the rim, but you're 20 feet away from that post-up.

Just concentration. We've got to do a better job of concentrating and taking care of the ball.

Q. Matt, just spinning this forward, obviously so much talk in the last 24 hours about Braden's health. He seemed fine. Did he come through it fine? How did you maybe see him -- did you see him sort of favor it at all, or did it seem to bother him at any point?

MATT PAINTER: No, it didn't. That's what I was watching. I think a lot of times with competitive guys, they're always going to tell you they're okay, and you've got to watch them

through the game. You really have -- in our trainers, we've got a great trainer in Chad Young. I said, hey, you've got to tell me if you see him favoring it or if you see something. I'm watching the game. I'm not watching one person.

So our GAs went out there and watched him do stuff. I said, hey, you've got to be honest, if he's favoring it or he's not 100 percent, he doesn't need to go. They all said not at all, and he was fine.

Obviously he went out there and did some good things.

Q. I can't imagine with your rotations, Trey has worked a lot at the 5 since maybe the summer, and Lance in the last two days has played a lot more point than he has all season long. Is there value in this tournament and kind of the takeaways in those regards where you did some things that might come up in the NCAA Tournament, and now you've got reps in crunch time doing that?

MATT PAINTER: No question. I thought we played a lot of people. Myles played and did some good things. I thought Cam Heide did some good things. I thought Cam really rebounded the ball.

But Trey playing some 5 for us after he's played the 4. We got to where we're going to maximize Zach, sometimes we'll go smaller with Mason because of his ability to shoot and keep the guy out. A lot of times teams are going to come with the second biggest guy out there, and that's really helped us with things.

No, I think Lance playing the point some and Trey playing some 5, and Cam and Myles getting more experience and being able to play, especially in these type of environments can definitely help us.

Q. Matt, is a loss on Saturday almost a blessing in disguise because you get an extra day of rest before next week with all the bumps and bruises your team has gone through?

MATT PAINTER: Yeah, I think that's hard to quantify, but, yeah, you hope that's the silver lining. You get more rest. You get home at a decent hour tonight and watch the show tomorrow and get ready for playing on Thursday or playing on Friday.

Q. I asked Braden about it, but Zach is how the all-time leading scorer at Purdue. Just one more chance to just say what he's meant to this program.

MATT PAINTER: It's fabulous, man. Being the all-time leading scorer and rebounder at a school like Purdue with

great basketball tradition is really unbelievable. You look at both of those awards with Joe Barry Carroll and Rick Mount, who are just legends at Purdue, and for him to be able to do that and be humble.

He's a good teammate. He's a selfless player. He's competitive. He's everything you want in a player. I've never seen somebody so good get so much s*** for no reason, you know what I mean? It just blows my mind.

I played with Glenn Robinson. I've been around big-time players, big-time people. It blows my mind. All the things that happen and go on in a game, just because people with his size are normally not very good at basketball. He's really good. So he gets a lot of attention.

He's stayed grounded, man. He's stayed grounded. He keeps his composure, and we're proud of him for everything he's accomplished.

Q. What's the calculus on deciding whether to put 7'4" on the inbound run that last play at the rim?

MATT PAINTER: I had to put him on somebody, they went small. I can keep him at the rim and we don't match up and they hit a three, and they beat us. So when they went small, the one guy that's still out there triggering that pass is Tyler Wahl. That was their center on that play.

So we tried to angle it the best we could so they couldn't get on the run. It's where you kind of want the basketball, unless you throw the ball out to half-court with three seconds to go. Like he went to the corner.

So now you want to take that three away so it doesn't beat you, but then you want to have some resistance when he puts it on the deck. We kind of played it like we were up three, who cares if he gets a two. Well, two sends it into overtime.

Then everybody is so worried about a three, we're so spread out. We just had to give a little resistance there, and now we're going to get him into a tough two, tough pullup, and that's what you want. We just didn't do it. He just got a clear path to the rim.

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