

# Big Ten Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Thursday, March 13, 2025

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Gainbridge Fieldhouse

**USC Trojans**

**Eric Musselman**

**Matt Knowling**

**Desmond Claude**

Postgame Press Conference

Purdue - 76, USC - 71

ERIC MUSSELMAN: Just want to give Purdue credit tonight, but I've been doing this a long time, and the amount of text messages I got from an NBA head coach, an NBA GM -- that was tough for us. I thought our team did everything we could to put ourselves in position to win the game.

I feel for the locker room. This group came here to try to win this tournament, and I thought we put ourselves in position tonight to play one more day tomorrow.

But I get it. They had a great fan base tonight, and they'll have a great fan base tomorrow. Just unfortunate that we couldn't pull out a victory.

**Q. Matt, you came in and had an immediate impact, scoring the first five possessions down in the paint. What was your goal down low trying to help the offense if they needed it?**

MATT KNOWLING: I just wanted to stay ready, come in and impact the game any way I could. This is it for me. No more eligibility, so I'm going to go out and play as hard as I can, do anything I can to win.

That was stay around the basket, rebound and defending tonight.

**Q. Desmond, how tough is it for you not getting in the flow of the game and being on the bench with foul trouble and wanting to be out there and having to spend more time on the bench when you'd like to? How tough is it to come back in and when you're not in the game?**



DESMOND CLAUDE: It was a little tough, but I just wanted to stay ready and be supportive of my teammates, just give feedback of what I could see just from the bench.

I used the halftime to get warmed back up. But I was ready. I was ready. I stayed ready. At least I had the half to be fresh for the second half. I don't control what the refs call even if I don't agree with it.

I just try to be helpful in other ways, like I said, be supportive, give feedback, and just cheer on my teammates.

**Q. Des, they trapped you a lot in the second half. What were you trying to do, what were you trying to see on the court just to get some plays going?**

DESMOND CLAUDE: I mean, just to make the right reads. Basketball is just a thinking man's game. I just have to make the simple passes. If I've got an angle to get downhill or take the shot, then I've just got to make the right play.

**Q. Desmond kind of hinted on it, how frustrating was it that he was out for that long a time during the game? I know there's nothing you can do about it because they're going to officiate the game that way, but what kind of predicament did that put you in knowing that he's sitting next to you?**

ERIC MUSSELMAN: A pretty tough one. I didn't know that Desmond was so physical, but he was tonight, I guess. The game's on tape, so anybody can watch it. It doesn't do me any good to sit up here and get fined or whatever. The game is reviewable for anybody that wants to.

When Buzo dug down in the post, that's as clean as can be. Look, I've got to go face a locker room that their season's over. I thought the game plan, even with guys in foul trouble, I thought we could have won the game, but we didn't.

Like I said, credit to Purdue, and we go home.



**Q. Wesley Yates, what have you noticed about his confidence throughout the season? He played 50 minutes last night, 39 tonight. How has he evolved?**

ERIC MUSSELMAN: I think people need to recognize we played a double overtime game last night, that we're three hours difference from home on our body clocks, that we got back to our hotel and the first time we got to utter the words Purdue were about 1:00 a.m.

We had some walk-throughs today, and I thought they came out and followed the game plan as good as any group I've ever coached. This is probably the most difficult game I've ever lost with a team, and I've been coaching a really, really long time.

Again, I thought we played well enough to win the game, even with foul trouble. You talk about a player like Wesley Yates, who played 50 minutes last night, and then he comes out and does what he does tonight.

Baseline out of bounds, three seconds on the shot clock, we've got to defend without fouling there, I guess. And Wes has to hold his ground if there's body contact when he comes off a play that we diagrammed for him. Wes will be back, I hope, and I'll try to help him with that.

**Q. Those last two possessions in particular, what did you see from --**

ERIC MUSSELMAN: I saw what everybody saw, you know what I mean? I appreciate it, Ryan, but it's all on -- my daughter's at home. She watched it on TV. She's a freshman in high school. My mom's obviously living in San Diego watching it. All you've got to do is go on Twitter.

Look, we played well enough to win. That's all I can say. I'm going to keep reiterating give Purdue credit. We're new, we've got to earn respect.

**Q. In terms of Desmond's floater that he took, what did you think of that decision? What was the play call coming into that?**

ERIC MUSSELMAN: We wanted him to have the ball. He's so good at his float game. That's the only shot he really missed down the stretch. I'll live with that all day long. We wanted to open the floor for him, and sometimes to make or miss can be the difference, you know, or other things can be the difference too. You can miss a shot like that and still win the game.

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