

Big Ten Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Friday, March 14, 2025

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Gainbridge Fieldhouse

Purdue Boilermakers

Matt Painter

Trey Kaufman-Renn

Braden Smith

Postgame Press Conference



So like, hey, let's take this opportunity here. We get quality shots right away, and they don't go down in the second half. Then we get behind double digits. Then we never really recovered from there. We never could get a series of stops and get a series of scores right there and get on a run to really get the game back to a one or two possession game.

Like I said before, they have a good team. They have good pieces, and they were better than us today.

Q. Braden and Trey, is it just as simple as that you had the looks, they just were not going down tonight?

TREY KAUFMAN-RENN: I think so, yeah.

BRADEN SMITH: I mean, yeah, I thought we had a lot of open shots. Just got to figure it out. If the shots aren't falling, we have to figure out a different way to win, and I think we didn't do that defensively tonight.

Here on out, we've got to figure that out. We've got to figure out a different way to win.

Q. For both of you, what was the mood like in that locker room after this game? I was there when you guys walked in. It was very quiet.

BRADEN SMITH: Yeah, I mean obviously we're all upset with ourselves because we're better shooters than what we showed tonight. When you're competing your butt off and shots aren't falling, it sucks, especially when they're good shots. It's not like we're taking bad shots out there.

All good shots, and shots just weren't falling. Obviously we're quiet and just trying to figure it out. We obviously have a week here to figure some stuff out and get on the right track.

TREY KAUFMAN-RENN: Yeah, really just reiterate what Braden said there.

Q. Braden, after kind of a tough end to the season here, losing 6 of the last 9, like you said, you've got a week. How do you hit the reset button here in this next

Michigan - 86, Purdue - 68

THE MODERATOR: We've been joined by Purdue. Coach, we'll ask you to make an opening statement then we'll go to the student-athletes.

MATT PAINTER: Congratulations to Michigan. I thought they played a good game. Just on both ends, I thought they were better than us.

I thought for us our inability to make shots, not produce good shots. I thought we got really good shots the whole night. If you look at our turnovers, we didn't have a lot of turnovers. I thought our effort on the glass was good. We had 14 offensive rebounds, but we just had to convert.

The guys to the right of me have carried us, along with Fletch and all of our guys. We've been a good offensive team this year, and we need some makes to feel good about it and set our defense. And when you're missing two-thirds of your shots, which is not ideal for us.

But we got Braden in position, TK in position, and it just didn't go down tonight. It just was not our night. You've got to watch film, look at things, but when you're putting the ball in the right people's hands and they're getting quality shots and that's what the defense is giving you, you've just got to stick with it.

For us to win this game tonight, we had to be better on the defensive end, and we weren't. All season our defense is better when we're making shots because they're going against a set defense. They got us in transition earlier in the game. I thought we were very, very fortunate to be in the position we were at halftime, very fortunate.



week before you prepare for March Madness?

BRADEN SMITH: Just having fun and understanding the meaning of this game. And flushing everything and it's in the past. It's in the past for a reason.

I think just for us, just regroup, focus back up, get in the gym, get shots up, and trust ourselves. I think we'll be just fine. Like I said, we're shooting great shots. It's not like they're all bad shots at all. I don't think we took a bad shot, to be honest.

So I think just sticking with that and understanding shots are coming our way.

Q. Trey, you seem very frustrated. What are you most frustrated about with the way this game went down tonight?

TREY KAUFMAN-RENN: I'm just frustrated that some of the shots didn't fall. I just felt like you take great looks, you get great looks, and then they just don't fall, it's so frustrating. The amount of work that I put in for them not to fall.

This was a big game for me. It's just one of those things where you wish you could play the game over again. No doubt that I don't know if we'll play Michigan again, but that will be a big game next year for me because I just really wanted this one.

Q. Matt, one of the things you talked about and I heard was Tre Donaldson. You thought he was really underrated in how he was going to attack you. Did that happen?

MATT PAINTER: Yeah, I thought across the board, like we had to do a better job of keeping the ball out of the paint, especially when Danny Wolf is navigating things and Donaldson is navigating.

So I don't think it was any one player from them. I thought they collectively did a good job of breaking us down and getting the ball where they needed to get the ball. We had to do a better job of keeping it out of the paint.

I know I'm a broken record in that area, but they got us in transition a little bit early. I know the total points there aren't extreme, but it's like we had to do a better job to start with in the game. We get off to a 6-0 run, they go on a 10-run. You're just trying to get traction, right, you're just trying to get some momentum, and we never quite could do that.

They're a good team. Tre Donaldson is a good player.

Burnett didn't have a lot of opportunities in terms of shooting, but they're just solid. When you look at Rubin Jones goes 2 for 2, Roddy Gayle goes 3 for 5. Will Tschetter goes 3 for 5. Cason struggled a little bit with shooting. But like Danny Wolf 7 for 10. Goldin is 5 for 11. Donaldson is 5 for 11. Everybody contributed. Everybody was just solid.

Their decision-making and obviously their assist-to-turnover ratio was very good. We're not going to have a great assist-to-turnover ratio when we don't get shots. And that was just a thing for us. Stay process-based, get good shots and stick with that. Because normally when we get good shots, we shoot at a very high clip.

We had the best three-point field goal percentage in the league. Once Trey is making those plays, once Braden is making those plays, now you get an adjustment from people. And now once you get an adjustment and they're playing in drop, now we can open up some things for other guys. Tonight that didn't happen. We got quality shots, and they just stuck with it.

We've got to keep going to the well, right? We've got to keep going to get those quality shots, which we did, we just didn't convert those.

Give them credit. They were better than us today. They did some good things, and those guys did a great job of breaking us down.

Q. What happened when Fletcher fell out of bounds and came out of the game? I know you inserted him back in and pulled him back out. Have you heard an update on him since.

MATT PAINTER: Yeah, he hurt his elbow. I was just kind of asking like I didn't want to put him back in and further injure something, but our trainer said like he didn't think that was possible. He wanted to go back in.

But I didn't see the play. I know he was saving the basketball and fell on it funny, but he didn't really know how it happened either. It seemed like just on him landing trying to save the basketball, he hurt his elbow.

Q. Matt, it's been a lot of losing for guys who aren't used to it. How do you find the balance between being justified and being frustrated with your performance but also getting positive again?

MATT PAINTER: The one thing is like for us we split it. We always talk offense and defense. We have to be better defensively, and we have to be a better defensive team. At



times it's doing our job and being consistent. Then at other times, when it gets to a certain point, we don't have great rim protection. So we can't let it get there.

I know I talk about that a lot, but I think that's part of the frustration. I also talk about, when guys shoot the basketball well, they feel better about themselves. Like they play better on the other end and stuff. I think you kind of saw some of that frustration mount here when we have struggled offensively, it's affected our defense, which in the first place, like we're not a defensive juggernaut, right?

We've got to do a better job of that and just being able to grind it. That's why the USC game for us was a good win. It was a grinder. And any time we get in those situations and kind of fight our energy, like we bring energy when we make shots. Well, you're not always going to make shots. So that's what we've always pushed on this whole season is like we've got to have great energy. We've got to stay with it no matter if the ball's going in or not.

But you can see where it hurts us from time to time.

Q. They're 4 of 15 from three at halftime. I think all four those were deep, tough shots. Does that change the dynamic of this game at all as far of what you're talking about and then trying to defend the post because I know that's been an issue in the past.

MATT PAINTER: Not really. They end up 8 for 26. It's not earth shattering. It's not one of those things that we went in and said, I thought we had a couple close-outs where we could have broke rhythm, when a couple of guys that don't normally make them make them and then you still contest. Like you're living with that.

We had a couple times with Donaldson where we had to do a better job of closing out to him. Just the guys that -- he and Nimari Burnett are the biggest 3-point shooters with the highest volume, in terms of guys that start. But that wasn't earth shattering in terms of what hurt us.

It was kind of really the combination of everything -- their ability to navigate inside, their ability to make enough 3s. We've got to do a better job of adjusting and containing the ball. Not letting it get to the middle, not letting them get to the paint and then making people score over us. But also trying to break their rhythm to not let something be fluid.

Q. I know you guys want to win here in the Big Ten tournament, but how much of this in a format where you've got to play day after day is just process based, keeping guys in their routine as opposed to the end result knowing you've got March Madness ahead?

MATT PAINTER: It's a great point. We go round and round. A lot of times really experienced coaches will talk about it, guys that have been in the same league for 20, 30 years, and they talk about all the different years they bailed out of something early and they played better and vice versa, right? And then sometimes it doesn't matter.

I think today like the back-to-back affected our team, and I think sometimes it affects teams a little bit different. I don't want to take anything away from Michigan, but if we didn't like it, then we should have won our last game of the season and been the 2 seed, right?

Now you're playing the first game today instead of the second game today. So for us, there's not a magic wand. You just try to do your job and keep working.

A lot of people -- and I always talk to these guys about it. The people that try to talk and explain that aren't in our practices, aren't in our film session, it's hard. We didn't get beat by a bad team today. We got beat by a good team. Just that back-to-back for us, I thought was a little bit tougher.

It looked tougher, right? A lot of times you get beat, you're like, man, we've just got to generate better shots. We've got to be able to execute and get better shots to be able to do it. When that happens in the game, that's a frustrating point for a coach because it's your responsibility to create a system that creates that when you have good players, which we do.

But when you get good shots and you don't get it, because we need to feed off of that. Everybody feeds off of that, but we really need to feed off of that. Now transitioning into the tournament, hopefully you can get some rest. You didn't play as long. Any way you look at it, you try to grab the silver lining as a coach and make it positive. You have to because the result's over.

Hopefully that's the case. Hopefully we play better in the NCAA Tournament. We get some rest here, get ready to go and have some fun.

Q. Coach, over the past month or so, you're 341st in defensive effective field goal percentage, but you're also 338th in defensive turnover percentage. How important is it to get back to forcing turnovers given the kind of rotations you have to live in defensively?

MATT PAINTER: That's a great question. We really talked about it because we were doing it at one time. You also have to look at who we played at that time and who we played in the last stretch. I think that probably has the biggest hand there, if you look at it carefully. I don't want to

be disrespectful.

I talked a lot about hand activity and having active hands and trying to get deflections and doing that without taking yourself out of defensive position. When you don't have that rim protection and you don't have that, the last thing you want to do is to get really aggressive and just get blown by.

But we've got to do a better job of having that and understand like in ball screen defense or dealing with the post, having those hand activity to make it difficult on them but not go crazy one-on-one, especially out in space and making sure you're keeping the ball out of the paint, make sure you're keeping the ball there.

But you also are going to have your built-in help, and the one thing you've got to be able to do is you've got to be able to help on drives and swarm the basketball. You saw that a couple times at the end. We just don't swarm it, and they just make easy plays over the top and just lay the basketball in. So we've got rules to it. If you get off those rules, it doesn't help.

But you can't live in help the whole time. If you're just helping the whole time, you just can't be in rotations. It's why you see a lot of teams switch a lot of things because they don't want that rotation. But there's certain matchups where you can't or you're just going to get exposed. Sometimes we do it and we knock you out of what you want to do, but then we don't have good matchups on the glass when shots go up.

You're like, well, why can't this guy get this? I always say it's why heavyweights fight heavyweights in boxing. You don't see someone weighing 120 pounds fighting someone who weighs 240. Basketball it's different because, if you're going to switch, you're going to knock things out, but now you're there.

It's kind of when you go down that rabbit hole -- like I'm kind of speaking like I'm going down a rabbit hole -- but when you go down that rabbit hole, it starts with on the ball. If you can't be good on the basketball, you're just creating angles and you're creating advantageous scenarios for your opponent.

Then if they can decision-make -- sometimes you play people and they can get it, but their decision-making stinks. But when you play people that understand basketball and they're well coached like a Michigan team and their players, now they're going to expose when you get to that point.

We've got to do a better job of not getting behind plays

because once we get behind plays -- earlier in the Big Ten season, we were forcing some things, but we're also getting it from a style standpoint to where we're getting active hands, we're getting steals. When we played these guys, we really pressured them at our place, and we really got into them, and it kind of shocked them. We stole their spirit, and we blew them out. Then we outplayed until the last five or six minutes of the game there, and today they outplayed us.

But you've got to be able to create, like you were saying, you've got to be able to create some toughness to where the ball doesn't get into the paint, and then you're getting some turnovers. Like they didn't turn us over, we didn't turn them over. Then like who's going to shoot better, right?

They outrebound us by six, but at one time we were down seven in the first half, we brought it back to 20-20 at half. When you look at all those things, there's a lot there, but you've got to be good initially. When we're not good initially, we just live in help, and we don't have great block-out responsibility, and it really hurts us.

I really just try to talk you in circles to confuse you so you guys stop asking me questions. Honestly I'm just trying to answer your question.

Q. I guess following up on Dustin's question, this is twice in three games where you thought your team got really good shots and they just didn't fall. Is that the product of the end of a long season? Is it kind of the way the ball bounces at times?

MATT PAINTER: It's hard to quantify. It's probably somewhere in there. They're probably both right or a little bit right or somewhere in there.

As a coach, that's what you do. You have to run a system that's best for your best players, your most efficient players, and we do. We're going to keep doing that. We're going to keep getting quality shots and, I should say, keep working towards getting quality shots because it does depend on what the opponent does and how they guard us with things.

Yeah, like I just thought we were short on some things, like TK has that little shovel shot it seems like at times he never misses, and he just kept getting it. You want to encourage him, hey, keep shooting it, keep taking them. And it's frustrating for these guys. You guys have good questions because you can see the frustration.

It's frustrating for them because they get it, they get an open -- Braden gets that pull-up 3 where he's won games

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

for us, making those pull-up 3s, and he had a lot of opportunities today that he made the other night, that he's made all year.

Yeah, you just hope that got to get some rest, got to get ready, got to stay positive, and then have a couple good practices and let it rip. This is what you work for. You put in a lot of time. We start in June, and we put in a lot of time to be great right now. Sometimes that's worked for us, sometimes it hasn't, but that's part of March Madness. That's the way it is.

There is another team out there competing. So we're going to have a couple good practices here. No matter what happens, we're going to play somebody that's really good because they've earned their way into the tournament.

Q. I know there was conversation about the energy to start the game yesterday, bouncing back and being able to really generate it. How do you keep that energy up, though, when good shots aren't falling? How do you encourage them to keep going?

MATT PAINTER: Just be positive. You see me over there just trying to be a cheerleader and just try to keep them going, keep their spirits up. It's been an issue the whole year, to be honest with you. We don't have a team that has that.

When we play well and we shoot well, they do that, right? They feed off of that. So just trying to fight that when you know you have a little bit of a shortcoming there with that. I think every team fights it. I think we fight it a little bit more. We have some guys that are a little bit more quiet, and they feed off the guys that are a little bit stronger personalities and the guys that lead us.

Yeah, there's nothing magical about it. You just got to stay positive and keep working and keep competing. I thought our effort was good. I thought our execution was good. We just didn't finish things, and then we weren't good enough on the defensive end.

We're not going to go away. We're going to keep working. We're going to keep trying. We've got a great staff. We've got great players. We've got to try to do our best in the tournament and get on a run.

That's what everybody tries to do, right? No matter what happens here, now you've got to get on a run? You can't get on a run without that first game. So just looking forward to it.

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