

# Big Ten Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Tuesday, March 10, 2026

Chicago, Illinois, USA

United Center

**Oregon Ducks**

**Dana Altman**

**Nate Brittle**

**Kwame Evans Jr.**

Postgame Press Conference



Maryland - 70, Oregon - 60

THE MODERATOR: We are now joined by Oregon Ducks head Coach Dana Altman and student-athletes Nate Brittle and Kwame Evans Jr.

DANA ALTMAN: Really disappointed in the way we started the game obviously. It's my job to have them ready to play, and that first half was awful, another way to put it -- offensively, defensively. We were down 12 on the boards. We didn't do anything right.

The guys really battled, tried to get themselves back in it the second half, cleaned up some of the board play, made a couple shots. Really disappointed for the guys, especially these two guys. Nate's out with injuries all year and fought his tail off. KJ's tried to hold it together throughout the year. Really disappointing for these two guys because they tried to keep us in it all year.

Guard play has suffered throughout the year. Today they obviously didn't shoot it very well, which was part of our problem.

**Q. Nate, it's been five, six years. You've been at the Oregon fold. I'm curious when the final buzzer goes, what's going through your head there?**

NATE BITTLE: Just how blessed I've been to have been part of this program for five years. I came in as a freshman, had to work my way into the lineup and everything. I built a great relationship with this guy here. Teammates I've had throughout the process, whether my freshman year all the way till now has been a blessing. Nothing I'll ever take for granted. I'm thankful to be part of this program.

**Q. When you guys got back from that game there, it was just a few days ago that you had a miraculous run to close a game. Did you feel like this game was getting close again or you had an opportunity?**

NATE BITTLE: Yeah, but we had a couple turnovers there that caused some easy buckets for them when we cut it down. We just had to do a better job of taking care of the ball and rebounding. We just didn't come out ready in that first half. They jumped on us early, and ultimately they got the little gap lead there. We tried to fight back, but it wasn't enough.

**Q. Kwame, there's so much transition in college basketball. You guys have new teammates every year. You and Nate have been together for quite some time now. What does it mean to you to sit next to him one last time and what's the relationship between you two?**

KWAME EVANS JR.: I'm grateful for it. I've been with this guy since I've been here, and he's been leading us. Watching him every day coming in, even if he's been hurt, to see him leading by example, it was great to be with him one last time and just really grateful for it.

**Q. Dana, just with the end of this season, the end of this game, what's your emotions right now?**

DANA ALTMAN: I'm disappointed for these guys. They've been in two NCAA Tournaments, last year, the last two years, and the expectations were for us to win again and we didn't. Part of that's injuries. Part of that's poor decisions that I made in recruiting and not getting enough experience.

So when our experience did go down, whether it was Jackson or Nate, we weren't able to keep anything together. I mentioned our guard play. We haven't had the assist-to-turnover ratio, the ball movement, the playmaking for KJ and for Nate that we needed to.

No, I'm disappointed. It's been 30 years since I had a losing season or my teams have had a losing season. So



it's kind of hard to digest.

Like I said, I mostly feel bad for the guys that Nate doesn't get to do it again, KJ gave us everything, Sean gave us everything. The guys were all in, and it just didn't work out.

**Q. When it comes to kind of moving on from this and building for next year, obviously in today's college basketball it's hard to tell who's going to be on the roster at whatever school. Do you have any sense of what your team's going to look like next year, and is there anything that you can sit here today and say like, I need to do this better going into next year?**

DANA ALTMAN: I need to do a lot of things better. I've got to make better decisions on all the guys that we bring in. We've got to get some experience. I thought our lack of experience -- I think we played 15 or 16 Quad 1 games. You're not going to win Quad 1 games with inexperienced players. Other than Arizona, who's got two NBA freshmen. If you look at NBA freshmen, they're a lot different than regular freshmen.

So you take out the guys at the high end of that freshman class that are going to the NBA right away, the other freshmen struggle. So you've got to be experienced.

With the quality of games we had this year in the nonconference and the conference, you have to have a more experienced team. Whether it be Nate out with his ankles or Jackson out, the experience that we had were those two guys. Those were two All Big Ten team players. Nate was a defensive player last year that led the league in blocks. This year he just wasn't as bouncy. He sprained his right ankle early and then his left ankle in early January.

To his credit now, he fought his tail off to come back. He came back early on both of those. So I give him a lot of credit for that. But he wasn't the same player he was a year ago. He's got to get healthy and try to make a run here, get on an NBA team, but he's got to get healthy first with those ankles. He's got to get his bounce back, and the only way he does that is get fully healthy.

I'm so appreciative of the fact that he didn't leave us hanging. He fought his tail off. KJ, like I said, came every day. I think he missed one game or two, but he was there all year.

**Q. Have you ever had a half like that in your career? What do you say at halftime to get them back? I mean, they were competitive in the second half.**

DANA ALTMAN: I'm sure I have. You do this 46 years there are probably a couple. 3 for 22, I'm not sure about

that. I just told them how disappointed I was in the fact that we were down 12 rebounds. I said, fellas, that just means they're playing so much harder. I know we missed shots, but we gave into it, and bad teams give into it.

When the shot's not falling, their energy level goes way down. I said, I don't think you guys are bad players, I don't think you're a bad team, but you got outworked there, and that's not what we do. So we're going to get on the boards. We're going to try to get it to 15 at the first TV timeout. We're going to try to get it to 10 at some point during the game, and see if we can make something happen.

Totally unacceptable to get out rebounded by 12. The shots didn't fall, like I said, mentally we weren't prepared, whatever. We didn't have any fire. We didn't have any bounce. That's on me as much as them. It's my job to get them ready to play, and we weren't ready to play.

But they did fight back at least, and I will give them credit for that.

**Q. I'm wondering what kind of words you want to put there for Lin Wei's performance this season, and you just mentioned there's some changes on the roster for next season. Can you still see Lin Wei on the team for next season?**

DANA ALTMAN: That's up to him. We'll meet after the season with all the players. Obviously things have got to change with all the players, not just Wei. There has to be a commitment to the team and coming back, working their tail off.

The adjustment's been hard for Wei with the language, the communication barrier. Then just the transition, it's a different game -- the physicality, the speed, the defensive requirements. College basketball is just a different game than what he's used to.

I've talked to a couple high school players from China, and they were glad they got to play high school basketball instead of just jumping right to college because of the change.

Wei's a wonderful young man. Takes care of his business. Goes to class. Works hard. I've got absolutely no complaints. He's just struggled this year. He puts a lot of pressure on himself to be good, and he gets frustrated when things don't go the way he wants them to, but you expect any good player -- good players want to play good. He just struggled making the adjustment.

I thought I'd have a lot of help with him and Jackson in the backcourt. Jackson can take a lot of the pressure off of

him with his experience and make some plays for him and that, and that wasn't able to happen because of Jackson's inability -- I mean, his injuries.

So a lot of pressure was put on Wei, and he just struggled with that, but we had a lot of guys struggle with that. Drew Carter struggled with the pressure, and TK with a negative assist-to-turnover ratio for a guard you can't have. Our guards just struggled a little bit without Jackson's leadership.

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