

Big Ten Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Thursday, March 12, 2026

Chicago, Illinois, USA

United Center

Ohio State Buckeyes Coach Jake Diebler

Amare Bynum

Christoph Tilly

Postgame Press Conference



Ohio State - 72, Iowa - 69

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by coach Jake Diebler.

JAKE DIEBLER: High level game between two really good teams. Got a ton of respect for Iowa, what they've done this year and the potential they have here next in the postseason.

Really excited about where we are as a team right now, the fight that we're playing with, the connection we're playing with on both sides of the ball. It's really been a joy to coach this group.

They've stuck together through a lot of adversity, and I think that's why we're playing our best ball here down the stretch. Our plan is to keep it moving, keep it going. We've got to get some rest, some recovery, and get ready to do it again tomorrow.

Q. For either one of you guys, the first time you played Iowa, 17-point loss, kind of looks like a turning point a little bit in the season so far. What was different this time around?

CHRISTOPH TILLY: Definitely that wasn't us that game. We sat together and talked about it. Like you said, it was definitely a turning point. It was kind of a revenge game for us. Last game wasn't the way we wanted it. So we took this opportunity to change that and to show what we can.

Q. What does it mean to get another shot at Michigan here in the postseason?

CHRISTOPH TILLY: It means a lot. They're a good team. We're a good team. We're excited to play them, obviously.

Q. Early on in the game, it seemed like maybe there was a little bit of trouble with Iowa's defense, good defense. What changed, I guess? It seemed like something clicked at some point early in the first half.

CHRISTOPH TILLY: I think, like you said, they played well, like good defense. We stuck together. We were talking about it in the timeouts on the court, what we've got to do. Got to move the ball, cut to get open looks, and that worked.

Q. Amare, I guess when it comes to -- you had a lot of long defensive possessions. What does that do in terms of momentum and getting you guys going?

AMARE BYNUM: I would say our communication has gotten better throughout the first half. We had a couple slip-ups in the first half, but then once we got that, we started doing better offense and defense.

Q. For Amare, you kind of seem like you always know where to be on the court on offense. As a freshman, is that something that you developed throughout the year? Is that just like a general basketball IQ thing? Like, when you're cutting, how do you kind of know where to be at the right time?

AMARE BYNUM: I would probably say shout out to Bruce and them because a lot of my guys help up. When I see that, it's cut, get in the right place for them so they can pass it and throw the lob.

Q. You're up 16 on Iowa, and then Iowa cut it all the way down and then had that last look. What was kind of going through your mind when you saw the ball kind of squirt out after the free-throw and the shot go up?

CHRISTOPH TILLY: Yeah, that wasn't what we wanted, obviously. I was under the basket, so I kind of saw the ball, and it wasn't going in. I was kind of like relieved a little bit.

Yeah, definitely. They're a good team, and we were



expecting them to go on a run again. Then, yeah, at the end, it worked out for us.

AMARE BYNUM: I would probably say it's March, so that was definitely about to be a heart dropper. I'm glad he missed it. We've just got to get that rebound next time.

Q. Last time out against Iowa, Christoph, I know you weren't active for that game, but you guys got outscored by over 20 points in the paint. You guys outscored Iowa by 16 points today.

Amare, if you could speak to it a little bit, what was different? Was it having Christoph in the game? What was different in the game today?

AMARE BYNUM: I would definitely say having Christoph was really a help for us. Just being poised in the paint. We've been working on being poised, just finishing over people, and just using our athletic ability and just finishing.

Q. Jake, Tilly just called it a revenge game for Iowa. Is that something you kind of pushed as a coach?

JAKE DIEBLER: No, it was another opportunity for us. This team has had great approach game to game. We have high level respect for every single team in this league, and we've played our best when we've just taken it one day at a time.

This is a Big Ten tournament. You don't need extra motivation this time of year, the way we're playing. That thought didn't cross my mind. We didn't talk about that necessarily when we were together. Maybe they talked about it a little bit, but it was just kind of this was the next opportunity right in front of us, and we needed to be prepared. I thought our guys did a great job with that.

Q. Last time you guys played Michigan, there were two players with double digit rebounds. What's the plan on limiting the big play, the dominating big play of Michigan?

JAKE DIEBLER: We've got to be able to combat their size with some size. I think that's part of it. We didn't execute our rebounding coverages or rebounding technique well enough. Their size has been a real asset for them this year. They've used it on both sides of the ball really well. We've got to execute our job at a better level next time.

Q. Bruce has been one of the best point guards in college basketball for years at this point, but has never played in the NCAA Tournament. What have you seen from him in the season from a leadership perspective and his on-court impact to get the team over the year,

it seems like?

JAKE DIEBLER: His on-court impact has been really special. You see the efficiency that he plays with. When you get the attention that he gets from opposing defenses, it's really impressive.

What we've been able to do as we constructed this roster is put multiple play makers out on the floor so we can move him in different areas and different spots, so he doesn't have to play make with the ball in his hands, and guys can create stuff for him.

We got a couple catch and shoot 3s today. That was other guys creating for him. And that versatility makes us really hard to guard. As far as his leadership goes, it's something he's continued to get better at each and every year, and it's something we're intentional about, he and I talking through, and I think we have a great group of guys whose chemistry is a really, really important part of our success this season.

That, I think, comfortability allows him to be the best version of himself as a leader. He's not on an island leading. We have other guys who are stepping up too. He's special. I think he's one of the absolute best guards in the country, and we're blessed to have him on our side. I'm excited for him to be in the postseason because I know how hard he's worked.

Q. Coach, you guys got off to a good start in the second half. What adjustments were made at halftime to go up on that big run?

JAKE DIEBLER: We've got to take care of the ball better. We had too many turnovers in the first half, and they scored off our turnovers. It's hard to guard them in the half-court, but you give them advantage situations. It's a problem for you. That was kind of really important for us, take care of the ball, trust each other, keep moving. I thought our offensive movement and pace in the half-court was better.

There was a stretch there where I thought we made it really difficult for them to score. They hit some 3s down the stretch. A couple of those were -- we had some communication breakdowns. A couple of those guys stepped up and made shots.

That's a team, they're so dynamic offensively with the pace they play at in the half-court. I know their total pace isn't super high, but what they do in the half-court, how they move, the multiple actions you have to guard, it puts a lot of pressure and makes you make decisions multiple times in the same possession.

I really am proud of the adjustments our guys made from Game 1 to Game 2 and then from first half to second half. It says a lot about the IQ on our team.

Q. To you, what is different with this matchup against Michigan, and what advantages do you see on the court for your guys tomorrow?

JAKE DIEBLER: I think we're healthier than we've been in a long time. I think that certainly helps. There's still an execution element to this game that's going to be really critical. Obviously, it's a big game. It's another big opportunity for us. We're used to playing in big, meaningful games.

This one, going against the team up north hits a little different. I've said that from day one. We don't run from that. But our approach and focus has to continue to be the same.

We are going to recover and prepare well between now and tomorrow, and then when we're out there, execute, play together, play tough, and keep having the fight we've had the last few weeks.

Q. I want to ask about both Puff and Brandon. Puff is day-to-day and Brandon, there's a chance that he might get back at some point. What's the status on them?

JAKE DIEBLER: They've finally been able to practice. I think that's good. There was a couple conversations in this game about maybe getting them in a time or two. I just felt like shrinking the rotation for this game is really important. Obviously, size is going to be critical next game.

Iowa went smaller this game at times, so we didn't -- at that moment, we went a little smaller versus going bigger, but I think next game we've got to have all hands on deck and ready to go.

Those guys have trended in a really positive direction, so we feel good as far as their availability goes for tomorrow.

Q. Jake, a year ago to the day, you guys lost this same game to Iowa in the Big Ten tournament, and now you're here a year later. You guys win this game, you're going to the NCAA Tournament most likely. Can you just speak a little bit about how far the program has come in the last year?

JAKE DIEBLER: Yeah, I think we've taken real strides from last year to this year. I'm blessed to have some great young men in that locker room and a part of this program, and that's a great foundation to start with when you're

trying to chase something and build something.

So you combine that with our guys' ability to handle the adversity of the season is a big reason why we're in the position we're in. Our culture, our foundation, it's firm. So that's helped us weather the storms of life in the Big Ten. Like, every game is really hard. Doesn't matter if it's home or on the road. We've dealt with injuries and sickness and things like that, but we just kept moving forward, kept focused on the task at hand. Guys stepped up, which has been really important for us.

This is a really fun group to coach. Really fun group to coach. I'm excited how the season is going to play out for us. I really am.

Q. You guys finished the regular season on a high note and then you got the double bye. How do you think that rest helped you mentally and physically coming into today?

JAKE DIEBLER: We needed it. It would be great if there were a double bye in between the next game or something. Listen, we've had to -- this is a team that's continued to practice, and we continue to practice hard, but we're practicing really short. We've got to be really efficient with our time.

It's easy to do with this group because they enjoy being around each other so much. I think that's a really important part of success this time of year. We're fortunate to have that in our locker room. It was by design, but we've got great young men who have embraced it.

Yeah, we've got to rest, recover. It's going to be a big-time atmosphere tomorrow, and we'll be ready for it.

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