

# Big Ten Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Thursday, March 12, 2026

Chicago, Illinois, USA

United Center

**Wisconsin Badgers**  
**Coach Greg Gard**  
**Nick Boyd**

**John Blackwell**

Postgame Press Conference



Wisconsin - 85, Washington - 84

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Wisconsin head coach Greg Gard along with student-athletes Nick Boyd and John Blackwell.

GREG GARD: Obviously, give Washington a lot of credit for making a comeback and pushing us to the limit there. I thought Steinbach was terrific, just like he was in our first game, and we got a little loose with the ball at times, and obviously, loose defensively and gave them some confidence that started in the beginning of the second half.

We were able to respond. Obviously, JB hit a big shot, Rohde with two free throws to be able to put us back up three.

I'll look through the tape. We've got to quickly turn the page and get ready for tomorrow. That's what this time of year is about, just find a way to get to the next one, and that's what we'll do.

**Q. This question is for both of you guys. Washington's press made it competitive down the stretch there. How are you able to regroup in the huddle and maintain composure to close out the game?**

JOHN BLACKWELL: I think with our leadership, we've been in moments like this. Just take care of it down late and then sealing the game. Good defense by them to pressure us, but I think we did a good job of just sealing it and just finding the open man.

**Q. John, coming out of that timeout, you get the big shot. How did you keep your energy on the timeout on**

**your sideline and then go up 3 there?**

JOHN BLACKWELL: Just encourage the guys. When coach drew up the play for me, I knew I was to -- just try to make a good play out of it, whether to shoot or make the read. It wasn't about the shot. It was about just getting one last stop. So just encouraging the guys. When the team makes a run like that, all the momentum is on their side. So just encouraging the guys. Let's keep it up.

**Q. Congratulations on your game. According to my research, you tied the third most points in a single Big Ten tournament game. What changed compared to the last time you played Washington? You only had 7 points last time, this time you had 34. What adjustments did you make?**

JOHN BLACKWELL: I think I was just more aggressive this game around whoever's turn it is. Today, I hit some shots. So these guys did a good job of finding the hot hand. But at their place, Nick did a great job of getting to the paint, doing his thing, and BC had 32. If I'm not mistaken, he broke a record.

So it's just whoever the hot hand was. As long as we got the win, I'm good with it.

**Q. John, you said last week with Nolan going down, you guys are fighters, you're going to fight for him, just like he fights for you guys. With the extra minutes the bigs got, what did you see in their development in rising to the occasion today?**

JOHN BLACKWELL: I think the bigs did a great job on the offensive rebounding and defensive rebounding. Obviously, gave up a couple, but stepping up, Will Garlock had some great moments in the first half, got the and one dunk. That's a great progression out of him. And then Aleksas did his thing.

They're just going to keep getting better. They're young. They're going to keep getting reps and keep getting better game by game.



**Q. Hayden had an and-1 as well. He touched on Will's and-1. Between him and BC hitting a couple of buckets early, how important was getting some of the bench performances when you guys were short staffed in terms of injuries early on to build that lead?**

NICK BOYD: It's really important. Shakes the game up a little bit, gives us a jolt offensively. Defense has to start making decisions. BC didn't have his best game, but I'm excited because that means tomorrow all his shots are going to go in.

They just give us that extra energy and boost, and we need that.

**Q. Nick, you were part of a Final Four run a few years ago that nobody expected your team to make. What kind of wisdom do you think you can instill in your teammates as you guys start your March run this year?**

NICK BOYD: Just confidence. Together and confidence, that's the most important thing. My old team, we had a certain confidence and swagger about us. Every game is different. Here we only won by a couple points. Tomorrow it's a different game. We've just got to be ready to compete. If we compete, March will be special for us.

**Q. The 3-point shots were flying early on. How much confidence do you have coming into that after the Purdue game after the last time you played Washington?**

NICK BOYD: I've been confident since I was a little kid, so after those games, not much of a difference. It's good to see the shots go in because we really work on those in practice. Coach puts us through a lot of drills and things like that. That translates. It's good.

**Q. You sort of touched on the short turnaround. What is the next 24 hours going to look like for you guys as a staff and allowing these players to rest and recover?**

GREG GARD: The players are the most important thing, rest and recovery. Obviously, we played Illinois. We know they're a terrific team. So the assistants have already worked ahead knowing that, if we took care of business today, we'd be playing Illinois tomorrow.

We'll get back. We've got a meal. We've got study table. Actually, we're doing academic work while we're here on the road. We've got a scouting report later tonight, another meal, and then get ready to go tomorrow.

**Q. Last time you guys played the Illini, you won by**

**only two points, and you allowed Wagler to put up 34.**

GREG GARD: Yeah, he's really good.

**Q. Do you have a new game plan to keep him under control?**

GREG GARD: I don't want to say it. I'm sure Coach Underwood and their staff --

**Q. Do you have a plan?**

GREG GARD: I'm going to be up all night. He's a terrific player.

**Q. Greg, Jay Cohen, Associated Press. To build off of your earlier question, how do you balance the rigors of playing in this tournament in multiple games and days in a row while also getting your team prepared and rested and healthy for the upcoming NCAA Tournament?**

GREG GARD: I think they're hand in hand. I think playing in this prepares you for what's coming next. You don't playback to back in the NCAA Tournament. There's obviously a day in between if you're fortunate enough to win the first one.

I think just being in a different environment, obviously a lot of bright lights and cameras and locker room access and all the things that happen within the NCAA Tournament, you get a feel for that during this tournament.

Obviously you want to continue to advance and win, and there's a trophy at stake, and they're keeping score. We're going to put everything on the table we can, but just like any other experience, you have to build upon it and use it to your advantage as you walk forward.

**Q. You've been at this game a long time, been in the tournament a lot. How do you rely on your veterans? It seems like there's so many young guys now in sports, but how did the veterans on your team help the whole team?**

GREG GARD: Yeah, I think that's important. It starts with these two guys that were sitting to my right. Postseason play is really guard play is vital, and I got two of the better ones in the country. You just maximize using those experiences, whether Braeden Carrington's got some experience. This will be the first time he'll play in the NCAA Tournament. Andrew Rohde is a senior.

So we've got some guys that maybe haven't been with us for a long period of time and transferred in but brought with

them experience wherever they were prior.

**Q. That rotation where basically I think it's three guards forward, and then you've got a big there where you've got Rohde, Blackwell, Boyd, and I believe Braeden on the floor too. What does that bring to the floor, especially in the situation you're in now, rotating bigs and giving them rest?**

GREG GARD: Washington, when they go -- they went to four guards. They had done that a lot yesterday against USC. We're better defensively guarding four guards with four guards. So that's really -- between that and obviously Rapp had some foul trouble, Rohde had some foul trouble, Garlock had some foul trouble, but playing smaller to combat what they were trying to do is really what we -- once they went with four guards with Steinbach, just trying to keep those matchups as much as we could and not get caught where we had some mismatches on the floor.

**Q. You guys have made deep runs in the Big Ten Championship game these past two years. Is there anything in particular that you take from those experiences that you want to apply this year?**

GREG GARD: I think just the things I've talked about in terms of your recovery. You're moving on. You're taking one game at a time. You're only guaranteed the next 40 minutes. We've been in a lot of tight games. We've been against really good teams. We've been in a lot of raucous atmospheres, which I know it will be loud in here tomorrow night or tomorrow afternoon. I'm sure a lot of red and a lot of orange.

So it's just you draw on all those other experiences. Every team is a new team. This is their journey through postseason play, and you use those experiences from each player that they've had. I have a few that have been with me before. But you draw more on the experiences and the growth you've had together during this current season to continue to walk you forward in the postseason.

**Q. Aleksas and Austin have obviously been tasked with larger roles throughout the last couple games without Nolan. Obviously, limited by foul trouble and whatnot today. What have you liked out of them these last two games? And can the increased responsibilities they've had recently help them or help you guys once Nolan is back?**

GREG GARD: Absolutely. I think this is big for them. This is huge. Aleksas, with how he played last week at Purdue and how he played again today, you know, I thought --you know, Steinbach is a handful. He's so good on the offensive glass. So all those experiences that he can get

against that type of competition help, and obviously, Aussie getting more experience and more run during the guts of the game, so to speak, it's going to help them, which in turn, it helps us when Nolan comes back.

Hopefully, the end result makes us better. As Bieliauskas and Rapp get better, that continues to raise our floor.

**Q. Steinbach had a couple of great games against you this season even though you beat them both teams. If an NBA team was to ask you what to expect from Steinbach if they were going to take him, what would you tell them?**

GREG GARD: I don't know him, so I can't speak to his personality. I've heard great things about him, that he's a great kid and a he's a terrific worker. Obviously, the measurables he has, you look at length, bounce off the floor. His hands are terrific. He's got big hands. I think they make those decisions on those internal things, but for a kid that age to be able to do the things he's done and how he plays -- I mean, I was impressed with him before I ever got to Washington, when he was playing in the Euro stuff.

Whatever he does, if he goes in the Draft or he stays at Washington, there's a lot of options on the table for sure for a young man like that. It certainly sounds like from a personality standpoint, he's A-plus, from what I've gotten from Danny Sprinkle.

I'm glad I don't have to play against him tomorrow. He's been -- like I said, he was really good in both games, but that's who he is. He's been really good all year.

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