

Big Ten Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Thursday, March 12, 2026

Chicago, Illinois, USA

United Center

Washington Huskies Coach Danny Sprinkle Hannes Steinbach Zoom Diallo

Postgame Press Conference

Wisconsin - 85, Washington - 84

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Washington head coach Danny Sprinkle, along with student-athletes Zoom Diallo and Hannes Steinbach.

DANNY SPRINKLE: Extremely proud of our team and just kind of the resolve and the ability to fight through adversity, which we've continued to do all year.

It doesn't surprise me how we responded to being down 18, I think, to one of the hottest teams in the country, not just the Big Ten. They're extremely difficult to guard. When they got two guards like that, they combined, I think, for 57 points, Boyd and Blackwell. 57 points, 11 assists, 13 rebounds, and only 3 turnovers and 11 for 18 combined from 3.

When they're playing like that, they're going to be really difficult for anybody to beat. To give ourselves a chance down to the last five seconds to still win the game was really impressive of our team.

Not having the depth that we're accustomed to having, for these guys to continue to play together and fight, I couldn't be more proud of this team.

Q. Hannes, first year here in the USA after coming from Germany. The season is most likely over probably. What are kind of your reflections on it all, and how do you take these experiences as to what's ahead for you in the future?

HANNES STEINBACH: It was a really fun season with the team, like, we had such good chemistry. So I really enjoyed that part. Of course, we all wanted to have a solid



year, but as I said, the chemistry on this team, the trust we have generated was a really great experience, and it was fun to play for Washington.

Q. Hannes, I thought your defense looked really good today, your verticality was awesome. You were challenging a lot of shots at the rim. What's been your mindset defensively at the end of the year? It sort of seems like you've gotten a better grasp maybe on that end of the floor.

HANNES STEINBACH: Just trying to stay in front of my guys and then the rim, just one up, trying to stay straight up so I didn't get a foul. So switched, just like staying in front of the guards and not letting them get easy shots.

Q. Zoom, coach was talking about those Wisconsin guards had big days. You put up 20 in the second half. How did you go bucket for bucket later in the game to push back?

ZOOM DIALLO: To be honest, I felt like I could have gotten that in the first half, but I was in foul trouble early. It was a long game, and I feel like my coaches did a good job of just trying to manage me for the whole game.

It was just, you know, they were going over the screen, and I knew that I could get to my spots and get dudes open. I feel like I was just playing to my strengths. I feel like in the first half, I could have done the same thing too, but I feel like I cost my team being in foul trouble.

We fought back in the second half, but it just wasn't enough.

Q. Zoom, you guys were down by 18, and those guys were just hitting in bombs. I know it can get real frustrating, but when things started to turn, was there a moment or something that just kind of ignited that turnaround that you can identify?

ZOOM DIALLO: I would say no. Our mindset was we were just never out of it. The whole mindset is, it's not over until it's triple zeros. We just played a game yesterday



where we were down 13. 18 is not that much.

I would probably say, when we started pressing them a little bit, we started to see they were getting a little worried, just starting to turn the ball over and starting to be passive with their decisions. We saw that real early, and we wanted to take advantage of it. Their energy started to change when we started to get real aggressive with them, and we just decided to take advantage of that.

Q. They just referenced it, but how did your defensive pressure change in the second half when Wisconsin started going on that cold streak?

DANNY SPRINKLE: Like Zoom mentioned, when we started pressing and picking up, it seemed like our energy got going a little bit. A lot of it was fortunate too. They missed some open 3s too. Like, when they're making those 3s, that lead could have went from 18 to 30 if they kept shooting the ball the way they do.

Hannes had some great wallops at the rim, and we started coming up with some of those balls that were going, and we transitioned and scored. That's how Zoom got going. We got some steals, got some easy layups. I thought he made some great efforts on offensive rebounds, even with a chance to tie the game there where he got the foul and the one-on-one.

It came down to just effort plays. We just needed one or two or more of those 3s to kind of fall within the sequence of the game.

Q. That can be a real frustrating team to play because it seems like every time you try to get a little momentum, they'll come down and hit a 3. The they were shooting lights out in the first half. Trying to keep it close, and Kamari goes down and sprains his angle. You don't have a lot of guys. How do you keep yourselves going?

DANNY SPRINKLE: They keep themselves going. We don't talk about injuries. We don't talk about adversity. It's next man up, let's go. If we have to play big, if we have to play small, it doesn't really matter. I've said it before, nobody cares who you have. Wisconsin didn't care that Kamari was hurt. We have to go fight no matter who's on the court.

So give our guys a ton of credit. They scrap for each other. We got the loose balls when we needed to, and they gave themselves a chance to win.

Q. If you were to kind of play this game again, would you change up the way you came out defending Nick

Boyd and John Blackwell?

DANNY SPRINKLE: I mean, not really. You have to -- with kind of who we have, like with our depth, we had a couple different game plans, and we had to show different things throughout the game because any time -- if you try to guard Wisconsin with just one game plan, they're going to score 130 on you. They're too good. They're going to finally pick you apart.

So we wanted to switch everything early, and then we wanted to go and change up our ball screen coverage a little bit and change it up and get Boyd and Blackwell thinking. But when they're knocking down shots like that, whether it's man or whether it's zone or just making tough shots, there's not much you can do.

They took 18 shots combined, and they made 11 of them. Even if you're not guarding them, they still made 11. We had our hands in their face quite a bit. That's why I think they might be the best backcourt in America. Like they really might be. When they get going like that and playing off each other and some of those other guys start making 3s, they're really hard to guard.

Q. I'm curious after two years, Danny, like going through the roster building process with rev share, what changes, what have you learned going through the last two years that you can apply in this off-season, where I'm sure you'll have to be aggressive again?

DANNY SPRINKLE: The one thing I thought, in August, I thought we were going to be two deep. I thought it was going to be really hard to keep everybody happy and get minutes spread around. I didn't know we were going to lose eight guys to season-ending injuries and issues. That's probably the most in the country. Literally we have eight scholarship players not here and just a multitude of different injuries and factors.

That's what makes this group, like the way we played the last five, six games, like it's just impressive to me. Like I'm proud of them. I'm proud to be their coach because of I know how easy it is to quit -- when you're playing against teams like Wisconsin, even yesterday like we were down twice to USC in the last ten days. We were down big to Oregon on the road in a place -- like we could have packed it in any time in those games, and we just didn't and kept fighting and came back and won a lot of them.

That shows the character of this group, but we definitely need to hopefully have some more depth next year. We've got to add some more athleticism and shooting. This league, teams shoot the ball too well, and it's so hard to

win on the road if you can't knock down 3s. Even tonight, like even if you shoot it average, like they're making 15 3s. They outscored us by 24 points at the 3-point line. Our margin for error is not good enough to do that.

Q. You guys outscored Wisconsin 49-42 in the second half and went on a 21-6 run. I was just wondering what adjustments you made at halftime and how you helped support your team to keep them mentally in the game even down 18.

DANNY SPRINKLE: We didn't make too many adjustments -- actually, some ball screen adjustments we did. We had to stop switching 1 through 5 because they started hurting us with some rolls, and then their guards were attacking our bigs. We had to change up.

We tried to trap a couple times their guards off ball screens, but they're so good they get it out of the trap, and now they have numbers on you. That's where, I think, Rapp hit one of his 3s. They're good. You have to hope they miss some shots, and you have to hope the ball bounces to you because they can rebound it too.

Then just mentally it wasn't anything that we haven't been through, like I said, the last month. I just kept telling them, when we were down 13 with 9 minutes left and the timeout, fellas, we were just here last night. Less than 24 hours ago, we were in the same exact situation. If one team can get it done, it's you guys. Now we've got to go prove it.

Q. Hypothetically, if an NBA team asks you what they could be getting in Steinbach, what would you tell them?

DANNY SPRINKLE: Just not a good kid, not a very good player, probably needs four years of college (laughter). No. He's tremendous. He has unbelievable instincts to play basketball. He's a very good passer. His instincts to rebound are elite. Like, his effort to go rebound is elite, but then his instincts of knowing where the ball is, that's what's special.

He's a worker. He's not once complained about getting shots. He's never complained about getting the ball. He's an elite teammate. Honestly, there's not -- I can't say a bad thing about him. I really can't. He works. Any deficiency he has in his game, he's going to work, and he'll be tremendous at it.

His character and just like the type of person he is -- and once you meet his parents, like you understand the stock that he comes from. He's going to be a tremendous pro for a long time.

Q. Hannes, again, was a monster, 25 and 16, which seems to be the norm for him lately. Have you devised a plan to possibly get him to come back? Then also Courtland Muldrew.

DANNY SPRINKLE: We'll do whatever we've got to do to get him to come back. The whole city of Seattle had better step up and make sure he comes back. And Courtland?

Q. It just seems the more he plays, the better he gets.

DANNY SPRINKLE: He's competitive, man. I'm so pissed at myself because I had seen that and my gut was telling me that, and I should have been playing him a lot more minutes earlier. That's my fault. That's not Courtland's fault.

Like, the sky's the limit for him. It really is. He still needs to become more disciplined in his game and let his energy and activity. I never want to harness that. Like I told you before, he's my wild banshee. I need him to be a wild banshee, but I also need him to be really scout detailed in that.

From his freshman to sophomore year, he's going to make a huge jump in all that. Like mid-game adjustments, guarding the best players. You could see, like, Boyd and Blackwell, they kind of baited him into a couple fouls. They used his aggressiveness against him tonight. He'll learn from all that.

But he's so dynamic. He's not scared of the moment. He's not soft at all. Like, he has some real toughness, which I've known all along, which is why I'm pissed at myself that I didn't play him earlier.

Q. Given the lack of bodies that you had available, have you given any thought to playing in a postseason tournament like NIT in the off-season?

DANNY SPRINKLE: No doubt we have. That's another step for our program too, to go compete in a postseason tournament. You look at what it did for Nebraska last year, like I imagine that fed their off-season. They had a tremendous year.

Hopefully, something like that can happen for us and our program because our players deserve it.

Q. Kind of piggy-backing off that, Coach, once this off-season hits and your guys are finally all healthy, what are the biggest things you want to develop on this team? Being the fact they're majority freshmen and sophomores now becoming sophomores and juniors.

DANNY SPRINKLE: Offensively, we've got to better at our pace and our spacing. We've got to become better ball movers. We have to play with dynamic pace, and we've got to shoot the ball better. Everybody, it doesn't matter, 1 through 5, we've got to get in the gym. That's the only way you get confident in your shot, and we need everybody to be doing that.

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