

Big Ten Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Friday, March 13, 2026

Chicago, Illinois, USA

United Center

Michigan Wolverines

Dusty May

Aday Mara

Elliot Cadeau

Postgame Press Conference

Michigan - 71, Ohio State - 67

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by head coach Dusty May along with student-athletes Elliot Cadeau and Aday Mara.

DUSTY MAY: Very hard fought game by two competitive teams. I thought our defense down the stretch was the difference. We were able to buckle down, force some really tough shots, and finish with rebounds.

We struggled in the first half when we did force the misses coming up with loose basketballs and rebounds, and I thought late in the game that was the difference.

Q. Cadeau, last game against Ohio State, you only put up 2 points. This game you looked a lot better. What was your mindset and training like coming into this big game?

ELLIOT CADEAU: My mindset was the same mindset as usual. My goal before every game is to get a double double with assists. Just trying to get my teammates involved. I felt like I played good last game. I felt like I had a lot of good assists and I controlled the game last game.

I felt it was pretty much even the way I played. I just was more aggressive with my shot this game.

Q. Dusty, halftime I think you outrebounded 19-14, a lot of 50-50 balls going OSU's way, and then they ended up with the 3. What was the message at halftime, and how did that in reality end up?

DUSTY MAY: Several of them were strange. In this game, there were three or four in the first half that came



right to us, and we just weren't able to come up with them. The ball was a little bit new and it was overinflated. So we were talking about finding the ball with our eyes a little bit quicker and securing it.

Also, there were three or four I felt the ball just caromed to where they were. So I thought those possessions were big.

But the ones that really resonate late were just Rez' and Aday, our big guys going and getting the rebounds above the rim. They got some real ones. I was hoping that Elliot was looking for a double double, rebounds and assists. Get 10 out of him next game maybe.

Q. Elliot and Aday, you have the whole adage of rust versus rest. How much did you guys lay off playing to the effect of today's game?

ELLIOT CADEAU: Yeah, we've been practicing really hard these past couple days. So we feel like not playing was kind of helping us. We felt like it took us a minute to get into our groove in the game, and we started playing better towards the end. And that's just how it goes.

We felt like we shook all the rust off, and we'll be 100 percent our best basketball tomorrow against a really talented team.

Q. For both players, you guys aren't used to being in close games down the stretch like that. What did Ohio State do that you guys didn't expect or did expect? What did they do to you a little bit?

ELLIOT CADEAU: I felt like Bruce had a really good game. Like he's one of the best players in our conference, and it was hard to stop him. He was playing really efficiently, playing really good. He was making big time shots.

Along with the 50-50 balls, it kind of took us a while to get those going to our way. We were just like not stringing together a bunch of stops, which we needed to, and we felt like at the end we were playing defense with a lot more



intensity and a lot harder, which helped us.

Q. Aday, you had a huge second half. I was wondering what adjustments you made at halftime and what you noticed differently between the first and second halves?

ADAY MARA: I think we changed the way we were playing pick-and-roll, and the staff did a great job finding how we can create those advantages in pick-and-roll. As soon as we started getting good looks, I said to the guards they were finally giving me good passes. So I was able to finish. Yeah, I think that was the biggest thing.

Q. Aday, we haven't spoken to you since you won Big Ten Defensive Player of the Year. I'm curious your reaction to that, and can you tell how teams attack you guys differently when you're on the court?

ADAY MARA: For me, I think winning Defensive Player of the Year in the conference is an award that goes for the whole team. I think our defense is pretty good, and that helps me. Like when you're giving good pressure on the ball, the guards they're going to try to get to the rim, and they're going to be tired or off balance. That's when I'm there and I block the shot.

So I give the credit to all my teammates that as I said, pressure on the ball and playing good defense, and I'm able to do the easiest part.

Then I think just many people are scared as soon as they get to the zone. You see that they keep dribbling the ball around the zone. They try to find something else. They pop. They change their game to our defense. So I think that's the best thing.

Q. When Yaxel not having many opportunities, Elliot, do you take it upon yourself to get everyone else involved?

ELLIOT CADEAU: Yeah, we feel like we have a lot of guys that are really, really good. If it's not Yaxel's night, somebody else will step up. You see Trey McKenney step up, have a really good game, make a lot of shots. When he's having a good night, we're the best team in the country. When he's not having a good night, I feel like we're still the best team in the country.

Credit to Yax, even though he didn't get that many shots and he might not have made as many as he wanted, he was playing defense really hard, trying to get rebounds and attacking the glass. He can affect the game in many ways other than just scoring.

Q. Elliot, you mentioned facing a tough opponent tomorrow. Whether it be Illinois or Wisconsin, what will it take to advance again?

ELLIOT CADEAU: Just playing a lot harder than we did today. We lost to Wisconsin, and Illinois is one of the best teams in the country. So we're going to have to kind of have a different mindset coming into the next game, just playing a lot harder because, if we play the way we did today, I don't think we'll win tomorrow.

Q. Everybody knows what Aday can do defensively, but when he has a game like tonight, how much difference does that make for you guys, and how much kind of fear should that put in future opponents that he can go off like he did?

DUSTY MAY: I think everyone knows, when you have a team that's this talented and this connected, a lot of guys are capable. So the game -- I thought Ohio State had a good game plan. They're extremely physical.

We were trying to attack early in the game on the first pick-and-roll, and they were into Aday's body and they were into Elliot's body. We weren't doing a good job of creating space and separation so they could use those gifts. I thought those guys cut harder and screened away from the ball, so they were able to get some opportunities.

Aday, he's got sticky hands. The finishes around the rim, he makes them look easy and routine. I don't know in 25 years if I've ever coached anyone else that can make those types of plays, other than Vlad last year. So he's a unique talent, and we're still finding different ways to utilize his skill set and add weapons, even though it's March.

I thought his jump shot at the end of the shot clock was big. He's making his free throws consistently. When he gets fouled now, we believe that we're probably going to put two points up on the board. He just continues to improve. He's got an awesome attitude about him and a great spirit about him. Typically guys like that who enjoy being teammates and working on their game, they gradually get better. He's done that the last 10 years of his life.

Q. Dusty, you talked about the defense down the stretch. Can you talk about Trey McKenney's play on the ball down the stretch and how he's come along as a defender?

DUSTY MAY: Really want to applaud Trey. A lot of times freshmen in these situations or moments, you've got to get them out of the game. They're just not ready when the game is on the line. This year we even went with older guys -- not better or worse, just older guys that have been

in those moments before. Tonight we felt he was guarding those guys as well as anyone on the roster. He was physical, disciplined, staying down on shot fakes. He had active hands. Tonight was a real step forward.

Also, every game presents different challenges. Yax had an off night because they played him a little differently and had a game plan centered around stopping him. It's the same thing. Each night we have to figure out what's the best way for our team to win that night and just roll with it. Luckily we have a locker room full of dudes that, they embrace that. He's got it going tonight. Not bad body language from me, I'm supporting him. And maybe tomorrow is my game.

Q. Dusty, you just mentioned Yax. I'm just wondering if you can kind of speak to his ability to, even though he's having a little bit of an off night, not force shots, just to stay within the offense, what that means for you guys with all the accolades he has, to be able to kind of stay poised and stay within the game.

DUSTY MAY: He had six assists. I thought he played a good floor game. He just didn't seem like he had a great rhythm for whatever reason. The thing with Yax, if he's on the court, he's giving you leverage and attention on him so you can play some 4-on-4 away from him.

Elliot's assists, a lot of times they're with Yax being guarded differently than maybe somebody else in the corner. Also just his size and length. He'll bounce back tomorrow. That's one thing about Yax. He's a competitor. He can get down on himself, but he always responds. For him to have -- the Big Ten Player of the Year -- to have an off night still be able to beat a quality opponent like Ohio State, is once again a testament to how good of a team we are.

I thought overall it wasn't one of his better performances. He'll bounce back. We know what we're capable of. Most guys who receive those types of awards, they're going to keep firing and try to shoot their way out of a funk or whatever the case. Yax just plays the game, and he wants to win.

Q. I was wondering how L.J. Cason's injuries affected your plan for the rest of the season. And what roles and responsibilities Trey McKenney can be in going forward.

DUSTY MAY: I think we're three games in, and it really hurts whenever you go back and watch the Ohio State game and see how well L.J. played in that. He was really rolling.

That's part of sports. It's more of an opportunity for Roddy, and Nimari and Trey and Will and these guys to do a little bit more. I feel like that second group we played, Elliot -- and once again it also presents a new challenge for Elliot to stay out of foul trouble. When we're balancing the fouls, our rotations are off. We're not near as good.

That was part of our problem in the first half. Once Rez picked up that second, we were out of our rotation. In the second half, we didn't have any foul trouble. It's a new challenge for all the guys to pick up the slack. No one's going to replace L.J.. he's a different bird, man. He can get to where he wants to. He's strong enough. He did an awesome job on Thornton defensively.

So everyone else just has to be a little bit better in their version of their best version.

Q. A game like this that you're not used to, you guys haven't played many games like this -- tough, tight defensively, and everything else. As a coach, do you like it a little bit that you felt it, and did you sort of expect it?

DUSTY MAY: If we win, yes, I love it.

(Laughter).

Jokes aside, to be honest, we just play the next possession. Whether we're up 30, up 3, down 6, we just want to play the next possession and figure out what we need to do to find the next possession and find solutions. We encouraged our guys a couple times during the game, we're going to go on a run whenever we start focusing on our defense and rebounding and not that our shots aren't dropping or we turned it over or they're being physical with us on the ball screen.

Whatever the case, because Ohio State is a very physical, disciplined basketball team. We just get to the next one. Either one, we're equipped. We're ready for the challenge to figure out a way to win that one. Hopefully more of those 30 and 40 wins are coming soon. Those are fun as well.

Q. Back to Aday and Cadeau, you're keeping Aday on the perimeter a lot today and running a lot of dribble handoffs with Cadeau especially. What made that action really appealing for you guys coming into this game?

DUSTY MAY: We just felt like in the first half all of our ball screens, Aday had a guy in his body and Elliot had a guy in his body. We were just trying to figure out a way to get Elliot a little bit of speed and separation so they could

attack.

They weren't putting two on the ball like a lot of teams do. They're sending him to his left hand. Elliot's got a good left hand, but with a guard in his ribs, he's not near as effective or fast. We wanted to give him 12 inches of space or 24 inches of space and let him do what he does. Once we were able to create that space, that gravity, he was able to get downhill and made great decisions.

He missed a couple of floaters that he typically makes, but once he got a couple of dunks, the game loosened up a little bit. But it was more finding a way to give him a little space.

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