

Big Ten Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Friday, March 13, 2026

Chicago, Illinois, USA

United Center

Ohio State Buckeyes

Jake Diebler

Bruce Thornton

John Mobley Jr.

Postgame Press Conference



Michigan - 71, Ohio State - 67

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Ohio State head coach Jake Diebler, along with student-athletes John Mobley Jr. And Bruce Thornton.

JAKE DIEBLER: High level game. High level March game against two really good teams. Proud of the fight we showed. Just didn't quite get enough to go win there down the stretch, but our guys battled really throughout.

I thought we executed, for a majority of the game, our game plan well. Against a really good team this time of year, you've got to be able to do that and sustain that for the entirety of the game. We had a couple balls there that just put us in that situation there at the end.

High, high level belief in this team and what we're capable of here down the rest of the season, but big time basketball game and really proud of how hard our guys fought.

Q. Bruce, no moral victories here, but you just played one of the top teams in the country pretty well, better than a lot of teams have. Going into the NCAA Tournament, does that do anything confidence-wise for you guys?

BRUCE THORNTON: Definitely. How we've been playing as a team, how we've been practicing, how we've been preparing, how we've been showing up on these game days, it's just a collective effort -- from the recovery, from the nutritionist, from everything we've been doing day by day to prepare ourselves for the best Ohio State team we possibly can. And I'm glad we just showed it to the world.

Q. John and Bruce, you had a couple 3s that were in

and out, in and out, two-point lead there. If you could have gotten it up to four or five, it would have been a different finish.

BRUCE THORNTON: Definitely. Sometimes that's just how basketball is at the end of the day. We've been working on those shots since June. So I'm not having any regrets of taking those shots because I know in a couple weeks we're going to make those shots.

JOHN MOBLEY JR.: Like he said, we don't live or die with those shots. Those were good looks we got, just in and out. We stay in the gym, and we're going to knock them down when they count.

Q. For either of you guys, what did it mean to have Brandon back in this game?

BRUCE THORNTON: It means a lot, especially -- I just know his senior year, his presence, his experience of playing college basketball definitely helps. It was great seeing him back there today, him playing well, him just playing hard.

I'm glad he's had the opportunity to play again after being injured.

JOHN MOBLEY JR.: It was great seeing him back out there. Seeing the countless work he put in, the conditioning, everything, during these eight, ten weeks. No surprise with what he did out there. Shout out to him for sure.

Q. Bruce and John, when you have Aday Mara in the middle, you're driving, it looks like you got something and you see him there, how does that change what you do and how you attack?

BRUCE THORNTON: It's definitely hard, especially his style and his shot altering at a high level. We work with different paths and things like that in our workouts. And the stuff that we work on, like weight, in the gym.

It bothered us a little bit, but I feel like we still shot a great



percentage from 2 as a team. Like I said, I don't feel that was a really big factor for us. I feel like the fouling and the live ball turnover killed us today.

JOHN MOBLEY JR.: Like Bruce said, he's definitely effective in there in that paint. There's definitely ways we can work around that, like a hostage or a court top. Like he said, we're going to knock down those 2s when it counts.

Q. Speaking of Mara, he only had two points at halftime. I know you guys aren't really down low, but what do you think you guys did as a team to prevent him from getting his in the first half?

JOHN MOBLEY JR.: Amare does everything else on the floor.

Q. Mara.

JOHN MOBLEY JR.: Oh, Mara. You know, just being physical, trying to push his catches out. He's really a good player when he's down there on that block. He's really tough to guard. The game plan was to try to push his catches out, try to be more physical with him.

Q. They're obviously playing without Cason, but Elliot Cadeau and Trey McKenney, what sort of challenges do they present for you guys in terms of defending them?

JAKE DIEBLER: I think Cadeau's ability to create for others, and then tonight he was able to get to the rim too much. His playmaking is really important for their team. I'm familiar with McKenney, recruited him. He's a really good young player. He got off to a good start from 3.

Then he's got an ability with his size at his position, uses his physicality well for a young player. Those guys are able to score, it gives them more versatility offensively.

Q. I was wondering what adjustments were made at halftime to help deal with Aday Mara, who had a slow first half, and to limit the 3-point shots? Michigan started shooting really well from the 3 and cooled off toward the end. I was wondering what adjustments you made.

JAKE DIEBLER: I think they adjusted by getting him behind our defense and ball screens and some of that. We had some mis-executions on a couple of those. Then his activity on the glass, picked up a couple. There were a couple opportunities for us to pick up the ball that we just didn't quite get to today, just didn't quite bounce our way.

We certainly had to be more disciplined on the perimeter. A couple of their looks early were too good. Some of them were within kind of what we were doing schematically.

So that was some stuff we talked about. We knew there was going to be a heavy ball screen attack. We had to guard that well. I thought we did for a majority of the game. They got behind us a couple times for the lobs. It's a real weapon with his size back there.

Again, good player. Good player, I thought we made it hard for him for most of the game.

Q. Just wanted to ask about Taison, why didn't he play today? Also, I saw that Christoph was limping a little towards the end there. What's their status?

JAKE DIEBLER: Yeah, Taison tried to be out there. He warmed up, just couldn't quite get to where he was comfortable being able to go. Really worked hard the last -- it happened last game, so he didn't play at the end of the game. Tried really hard. Every time I walked by the room, he was in there getting treatment. Really wanted to be out there, just couldn't quite -- we just couldn't quite get him there in time for the quick turnaround.

Hopefully we don't anticipate this being a long-term thing. As far as Tilly goes, we had to take him out there at the end. He needed one. He needed to see our medical team, and we had to make sure we were obviously okay to put him back in before we did. His size not being out there against them, I think they got an offensive rebound on that possession.

This time, I'm telling you, these guys work so hard to be available. We have an unbelievable group, and they battled through stuff all year and worked extremely hard to be here. There's a toughness with this group that I really appreciate. It just got us here a couple times with those two guys today.

Q. Dusty May gave you a lot of credit for your game plan today. I just want to know what maybe was the difference between now and the last time you guys met up in that phase? He also gave you a lot of credit for being a physical and very disciplined team, and I know you've talked about how this team has been resilient all year. Just take me through like where that comes from and how you instill that.

JAKE DIEBLER: I think, as we've shown, we've improved as the year's gone on. You certainly want to be playing your best ball this time of year. I feel like we're doing that. A big part of that has been our improvement defensively. Being healthy, it matters.

I think it felt like we had to pressure them a little. They're down a ball handler, a really good one. We felt like we need to provide some pressure on the perimeter.

I think the physicality, we've gotten better as the year's gone on playing physical with discipline, and it's really important. It's something we work on all year, and it's just taken us a little bit of time to get to where we're doing it at a really high level. I like the physicality we played with. I like the discipline we played with. I thought our execution defensively, and really has been for an extended period of time, pretty good.

That's a team that their ability to get out and make you pay when you make mistakes on offense is really, really good. So that hurt us in the first half. Once we made them play in the half-court, which was important for us, we felt like then we had to play with that great physicality because, if you let them kind of move and play in rhythm, they've got so many weapons offensively, it can be a real problem for you.

The ultimate part is the glass. It's a team who really hurt us on the glass in the previous game. I want to say they maybe had 16 offensive rebounds last time we played. Big difference today for us.

Q. Jake, Gabe obviously played like 20 minutes today. I just want to hear from you. What do you think he brought to the floor? Can you just kind of talk about him being aggressive on offense a little bit too?

JAKE DIEBLER: Yeah, I thought he gave us great energy. He's really good at pressuring the ball. I thought that helped us. He was able to kind of make them start their offense a little bit higher. Then offensively, he stepped up and made some big time plays.

Understand this about him, he's been battling for some time an injury, and he doesn't complain. He just shows up every single day, works hard, spends time in the training room to be available. There's been times when I wanted him to be more aggressive offensively, and I think he just hasn't felt comfortable doing that with some of the stuff he's battled through.

But showed tremendous toughness, stepped up. We didn't know Taison, whether he was going to be able to play or not today, and I thought Gabe stepped up and gave us some real good minutes with his energy, his ball pressure, and then obviously hit two big shots.

Q. I want to ask about that goaltending call late in the game. It looked like you wanted them to look back at it. What happened there? Was it not reviewable?

Also, how did that change the game?

JAKE DIEBLER: I wanted to see -- I couldn't tell live if we had tipped it on the way up and then hit it after the glass. That's what I was looking for. When Pete back at the bench said he felt like it wasn't something we should challenge at the moment. I haven't gone back and watched it.

There were a couple other situations I felt that played a bigger role than that specific play that could have went either way.

Again, our guys fought, like their fight today was really good. We're playing our best basketball of the year. Certainly got to own the things we could have done better. We talked about that. We felt like there were a couple things we could have controlled a little bit better today, but we're going to keep riding this momentum.

It's an exciting time of year for us, for our program, and we've got to go get some rest. We know how to recover. We've had a lot of work at that this year. We're going to get some rest, get some recovery, and be excited about what the future holds for this team.

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