

# Big Ten Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Saturday, March 14, 2026

Chicago, Illinois, USA

United Center

**Purdue Boilermakers**

**Oscar Cluff**

**Trey Kaufman-Renn**

**Matt Painter**

Postgame Press Conference

Purdue - 73, UCLA - 66

THE MODERATOR: We're now joined by head coach Matt Painter along with student-athletes Oscar Cluff and Trey Kaufman-Renn.

MATT PAINTER: Obviously it was a different prep for us because a lot of what we prepared for was with Donovan Dent being in the game. That's a big piece of what they do. It's what they run. It's how they spread you out. They play high ball screen. They play pick-and-roll. They space it and attack you, and a lot of that is predicated on his ability to break people down.

So the fact that he got hurt and he was out of the game, that changed the game. I know it was a close game. We never really separated from them. You have to give them credit. It really shows the resiliency and the toughness of UCLA to not have their best two guys in Bilodeau and Donovan Dent and to go out there and compete.

I think they've got a chance to really make a good run in the NCAA Tournament. They have really good pieces if they can get Bilodeau and Dent back, that really helps.

These two guys here, they dominated the glass. They had 24 rebounds between them, and UCLA had 26. That's a big statement. One of them got all the offensive rebounds, and one of them got all the defensive rebounds. It's a good balance between the two of them.

Obviously when you get to the conference tournament, a lot of people don't realize that don't experience it that we don't play three games in a row. You never play three games in a row. That's why you see the exempt tournaments going to just two games, and very few of them



now have three games because when do you do that?

You get in the NCAA Tournament, you play Thursday, Saturday, you play Friday, Sunday. You try to win a weekend. You try to win two weekends. If you win three weekends, you're all by yourself. It's a little bit different, but it's not the same, and it's just something you've got to be able to work through and just go out there and compete and just take one game at a time. I know it's a cliché, but you have to do it. You can't look ahead.

Proud of our guys because we hung in there and we were able to pull it out.

**Q. Oscar, you come off of a little bit of a stretch where you were maybe struggling a little bit. You come into Chicago, and you've been like a silent assassin just coming in, getting rebounds at the right time, getting points. Can you talk about what maybe you've done a little bit differently coming into this?**

OSCAR CLUFF: I wouldn't say anything different. I would just say just from what I've learnt over the season and just being able to put it all together and understand everything about it which helps me play as hard as I can.

**Q. Trey, the game's tied. They've come all the way back. The crowd's going nuts. The ball goes into you in the post. There are back to back possessions. You score once and then put it up on the rim, and Oscar scores. What does it mean to you to get the ball in those moments, and what were you trying to execute on those plays?**

TREY KAUFMAN-RENN: I'm just trying to get the best shot for Purdue. Obviously Coach Thompson, P.J., has a lot of faith in me and my scoring abilities. When it's crunch time, as a competitor, you want the ball. I'm happy that I scored one of them, and then obviously having this guy to be able to get the rebound and putback is big time.

**Q. Trey, talk about when you and Fletch and Braden were sitting on the bench and the confidence that you guys have in the other players besides you three**



leaders.

TREY KAUFMAN-RENN: We've seen it all year. We saw it in the summer. It's really nothing new. Even the lowest points of the season through struggles, individual struggles, whatever it may be, we remain positive and confident because it's just the truth. We have a really good team. We have really good players. We have confidence in these guys.

**Q. This is for Trey and Oscar. You last faced Michigan at Mackey on February 17. How has this team evolved from the time you last faced them till now in which you're now on the brink of getting to a Big Ten tournament conference championship.**

TREY KAUFMAN-RENN: I think hopefully our communication is much better, our defense is much better. Really it's just about us doing our jobs. That's what we've talked about, whether it be Michigan, Wisconsin, UCLA, whoever it is. We can live with it if we do our job.

I think our mindset is kind of making sure, when we go back and watch the film of the game, to make sure we don't mess up.

OSCAR CLUFF: Obviously that wasn't a great game for us, and we've had a few bad ones since then. It's about learning from our mistakes and making sure we don't do it again. It's just growing as a team and getting stronger over time.

**Q. We talked about it last night and the night before about how you usually don't play back to back to back nights. Today it seemed like you were spacing out your minutes a little with rest. Is that where we're at? With the third day in a row, you kind of wanted to give more rest to everybody and space those minutes out to everybody?**

MATT PAINTER: Yeah, we obviously gave more minutes, but it's one of those things, it's your team, right? We were just trying to give a little bit. We kind of stayed with the same rotations but just a little bit longer. Obviously Braden didn't play as much at that time.

Yeah, you just try to do what's best, but also you're trying to win the game. So I thought our bench was good in spurts, and then at other times it kind of comes and goes there in the second half. We had some breakdowns there, and then we got those guys back in there.

It's something where you don't like to do it, but when you look at the big picture, if you can advance, that's the -- it seems like an intelligent move, but if you lose, you're a

fool.

**Q. What are you trying to sure up in your team, either between your team and Michigan's last meeting or your games over the last couple of days before you face them in that championship tomorrow?**

MATT PAINTER: When you say sure up, what do you mean?

**Q. Anything that went wrong over these last two days with your team or in Mackey.**

MATT PAINTER: Just trying to -- really it's the end of the season for us because we didn't finish the season great. You're going to have consistencies in terms of how you play, but you're going to have those inconsistencies also and just trying to be better at that.

At times we've been really good as a rebounding team, and then we've had some moments where like we haven't, but for the most part, we've been a good rebounding team.

I think no matter who you're playing, you're just trying to win that possession war to where you have fewer turnovers and you have more rebounds. That's very hard to do against a team like Michigan because they're a great rebounding team, they're a great defensive team, they're a great offensive team.

They're one of the best teams that I've seen in the Big Ten in 21 years, probably a top five team, like Greg Oden and Mike Conley's Ohio State team, Deron Williams and Dee Brown, Luther Head's Illinois teams, a couple of Tom Izzo's teams. Indiana had a team with Oladipo and Cody Zeller, they had two of the top four picks in the Draft. That was a really, really good team.

They're in a good category. If you want to beat them, you have to be special, and you have to be special at both ends. But you have to take care of the basketball, and you got to rebound against anybody, and you really have to do it against a special team like Michigan.

**Q. We heard Oscar talk about how he hasn't really done anything differently, just kind of using what he's learned over the course of the season, but he's averaging 16 and 11 in this tournament. That's more than he was doing during the regular season. What have you seen from him that's different, or is there anything different as he goes into the postseason?**

MATT PAINTER: I would say just a nose for the basketball. This isn't his most offensive rebounds. He had 10 offensive rebounds at Nebraska. He's had games. He

had a lot of double-doubles nonconference, and then he went through a period of time where he didn't. So just kind of getting recharged and going after the basketball.

If he's done anything better, it's really been the details to put himself in a better position, whether that's a short roll or he dives all the way to the basket for a post. But the main improvement is just something he's done throughout the year. He just wasn't as good for about a month stretch in terms of just going after the basketball.

He's got a great nose for the ball. He does a great job of tipping it to himself. He's a fantastic rebounder, especially offensively.

**Q. When they lose Dent, and they're already without Bilodeau, obviously two of their biggest scorers. How does that change what UCLA was able to do, and how did that affect what you guys were doing going forward?**

MATT PAINTER: They just went high ball screen, and they didn't do as much spread. I don't know what he calls it or whatever, but a lot of what they do with Donovan Dent, they run ball screen with him, they run a lot of different actions with him, but when he gets it rolling, they like having the ball in his hands, especially late clock. He's just breaking people down, creating for himself, creating for his teammates. That's when they're at their best, in my opinion.

Then they put Bilodeau in there, and they really cause problems because now Bilodeau can get the pick and pop. They'll run action to post Bilodeau like they do a little bit for Dailey. Now they're mixing in some of that usage there for Bilodeau and Dent's a heavy usage guy. It doesn't mean Skyy Clark and Trent Perry aren't good players, because they are, but now they get more into creating and not playing off the basketball. I think that's probably the biggest difference.

Then we outrebound them by 11. I think Tyler would have had a hand in that. He's had some monster games for them this year. Great player, all conference player. Hopefully both those guys can play. That would be awful if they couldn't play. Hopefully both of those guys can get back and get ready for their first game of the tournament.

**Q. Matt, you've got a senior team. What does this mean to your team, your seniors playing in the Big Ten Championship tournament game?**

MATT PAINTER: I think more than anything, it's an honor just to be in the tournament, to win three games and get to the championship. But for us, it was more of playing well

and stringing some wins together. You have to be able to show that consistency.

We haven't shot the ball well, and we've been able to win three games. It's not like overall like we're bad. We shoot 46 percent, 36 percent from 3 tonight. They're not great. That's not great numbers. Like our numbers have to be better in my opinion to beat elite people.

UCLA's an elite team, but without their two best guys, obviously you think about the game tonight, if our two best players didn't play, how does that look? Everyone has their own perspective, but when you take a step back and digest everything, like it's a lot different.

It's an honor just to be in the Big Ten, let alone play in the Big Ten tournament. To be in this championship game was great. Most important thing for us is that we've been able to grind some victories here and play well as a team. We want to use that as a positive going into tomorrow and going into the NCAA Tournament.

**Q. Jack Benter is a guy who's had some ups and downs in terms of his shooting, for him to come in and go 3 for 3, maybe not even the importance of him going 3 for 3, but for him to have the confidence to pull having the trigger when he gets a good look because you have the ability with Trey and Oscar to get the offensive rebound?**

MATT PAINTER: No question, that was great for him. Obviously he's had the wrist injury, and a lot of times you take guys and try to mold them from going from a shooter to a good player. He's a good player, period. When he doesn't make shots, he does good things for us. He rebounded today for us, that 3 he hit at halftime was big time, that layup he made in the second half was a big time play.

He's a guy that can rebound the ball for you. He can distribute the basketball, and he can shoot. He's got a lot more to him. He's going to have a great career at Purdue.

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