

Big Ten Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Sunday, March 15, 2026

Chicago, Illinois, USA

United Center

Michigan Wolverines

Dusty May

Nimari Burnett

Aday Mara

Postgame Press Conference

Purdue - 80, Michigan - 72

THE MODERATOR: We're now joined by Michigan student-athletes Nimari Burnett and Aday Mara.

Q. Nimari, what do you think went wrong during that run to start the second half, where Purdue kind of seized control?

NIMARI BURNETT: Braden Smith and Trey Kaufman-Renn just get into their, I guess, bag. We definitely prepared for it and planned for it, and those guys have really, really good abilities, and they work off each other well. They just really got hot. And we just failed to get stops.

Q. It's a tough result, but it shouldn't necessarily affect the seeding in the NCAA Tournament. Not exactly what you guys wanted, but how do you use this as fuel and do the quick turnaround the next few days to lock back in and try to go perfect the rest of the way?

ADAY MARA: I think we've got to feel this pain right now. We've got to use this for the next month. We know the month that we have ahead. We've just got to be ready, be better, and feel this right now because it doesn't feel good, and use it to be better in the Tournament.

Q. Nimari, your basketball career has taken you a long way, kind of around to be here playing in United Center in your hometown. What are the lessons that you've learned that's led you to this moment?

NIMARI BURNETT: Besides the loss tonight, these are dreams that have come true. To play for Michigan, to play



for Dusty, to play in the United Center, I mean, go out, playing in Chicago, my hometown, these are dreams that come true, and these are times that I pray for.

Q. Particularly Purdue had a really strong showing inside the paint tonight. I think it was 40-plus points they were able to score inside the paint with the frontcourt really dominating. Can you talk about what they were doing effectively, consistently inside and converting, and what you guys can do going forward to mitigate that?

ADAY MARA: I think we let Cluff get in deep catches. So he was able to score like really easy baskets around the rim. Also, they went, as he said, they went to the goal move, I would say, with Smith and TKR. I think that would be why they scored so many points, just letting them get to the paint and score easy baskets.

Q. This question is for both players. All losses aren't really losses. You can learn lessons from these losses. What's some of the lessons you guys can take away from this loss, I guess?

NIMARI BURNETT: The lesson that we'll take away from this will be applied directly to practice as we go and get ready for NCAA Tournament, to be more physical in areas that we need to and to fight through ball screens with a little bit more aggression as far as guards and the bigs doing what they do.

Although we didn't want this to happen, we plan to go 3 of 3: Big Ten, Big Ten tournament championship, NCAA. But this is a part of the process, and we're going to use this as fuel into this next month of basketball.

ADAY MARA: As he said, we're going to watch film, and we're going to try to know what we did wrong and just keep getting better as a team. I think that this loss and, well, all the losses we had this season make us know that we are not unbeatable. We can lose games too.

So we cannot relax during the games. I would say that, just keep learning, keep improving, and make sure that we



don't relax during the games.

THE MODERATOR: Let's now take questions for Coach May.

Q. Same question to you, Coach May. Despite the loss, team has to really turn around really fast over the next few days. How do you instill in your team to use this as fuel going forward knowing that you don't have many days to rest and you have a few days of practice before you've really got to lock in and be perfect?

DUSTY MAY: We'll have to get back and get our opponent and start preparing the scouting report. We'll refer back to a couple lessons we learned in this game.

I want to begin by congratulating Purdue, four games in four days, and their three seniors that have been together for a long time. It looked like they really found something deep inside. When you start the year preseason Number 1, you have two first-tem All-Americans, and it doesn't go as planned and you come in as a 7 seed with your back against the wall and perform the way they did, it's impressive.

Especially I thought TKR, I thought his force around the rim, I thought Braden's ability to manage the game, 21 assists to 2 turnovers against constant pressure was very admirable.

Overall, they earned it. Obviously we weren't at our best, but obviously Purdue has something to do with that.

Q. Dusty, it feels like as the season has gone, teams have gotten increasingly physical defensively against you guys. I feel like that was the case this weekend. How do you feel like that kind of disrupted your rhythm maybe, just other teams' physicality, and what do you do with that adjusting, moving forward to the NCAA Tournament?

DUSTY MAY: I don't know. Typically, the NCAA Tournament, I don't think is going to be quite this physical, but you never know. We've got to do a better job of adjusting however the game is being called. If it's called close, we need to adjust. If it's prison ball, we need to adjust. We have to do a better job.

Q. I'm sure you don't have a ton of information, but what happened with Yaxel? It looked like left ankle. Was he trying to stay in the game?

DUSTY MAY: He came back in the game, yeah. I think on that last spin, he stepped on Loyer or Braden Smith's foot.

Q. What did you see from him in general in this game? It seemed like when Purdue was taking control, he got a little more aggressive and ended up with 20, I believe?

DUSTY MAY: Yeah, he was aggressive. He had a couple opportunities around the rim that just didn't drop. He made really good plays. I thought he guarded Braden Smith really well, and obviously the stat sheet doesn't show that.

I thought his energy, I thought Braden never wore down. Obviously you could tell he was fatigued, but it didn't faze him. He just has that much mental strength and capacity.

Q. Dusty, talk about Nimari, this guy is playing in Chicago, his hometown. You have a lot of players that have a lot of experience in different ways, shapes, and forms. He might get overshadowed by guys like Yaxel obviously, Big Ten Player of the Year and all those other kinds of things, but what kind of role has Nimari carved out for this team?

DUSTY MAY: He's carved out a role, whatever the team needs, he needs to bring it. I thought he did a nice job on the offensive glass tonight. He finished shots with power around the rim.

I thought he played well tonight. Obviously we're a team that's very balanced, and these guys have sacrificed a lot to get to this point. So very, very proud of him and to be his coach. Most importantly, he's an A-plus human being. He's got a heart of gold, and he continuously just gives to other people and represents our team, our athletic department, our university in the highest esteem.

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