

# Crossroads Classic: Purdue vs Notre Dame

Saturday, December 19, 2020  
Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

## Sasha Stefanovic

Purdue Boilermakers

Postgame Media Conference



Purdue 88, Notre Dame 78

**Q. Sasha, when you guys take care of the ball the way that you guys did today, is this what can happen for you guys offensively?**

SASHA STEFANOVIC: Yeah, definitely. I think we really executed our sets really well. I thought we got good open shots, open threes. We got easy lay-ups. However many -- we had six turnovers, which is really impressive.

We try to keep it under eight every single game. Obviously we haven't done that yet this year, but when we do that -- I assume we out-rebounded them. When we out-rebound a team and limit our turnovers, you get more possessions and good things happen.

So we did a good job of that.

**Q. The rebounding allowed you guys to get out in transition and kind of play inside-out or outside-in, however it was going to work today.**

SASHA STEFANOVIC: Yeah, a little bit. I think when you're able to get those long rebounds and really crash the glass and keep getting defensive rebounds, I think it allows our guards to be really quick in transition.

**Q. They tied it at 53 there in the second half. You guys flipped that really quick. What allowed you guys to do that?**

SASHA STEFANOVIC: You know, nothing really. I think it was just we knew that -- we were able to fight through that adversity and just keep to our game. They're a good team. They're really well-coached and you know they're not going to stop fighting when they get down.

They showed that at the end of the first half, and then they made a little bit of a run there in the second half. So they did -- they played really well.

Luckily we were able to just kind of stop those runs.

**Q. What did Mason Gillis give you today?**

SASHA STEFANOVIC: Those put-backs that he had, 12 points, that's probably got to be a career high, and rebounds has got to be up there, as well. He played really well. He was ready to go from the jump. He provided a great defensive presence on Laszewski or however you say his name. We've been messing it up all week. But he did a great job on him, limiting him to 13 points.

It's pretty good for a top guy in the ACC. He did a great job overall.

**Q. A really important part of this game obviously was stopping their runs. What makes your team better in situations like that this year than perhaps it would have been last year?**

SASHA STEFANOVIC: I think just our maturity. I think getting into those types of situations where they're going on a run, they get some momentum. Maybe last year we would have wilted in those situations and not responded how we did today.

I think that was a major thing that we did our previous game against Ohio State and then we did it again tonight, as well. Just being able to fight through that adversity, keep executing, keep playing our game, keep trying to get stops, keep rebounding, and hopefully it'll help.

And I think we did that today.

**Q. When they got the game tied you guys went on your 9-0 run, pretty much everybody had a hand in it. Do you remember what might have turned the tide there in your favor?**

SASHA STEFANOVIC: You know, to be honest, I don't remember actually exactly what the sequence of plays and everything like that, but I think it was just probably executing. I think when we were able to get easy shots, probably easy threes, easy lay-ups, and we were just getting stops.

You said we went on a 9-0 run. You've got to get stops to



do that. Getting those stops and making sure that we grabbed that rebound and got on the other end and execute whatever we were running really helped us get on that run and kind of extend the lead.

**Q. What did you see from Eric today? He seemed like he was kind of in complete command of this tonight and obviously did a really good job at the defensive end. Do you see a different player this year than you did last year?**

SASHA STEFANOVIC: Yeah, definitely. He's back here, too, so I'll gas him up a little bit. (Laughter).

He was tremendous. Obviously I think we missed him when he was out with an injury early on, and he was definitely trying to get back into game mode and everything like that.

But you saw tonight how he was able to kind of control the game for us offensively, and then defensively just make it tough on Hubb. Hubb, I didn't even know he didn't score, so that's really impressive. He just gives us that calming presence when we're on offense and helps us execute plays. He's been in a lot of games and he knows what's going on. He really provided that maturity and experience for us today.

**Q. What does this win mean big picture wise?**

SASHA STEFANOVIC: It's a big deal. I mean, obviously we were 0-2 against the ACC so far this season. We had two bad losses -- not bad losses, but we just didn't really execute and we didn't finish the games how we should have.

Notre Dame is a quality opponent. They've played nothing but good teams so far this year and they've got some really good players that are going to be good in the ACC. It's a big deal. Personally I haven't won in this Crossroads Classic thing, so it's always great to get a win against a good non-conference opponent.

**Q. How tough are you guys when your junior class is contributing the way it did today?**

SASHA STEFANOVIC: Yeah, I mean, just providing that experience that I talked about. We've been in a lot of games. We've won a Big Ten championship. We've made it to the Elite 8. We've gone through struggles, as well, and we've got to show that experience now. We've got to make sure that we're bringing our younger guys with us.

And yeah, I think everybody played really well today. I think everybody kind of contributed. Aaron didn't really

score, but he got seven rebounds. That's a big deal. He played really good defensively.

That type of thing that you may not be doing something offensively or defensively, but you provide something to help us win. That's really huge for us moving forward.

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