

# State Farm Champions Classic: Michigan State vs Kansas

Tuesday, November 12, 2024

## Michigan State Spartans

### Tom Izzo

#### Press Conference

Kansas - 77, Michigan State - 69

TOM IZZO: It's hard to figure out what to say. I think Bill said it best to me after: Neither one of us shot it very well.

If I would have told you that we were going to do the job on Adams that we did and Harris and Mayo, I thought we had a good chance to win. But our key guys didn't play very well either, and some of that's got to be their defense.

I thought we both had some open shots we all missed. But I was really disappointed to get outrebounded because that's what we do here, and we start the game with five turnovers, I think, in the first five minutes. Then we settle down at the six-minute mark, it's a two, three-point game, and then they went on a little spree.

They're a good team. I don't think they're anywhere near what they're going to be. I think they're going to be really good. Their shooters didn't shoot very well either in Griffen, Mayo, and Harris, Storr. I mean, even Coit, I've seen him shoot the ball really well.

Dickinson played well, give him credit. What I really liked about Mayo -- I don't know him personally. I know he's a shooter, but when you shoot it like he does and he goes 2 for 8, 0 for 3, and honestly not very good, but he gets 10 rebounds and 6 assists, that's a credit to Bill, his staff, and how they get a kid who's not playing well to do other things to help his team win, and I thought they did a phenomenal job of that. I give Bill a lot of credit for that.

I did not get that out of a couple of my guys. They didn't shoot it well, they didn't rebound it well, and they didn't guard it well.

All in all, I think there will be some disappointing things watching the film. We missed a dunk, just can't do that in big games. But there's some positives that come out of this. We played a very good team. We're ahead in the game most of the way, and now we've got to figure out how to make some shots.



**Q. In that second half, you guys tied it up three or four times. But it seemed like -- I don't know what happened, but it seemed like a lot of times (no microphone)?**

TOM IZZO: Yeah, it really hurt us. I think a couple of times Jeremy overpenetrated. A couple of times Tre really struggled and Jaden. We took a couple of bad ones the second half.

The first half, I thought just about every shot we took was pretty good. Second half I think we -- we showed like a team -- although I was playing those young guys, and deservedly so. I thought Jase played very well. I thought Jaxon did some good things at times and a couple of them not.

But we need Tre and Jaden to play better, to be honest with you. And Book. Book missed wide open shot after shot, which I don't care about, I really don't. But then not guarding and not rebounding, 14 minutes to get one rebound, he's just got to rebound better. He's got to do something.

Hopefully we'll learn something from Mayo because I thought that was pretty impressive stats to be that bad for a good shooter and yet do those many good things to help his team win. In fact, maybe will his team to win. It was really impressive.

**Q. Got off to another slow start this year at the 3-point line. That happened last year. You all ended the year at 38 percent in the Big Ten. How much confidence do you have that this team can get back on the right track?**

TOM IZZO: It's interesting you say that. We started out 1 for 22, 1 for 11, and I think 4 for 15 last year. In Jaden's case, he's a 37 percent career shooter, and he has struggled. But I think he struggled tonight for some poor shots. I thought he rushed some.

He's got to realize now he's a marked guy and he's going to have to do more to get open. They did a good job on him.



I have confidence. We held them to 30 points the first half. They only shot 40 and 29, and I think that's a pretty talented team.

But I think Bill agrees with me and I agree with him, offensively we both sucked, to put it bluntly. We've got to both get better, and we've got to find a couple guys. Might start putting Kur in there some, get some shooting.

**Q. What went into you not doubling Dickinson?**

TOM IZZO: We weren't going to double Dickinson. Not many people I've seen have doubled Dickinson. He made some shots early. We were supposed to dig a little bit more on him. If you double Dickinson -- we did everything we wanted to do in the scouting report.

We wanted to keep the ball out of KJ Adams' hands at the 3-point line. He's lethal. He's the Draymond Green in college now. He's the best screener, roller, passer. He passes like Magic, he rolls like Draymond and screens like Draymond. Those are the Michigan State guys that I can compare him to.

I told him at the end, watching him on film, one of my favorite players -- tough, unselfish. So we do a helluva job on him, and partly because of the game plan we had to not double. Did a good job on Mayo and Harris and Griffen.

Dickinson, of course, hurt us, but you pick your poison sometimes. Give him credit. He made some of those shots, made that big 3.

We still had our chances to win the game. I'm not sure I'd change that. I would like to make maybe just two more 3s. Not be greedy or selfish, just maybe 2 out of 100.

**Q. Booker and Akins combined for two points, two rebounds, and made 1 of the first 19 3s. What do you learn from this?**

TOM IZZO: That's where I said, somewhere I'm going to look at the film, and I'm going to see some good news, but I'm also going to see some bad news. I didn't think we cut out.

They hurt us on the offensive boards. Whatchamacallit was pretty effective the first half. I'll just say Flory since I recruited him. Never knew how to say his name then, still don't know how to say it. Helluva kid, good person. He was effective even though he only had one rebound.

Like I said, I'm not disappointed in the way we played them. I'm disappointed in how we shot and the turnovers

that led to -- sometimes a bad shot is a turnover, and they usually lead to breakaways.

In that stretch, they got a couple of 3-point plays, one from the 3 and one on a layup because of our poor decisions on taking a couple of bad shots.

**Q. Tom, with Jaden, he's pressing, wanting to be that guy to emerge. Do you sense that from him? What do you sense from him right now?**

TOM IZZO: Listen, you'd all want Jaden Akins to marry your daughter. You'd all want Jaden Akins to represent your program. He's an incredible student, incredible kid, incredible worker. He'll be in there working morning, noon, and night. Do I think he's pressing, feeling the senioritis that you do? I think he is.

How do I correct that? He's going to have to work his way through it. He still played 26 minutes. That's enough time to get more done than he got done. I think maybe we'll watch Mayo and figure out, when your shot isn't there, how do you get there other ways? How do you get to the free-throw line? How do you get offensive rebounds? There's things Jaden can do.

But he's been, as you said, a career 37, 38 percent career three-point shooter, and he works too hard for that not to happen. It's just disappointing that first game he shot pretty well, second game not so good, and this game terrible.

I have faith in Jaden, I'm just disappointed and I feel sorry for him because I think he's a much better player than he showed tonight.

**Q. (Question regarding Xavier)?**

TOM IZZO: Xavier tonight, we didn't go back with him not because he missed shots, we didn't go back with him because of the lineups they had. They were going small, and he struggles to guard. So we went small some too with both Frankie and Coen.

We got some things out of it, and Book will be fine. He's making progress. If he makes a couple of those 3s, we're all sitting there happy with him and he probably plays a little more because he had, I think, wide open 3s. I don't think he had one that wasn't wide open. I think he had three and one possessions. It will get better.

**Q. To follow up on that, when you have a player that's struggling or it seems like that, is there a way you can get him to maybe get that something back?**

TOM IZZO: I didn't hear the first part.

**Q. When you see Booker miss those open shots, you see his body language.**

TOM IZZO: Body language for Book isn't one of his strong suits, but he's not going against you. He just doesn't have great body language.

I would say that Book's worked his way through a lot of things. If you watched him in practice, he's a lot better than he was. He's gained 20 pounds. He's not where everybody wants him to be yet. It wasn't his fault that somebody projected him certain ways.

He's a good player, and he's a really talented kid, and he's going to get there. It's just the process is taking a little longer, and games like tonight -- I say that, and they have fourth and fifth year guys that struggle too. We forget he's in his sixth game as a sophomore. So I'm not worried about that. I'm disappointed that I think we let our offense affect our defense a little bit in the second half.

But Kansas has got a very good team. Bill's a phenomenal coach. When you win 13 championships like he has in the league and that consistency. He's got a good team. I don't think -- I wasn't in the press conference, but we've all got to do what we've got to do because you guys sometimes kill our guys and rightfully so sometimes, but sometimes we'll make it better than it will be and sometimes worse.

I don't think either one of us were happy on the court. The only thing that was happy for Bill and I is we were both miserable, and that was a good thing. I told him, we'll talk during the week. We don't play each other again, thank God. If we do, it will be late, late, late, and that will be cool.

We're going to get better. If you can shoot that poorly and be in a game against a good team, there's something positive there, and we're going to try to build on it.

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