

State Farm Champions Classic: Kentucky vs Michigan State

Tuesday, November 18, 2025

Michigan State Spartans

Jaxon Kohler

Jeremy Fears, Jr.

Press Conference



Michigan State 83, Kentucky 66

Q. Jaxon, you hit that first three, and it seemed like that lifted a little bit of weight off of everybody. What was that feeling like tonight knowing how much you guys have been struggling, to see them drop like that?

JAXON KOHLER: It was a great feeling because this entire week we've been really trying to step up our game in terms of shooting and playing physical and knowing the game that we were about to have.

I feel like this week in shooting, we've been shooting very well. The key is to go into this game and have confidence in your shot, and I feel like everybody did that.

The first one went in, and you just kind of built on that confidence, and I feel like that gave a leeway for everybody to make their shots. I feel like us as a team shot the ball really well tonight.

Q. Jaxon, I'm curious, Kentucky obviously every bit as equal as you guys in rebounding, and you guys out-rebounded them 42-28. In terms of sort of a testament to you guys' program and that tenet of it, what can you say about the rebounding performance today?

JAXON KOHLER: I feel like us as a team did very well about making sure that everybody crashed the boards. We know that they have a lot of size on their team from every position, and going into this game, for prep, we knew it was going to be a battle to go up against them on the boards and everything.

We brought it tonight because we all -- like every position had someone bigger or someone quicker, and we knew that was going to be, as Coach put it, a football game on the hardwood.

That was a key for us going into this game.

Q. Jeremy, you guys have both been around enough to know these types of games are sort of a piece of the season here, but when you have six new guys in the mix, Arkansas and now this one, what do you think these two games can do for those newer guys that haven't been a part of this to move forward into this season?

JEREMY FEARS JR: I would say this is huge. Obviously those guys haven't really had that bond or chemistry with us yet, and just to be able to get two big wins early in the season can kind of make life a little bit easier down the stretch.

Now you know what it feels like to be in close games, big games, where you're down, where you're up, big runs. Even playing UConn at UConn was kind of huge. So just being able to experience that is great for the team.

Q. Jeremy, I was wondering what you thought of Kur's performance off the bench, a career high of 15 for a guy that I believe when you came here last year he just checked in for the last couple seconds because family was in the crowd. For him to come back to this building and do that.

JEREMY FEARS JR: I think for Kur this game was huge. Obviously for Kur was huge. He was kind of struggling shooting which we all know. One thing about Kur, he going to work in the gym shooting every day. I tell him every time, just shoot the ball every time. If you open, shoot the ball every time.

So just him seeing shots go through the basket was huge for him, huge for us, and just adding that aspect to our team is special.

Q. Jeremy, 13 assists, Kentucky had 13 assists. How does it feel to know every time you throw a pass you're going to get an assist?

JEREMY FEARS JR: Grateful. I know the guys on my team, I got Jax down there, I got Coop, I got Coen, Trey, and Kur, all those guys. They made shots and they were

ASAP sports . . . when all is said, we're done.®

helpful for us tonight.

Just the fact that I trust every player on this team to either make the shot, make the dunk or make the lay-up.

Q. The second half they came out and you could tell they were trying to be a little more physical. Wondering how you felt especially after the San Jose State game, the response that you guys had to that. And then also the hot start, too. Obviously you hit from three, but how much did that maybe buoy whenever they started chipping away and you had already done that once?

JAXON KOHLER: I feel like that what happened at halftime at the last game, we all made sure to take a mental note of that. Especially the new players. No matter what is happening going into the next half, anything can happen. The other team is always going to try to find a spark. They're going to try to find something to get them back in the game.

The first thing we talked about going into the locker room at halftime was, hey, we cannot do what we did last game. We cannot afford to do that because this is a team who makes a lot of runs, and if they make enough runs, they'll come back and take the game.

We have to learn from our mistakes. I'm glad that that happened last game so that this game we can learn from our mistakes and really push forward and grow as a team.

JEREMY FEARS JR: I'd say we kind of knew they were going to go on a run. Obviously they didn't really shoot it that well early but we knew at some point they would go on a run. For us it was like they're going to go on a run, stay calm, and we just needed a good shot or two.

Q. Jeremy, you had the UConn game on the road and I'm wondering where you've seen growth since then, how much different you are and where you see it for you guys?

JEREMY FEARS JR: I think everywhere. We didn't really shoot the ball well at UConn. Defense wasn't as well as it was, communication, and just trust and chemistry.

So just over these past four games you can tell we have gotten better every game, and the goal now is to put two great halves together and make sure we bond and trust each other and trust the game plan, and I think we can be pretty successful.

Q. I wanted to ask you two about the twins and Nick getting in at the end. They've been in practice all the

time this year. Wanted to get your thoughts on the smiles you guys were giving and everything, the energy that they bring.

JEREMY FEARS JR: Great. I'd say those guys come in and they work every day and they're probably sometimes longer than us focusing on scouting, game plan, and extra film and knowing the other team's personnel.

Just the fact that we was kind of able to reward them is something special.

JAXON KOHLER: Yeah, I'd like to take this opportunity to make sure that they get their credit because behind the scenes, no one talks about all the work that they're putting in for us. They make us better. They put in the extra work, learn the scout, and making sure that we're challenged every day.

To see them go on the floor, man, it was a special moment honestly for everybody, and I feel like we need to give them more -- we need to give them more opportunities to do that because they really do put a lot, so much work into every single practice.

I'm just really happy that they were able to go out there tonight and kind of experience that, especially in the Garden and especially in a special game like this.

Q. I don't know how much this game may change it or not, but there had been a narrative created about how maybe Michigan State didn't belong here anymore because of how it had performed recently. Did you guys hear any of that? Did you guys use that as motivation coming into tonight's game?

JEREMY FEARS JR: I think a lot of that was kind of some of the past group that we weren't here for. But at the same time, we know our most important thing is we come out and our goal is to win every game, no matter who we're playing, where we're playing or what it is.

Our motivation is come out, prepare every game, play every game like we can win.

Q. Jaxon, that first stretch of the game you played 6:45, you and Coop, that first long stretch. Jesse comes in. How important was that stretch for Jesse, not just for him but for you guys to get what he gave you?

JAXON KOHLER: Yeah, you know what, that stretch was really important because I feel like tonight Jesse really put his foot down on being in our rotation. I feel like he really kind of found himself tonight, found some confidence



shooting.

Two for two from three and three for three from the field, so he didn't miss. I really feel like he put his foot down and he found confidence in the rotation.

Now we've got to keep asking him from him because he's a really big part of our team. Especially in tonight's game in a special event in the Garden, I'm glad that happened now, and moving forward, he's going to keep taking leaps.

JEREMY FEARS JR: Them young guys showed up tonight and new guys. Shoutout Trey Fort, Kur, Jesse. Shout out big Jax, too.

JAXON KOHLER: Shout out to everybody. It was a good team win.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports.