

GEICO Players Era Men's Championship

Monday, November 24, 2025

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

MGM Grand Garden Arena

San Diego State Aztecs Coach Brian Dutcher Elzie Harrington Miles Byrd

Postgame Press Conference

Michigan - 94, San Diego State - 54

BRIAN DUTCHER: I think it's safe to say Dusty May got his revenge against me. Florida Atlantic, he took it out on me, took it out on all of us. Michigan's got a very good team. Hats off to them.

When you're bad, you're bad from the top-down and I'm the top. So I didn't have us ready to compete at that level against a very good team. I told them after the game that we can't think one thing about Michigan when we walk out of the arena or we'll have no chance to play against Oregon.

As much as it can serve as a learning experience, this is not the time to learn from it. It's the time to put it behind us as quickly as we can, know that we're good, get our swagger back up, and come out and, compete at a high level against a good Oregon team tomorrow.

That's the beauty of basketball. We don't have to sit here and dwell on it for a week. We're playing again tomorrow. And we will be excited to have an opportunity to get back on the floor and try to play a better brand of basketball than we played tonight.

Q. Miles, this is a program that in 2023, as you know, played for the national championship. Huge expectation for this team. What happened?

MILES BYRD: It was just credit to Michigan. I think they came out, punched us in the mouth multiple times. In the rebound, they had 15 more rebounds than us as a team. That's something we stressed a lot in practice. So when we stress it in practice and we still come out and get



outrebounded by 15, you gotta tip your cap to a team like that. That's what they do. That's what they take pride in. And they just played better than us tonight.

Q. Obviously size was a big problem with Michigan between Lendeborg and Johnson. What was the game plan defending that and where do you see that kind of break in terms of getting to the rim?

MILES BYRD: I mean most times when you got taller dudes like that trying to guard wings the main goal is to really just beat them off the dribble. I thought they had a good mix of making us drive with Mara down low, you know clogging the paint. I mean it's not a lot of open shots not a lot of open shots to shoot.

I mean, yeah, we definitely scheme for their size. We have some tall dudes that we threw on scout this week that kind of helped us prep for it, but I mean it's a little different when you're on the court with it.

Q. Elzie, what did you see towards the end of the first half that allowed you to get in the good rhythm?

ELZIE HARRINGTON: I just saw, like what Byrd was saying, on offense we practiced all week, we knew the big was going to be in drop and we've been repping that out all week. So when we got out there, we were finally able to execute and I got the shots I wanted.

Q. Miles and Elzie, it seemed like Michigan just outphysicaled you guys tonight both on the rebounds defensively and when you guys had the ball offensively. How do you guys put this behind you going in to Oregon tomorrow?

MILES BYRD: I think it says a lot of what we are as a team and as we are as people being able to, once we get back to the hotel trying to drop this mentally and focus on the next one.

You dropped two already, and you try to do everything in your power to make sure that the third game isn't affected by the last two you played. And that's what we're going to continue to do. We've got a lot of time, maybe 24 hours until our next game with a team that we're pretty familiar with.



As much as this game hurt, I am in the process right now of trying to just get over it, get to the next game and turn our swagger back up.

ELZIE HARRINGTON: Like Coach Dutch said, we can't think about Michigan leaving the building. We gotta think about Oregon, so that's what we're going to do.

Q. Elzie, in the last game you had some good games earlier than you had, I think, six turnovers in the last game. You were able to rebound from that. What changed mentally for you to have this kind of game coming off that last one?

ELZIE HARRINGTON: As crazy as it sounds, I was just focused on trying to win tonight. I think, I don't know, I wasn't necessarily super happy with how I played the first two games. But people were telling me I was playing good and I think I got caught up in that. But so I came out here, I was just trying to win.

Q. I don't think you've had a 40-point loss since you've been head coach. I'm not sure you've even had a 30-point loss. I don't know the last time this program has had a loss like that. How do you sort of compartmentalize that and explain it?

BRIAN DUTCHER: You're just trying, at the point where you're so far down, then you're just really coaching for the next game. There's no coming back when you're that far down.

I told them at halftime, we could get off to a good start in the second half, we played a little stretch toward the end of the first half where we cut into it, until they made a basket late. We kind of, I thought, played ourselves in a position where if we got off to a good start, we might be able to get back in the game. But we didn't. They made sure that didn't happen.

Then it's just trying to keep their confidence up. There's no sense to yelling at a guy that's down 30 and 40 points. He already feels bad enough. So I'm just trying to encourage them, telling them that the best way to get over it is to believe in yourself, believe in your teammates, don't get caught up in pity, because nothing good can come of that.

So trust in yourself, trust in your coaching staff, and we'll work through it. We'll find a way.

And I've been in programs where I got beat by 30-some points as an assistant coach, and one week later we beat the same team by 30-some points. So it's basketball. I'm not saying if we played Michigan in a week from now we beat them by 40, but it's basketball.

So every game is its own entity. We can't sit here and obsess over what happened against Michigan. There will be plenty of others that do it. And I told the guys they have to drown the noise out. They have to drown it out. They can't get caught up in feeling sorry for themselves and let anybody start saying, well, this guy played better, this guy played worse. Don't get caught up in any of that.

Our whole focus has to be on playing as a team against Oregon and then seeing how that goes and then playing again.

So there is only the next game. If we would have won, we could have been all excited. But as soon as we left the building, we'd be talking about we have to get ready for Oregon. We've got to enjoy this. When we get back to the hotel we've got to get ready for Oregon.

But when you get beat. It doesn't change. As bad as we want to feel, we've got to get ready for Oregon. So we are moving on. We have to pick up our confidence back up, belief in ourselves and go out there and fight our way into a competitive win tomorrow.

Q. Reese Dixon-Waters and Miles Byrd, two of your veterans on the roster that have been on the Mesa for a while, had pretty rough games today shooting the ball, defensively, passing, just the sloppy game. How do you get the two veterans on your roster into a good headspace going into tomorrow and then getting them prepared against Oregon?

BRIAN DUTCHER: Just tell them they're good. Believe in themselves. They've got to fight their way out of it, fight their way out of a tough game. That's what they'll try to do.

Will it happen? I always say, I tell them, hard work is always rewarded. It's not rewarded every day you work hard, but over the course of a season, when we continue to work hard and we stay with it, we'll be rewarded at some point in the season. It doesn't mean you're rewarded every time you take the floor.

So I've got guys who work hard, they want to get good, they want to make the right plays, they want to win basketball games. And, so, if we continue to work hard and believe in ourselves, at some point this season I think I have enough talent and good enough players where that will happen.

Q. In a game where really no one is shooting well, what did you see from Elzie's performance tonight?

BRIAN DUTCHER: I thought Elzie and BJ came in the first

half and provided us with a spark. They got into the paint and made some shots. BJ got in there with some quickness. Elzie got in there and shot over him.

We knew that's what they'd be in, drop coverage. That's what they do against everybody. So we had to get in there and make some plays. And the hard thing is they're in drop coverage and because they're so big they don't help in. So you think you drive in and you kick out and get a shot, they're not helping. They're leaving the big at the rim and they're saying, make as many mid-range 2s as you can. We don't think you can beat us with that.

And they've proven correct tonight. We couldn't beat them. We couldn't get 3s, because they weren't helping a lot. They switch everything. So they're a talented defensive team. The success people have had against them have been kind of with the same game plan we tried to play, where you get into the mid-range area, and you try to make those shots. And if you can't, get on to the next thing and keep attacking until you find opportunity to score.

They did a good job. They made more 3s against us than they had made since the Oakland game. So they really shoot the ball well, too. And that's what we want them to do. We wanted to make them shoot 3s against us, contested but obviously they shot well and they banked a few in. And they shot well enough where everything started going.

Q. Like you mentioned earlier whether or not you beat them or you lost to them, you're going to be going to back to the hotel and make sure you focus on the next game which is Oregon tomorrow. What are some key takeaways that you're taking from this game that maybe change your focus or approach for tomorrow's game against Oregon?

BRIAN DUTCHER: I just told them there's not a lot we can change in 24 hours. We run the plays we run. Our defense's base defense is good. Maybe we can make an adjustment to how we play certain things. But we are who we are right now. We can't go back and say, well, we're not happy with how we're running our offense, and we need to change three or four things. You can't do that overnight.

So we just have to go in, try to call the right plays and we think will work against Oregon, play with confidence and fight our way through it, because there aren't going to be huge adjustments in 24 hours with the team, you know?

We are who we are right now. And we have to do a better job executing the things we want to run. But when you run into good competition, the hard thing is Oregon will play us

different than Michigan, who played us different than Troy, who played us different than Oregon State. Every game has a different game plan they're running against you. And you have to scheme and see what things will work against that game plan.

So I thought we did a good job preparing for Michigan, but obviously there's no practicing for their length and size and athleticism. Even when we got it around the basket, we couldn't get it in. And that's a credit to them and the size and talent they have on that roster.

Q. In terms of the bigger picture for this team, what's wrong with it right now? Is it an effort thing? Is it a shooting thing? Is it a not finding the right rotation thing? Can you put your finger on what's going on?

BRIAN DUTCHER: Obviously rotation is something we're going to have to work through, giving a lot of guys a lot of opportunities and then, depending on how they do, will determine whether we continue to play minutes for certain guys or short minutes, extend minutes for others. Guys like Elzie step up and have a game like this, obviously he's proven he's deserving more minutes, which I've known from the start. I feel Elzie is an incredibly talented player. He's only in his fourth game of college basketball. So there's a process with that too.

With that being said, you can't just forget about veterans and guys that have put in the work for you all these years and have proven themselves good. So it's always a fine line is to finding the right rotation.

Obviously it becomes more urgent when you lose games. You're like, what major things can we change? But at the end of the day, there are no major changes that are in store. It's you are who you are, you have to fight your way through some rough patches. We've had that happen in the past. So we just have to be gritty and fight our way through.

And, like I said, anybody that's ever heard me talk about my teams, I'll say this about this team: I know this is going to be a good team. What the journey is to get there, I don't know.

I was hoping we'd be great right from the start. And some years we are. But other years, it takes time. But as long as I've ever coached with Steve Fisher or myself as head coach, we've always gotten better as the year goes on. So we'll figure out what that is.

Will we figure it out by tomorrow? I hope so. I hope we play a little better. But over the course of the year, the strength of our program is we recruit really good kids that



buy in and want to get better and want to win. And eventually we will find something as a team that we can get to there. So I believe that in my heart, that we will get there as a team. We weren't there tonight, and there's a ways to go, but we will find a way to get there.

Q. Michigan's defense and their kind of game plan to force tough middle-range shots, how good were they at that?

BRIAN DUTCHER: Yeah, you watch games like Wake Forest and TCU, and everybody has success against them, which is the same thing, which is a high-ball screen against drop coverage and a mid-range jump shot. And you have to make a lot of those and those are the ones they want you to take, those are the ones they're willing to give up.

So they're big. They don't help a lot, so you don't drive in there and get 3s, because they know they're trying to stop ball screens with two players, and they're giving you some of those shots.

And so when they go in, like Elzie or BJ made early, that's a good thing because you can get them all day. But can you make enough to beat them? Obviously you have to do other things. You have to find a way to get fast break baskets which we didn't do. You have to get second-chance opportunities.

And I think in the first half we got a few where we rebounded, kicked it out and got some open looks, but we didn't get enough of those either.

So their defense has given you what they want to give you. Can you make enough to beat them? And that's the question.

And obviously we weren't big enough and strong enough to have an impact on the glass. The keys to the game for us were transition defense, which they ran us for a ton of fast-break points and rebounding, which they outrebounded us by 16. So if you don't hit either one of your first two keys, it's hard to win. So we didn't hit either.

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