

# GEICO Players Era Men's Championship

Tuesday, November 25, 2025

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

MGM Grand Garden Arena

**Auburn Tigers**

**Coach Steven Pearl**

**KeShawn Murphy**

**Filip Jovic**

Postgame Press Conference



That kind of set the tone for them to guard and it gave them confidence.

But a good basketball team. They had guys that made shots that typically don't make shots. And sometimes you're going to run into a buzz saw. And we've always talked about with our group, like, we just can't get too high, we can't get too low. We can't get too high because we beat a good Oregon team. And we can't get too low because a really good Michigan team ran us off the floor tonight.

It's about how we respond from here. That's the biggest thing with our guys. We're always talking about finding ways to improve, to grow, to get better as a unit.

This is an unbelievable opportunity to see how we respond to some real adversity in the season. So I'm really looking for some step-up from some of our leaders, some of our older guys, some of our veterans, to see how we handle it from here, because we have an opportunity to win two games in the most prestigious tournament in college basketball right now, but for us to be able to do that we've got to flush this one and get ready for the next one and learn from this down the road.

**Q. How much did you think the length of Michigan really contributed to the lack of assists? Obviously the rebounds but seemed like their ball pressure was getting after y'all?**

STEVEN PEARL: I would need to watch the film to really -- the length doesn't really bother you until you get closer to the rim. So I think we didn't do a great job of sharing it in transition. We didn't do a great job of sharing it once we got into the paint. We forced some tough shots.

So their size, they're switching 1 through 4 is going to disrupt people. They've got guys that can move their feet. But I don't want to say -- I don't want to comment too much on it because I just don't know. I've got to watch the film.

I just thought our pace was really poor early. We ran a couple of play calls and we had guys jogging through the lane. When you're playing a switching defense if you don't go full speed they'll be able to switch easily. And we made it a lot easier on them because we didn't execute full speed. That's on us as coaches. We should have done a

Michigan - 102, Auburn - 72

STEVEN PEARL: First off a lot of credit goes to Michigan, they played really well. A lot has to do with them. A lot of that has to do with a lack of execution offensively and defensively.

Offensively, for us to have three assists on 22 made field goals, that's probably the lowest in the last 11 or 12 years since we've been here.

So, their switching bothered us. They did a good job being disruptive. And we just didn't share the ball. I thought there was way too much "my turn" in the first half and we have to do a better job of sharing the ball in those situations.

They made 14 3s. They averaged eight. And we missed 15 free throws. So in a 30-point game, those numbers can start to add up.

I just thought our attention to detail defensively wasn't great. We talked about loading to the ball and ball screen. And every time we got into a ball screen, they hit a short roll and there was no one there to tag them. And Morez Johnson just kind of walked down the lane and had a nice layup.

We just didn't execute the game plan. And I've got to do a better job of really being more detail-oriented and showing examples in film of us executing those things because we just didn't execute tonight. I thought that was the biggest thing.

Offensively, we slopped through stuff early in the game.



better job of showing them examples of how we've got to run stuff against switching defenses.

But I think, obviously, once you get close to the rim, that length is real. They had five blocked shots tonight. But, you know, obviously they alter a lot too with their length.

But I thought their guards did a really good job of disrupting our timing and framing us and not letting us run our stuff tighter to the 3-point line. I thought it was more on their guards than it was on their bigs.

**Q. They beat San Diego by 40 last night. They beat you by 30. These aren't buy games against D-II games at home. They're Final Four programs that they're beating by 30 and 40. How good is this team?**

STEVEN PEARL: They're good. When they make 14 3s I think they beat anyone in college basketball. I really believe that. They've obviously ratcheted up their level of play. Having a couple of really close games was really good for them. Wake Forest, and I think that was in Detroit, gave them everything they could handle and almost beat them in overtime. And TCU had them on the ropes.

For really good teams it's good for teams like that to go through stuff like that to really expose some weaknesses and things you have to work on and improve. And credit to Dusty and his staff. They did that this week so far.

We're a team of 10 new guys that we're still trying to figure things out, and we played like it tonight.

But they have a hell of a team over there. They've got a lot of really, really nice pieces. But when they shoot the ball at that rate, nobody's beating that team.

But we always have got to do a better job of executing what we're doing to make it tough on them. They were just comfortable for 40 minutes tonight. They were comfortable for 40 minutes last night. You've got to make that team uncomfortable to be able to bother them. But we didn't do a good job of that at all.

**Q. First thing you mentioned was three assists tonight. How do you emphasize the importance of sharing the ball and playing more as a team on offense?**

STEVEN PEARL: We lost by 30. You know, that's how you emphasize it. Obviously when you share the ball and you score, I think, you know, offense can affect your defense sometimes. When you're playing as a team offensively I think you're a little more connected

defensively. They had 19 assists and they're playing well defensively. I think there's some correlation there.

If we want to -- I've got to watch the film to see how egregious it was. But I have a feeling I'm going to look back and see guys looking at each other off or just trying to do too much. Maybe not looking each other off but trying to do too much.

Obviously, there's a lot of respect for Michigan. I told these guys, this is by far the best team we've played, by far. That's not me being disrespectful to Houston or Oregon. Michigan is the real deal when they play at that level. And they showed it last night and obviously they showed it again tonight.

If you want to beat the best teams on our schedule we've got to get everyone involved and we have to play more unselfishly.

**Q. Murph, what kind of performance do you think this does for this team? S.P. was talking about stepping up, having leaders. You're one of the leaders on this team. What do you think this could do happening early in the season for you all?**

KESHAWN MURPHY: It could mean two things. We can either stand down or we can, you know what I'm saying, take credibility and do something about it. We know what happened. We knew what went wrong early. And S.P. talks about it a lot.

This doesn't define anything. We just come in and move forward. We'll wash this off our shoulders and get better.

**Q. What is it like trying to score in the paint close to the basket against that kind of size and length?**

FILIP JOVIC: We had only three assists this game. We need to play more like we didn't represent -- nobody didn't represent Auburn basketball today. We need to change that tomorrow.

**Q. Filip, what do you feel like you've learned playing your first couple of weeks of Division I basketball, including some games against some really high-level opponents?**

FILIP JOVIC: For me, this is a very good experience, but hard because I played different basketball last couple of years. And here, everybody's in the SEC is more aggressive than my last league.

But I like to play aggressive. I like to play around the basket. I like to fight around the basket. And this is what I



want.

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