

# Big Ten Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Friday, March 3, 2023

Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA

Target Center

## Michigan State Spartans

### Dean Lockwood

### Kamaria McDaniel

### Moira Joiner

#### Postgame Press Conference

Indiana - 94, Michigan State - 85

DEAN LOCKWOOD: Hard fought game. Love the way we started the game. Just, again, very aggressive. Kind of consistent with what we've been doing in our game plan.

Hit a few bumps in the road along the way, and again I want to credit Indiana. Indiana is a very good basketball team, very good basketball team, and they showed their mettle today what they're made of. Obviously just very solid.

Again, the start was good. Along the way, we missed several layups. We gave up some open threes -- I thought those two -- those were probably two of the biggest factors for us is missing some layups that either would have kept us in the lead or kept a little bit of a cushion or could have gotten us back in striking distance.

Some of those open threes that we gave up, we gave up 12 made threes, and certainly that was not what we wanted to do and talked about. So, again, I thought those things hurt us.

Overall, very, very proud of this team's grit and their effort and their fight. Again, I think they showed who they are and what they're made of, our team. We're very, very proud of them for that.

Obviously some technical things, some tactical things that we want to clean up, but I will tell you this. You can't -- all you can ask for is 100 percent of people's best, and I think we got that from our team today in terms of their effort level. So I'm proud of them for that.

**Q. This is for either one of you: The first half you**



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**guys started off like a house of fire, eight three-pointers. And then things changed a little bit in the second half. What did they do differently to defend you at the arc?**

KAMARIA McDANIEL: Personally I don't think they did anything differently. It was more so us. I think we know how to put ourselves in position to get good shots and do certain things. So I think it's more so just us and our decision-making.

I think we get the shots that we want to get, and we emphasize that in practice and in the game plan. So it was more so an us thing, I would say.

MOIRA JOINER: I agree.

**Q. Kamaria, you had 32 today. It seemed like you were just on fire throughout the whole game. Could you speak to like what was working for you and just how you were able to be so dominant out there.**

KAMARIA McDANIEL: First of all, I always go back to this time last year, I couldn't run, like I really struggled with my injury. So I see all of this as a bonus, and God is so good, and that's all I can say.

My teammates are amazing that give me the ball, and we got defensive stops, which opened up the open court and getting them fast breaks. So we were getting stops, and that was helping with momentum. So when you're playing good defense and your teammates are getting you the ball, I'm just able to kind of be myself and be that scorer that I've been.

A lot of credit to God, first of all. Credit to our grit on the defensive end because we have to get stops in order to get out in the open floor. I'm just grateful to be here, and God is good, man. My teammates are amazing. So that was the formula for that, not much of me individually.

**Q. For either of you guys, I think you guys just heard dean talk about you guys showing kind of what you're made of. In your guys' mind, what do you feel you've shown over the last few weeks, especially in a**



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**performance like this and having your chances there against a team like Indiana?**

MOIRA JOINER: I would just say you can never count us out. So many people talk about, oh, they're playing Indiana. That's not going to be a good game, whatever it is. They always count us out.

We're a really tough team. We don't give up. If you look at our season, our losses are within five, four, three points, to like the best league in the country, like ranked teams.

So I'm very proud of our effort. Yeah, I love playing with these girls. I wouldn't play with anybody else.

**Q. With everything that's gone down this season from Coach Merchant being out to the shooting to struggling to find consistency. Now that the future is up to the hands of the people who decide for the tournament going forward, can you just describe what it's been like to be on this team and just play for this school this year?**

MOIRA JOINER: It's meant a lot. Being here for four years myself, you have -- sorry. (Crying). You go. Sorry, I can't.

KAMARIA McDANIEL: I think it's a testament to us coming together. We had this thing that just came about not too long ago, and it's unity of purpose. We're a unit, and we have the same purpose, and we just go with that every day. We've seen every piece of adversity you could possibly see -- the unthinkable, the unfathomable -- ooh, that's a big word. So we've seen it all, and we just take it as small as we have to take it.

Even if it's minute by minute, possession by possession, but we try to master every opportunity we get. Coach Dean says "in the moment and no regrets," and that's just been our motto. A lot of things have happened that's out of our control, and when stuff is out of your control, you have to put your focus towards the things you can control, and I think we have been a master of the controllables. That's why coaches and we're all proud because we could have folded a long time ago.

MOIRA JOINER: I was going to say, being a senior, it means a lot. Even like you've got to play for people that are leaving on this team and you've got to play for the university and everything we've been through there. So it just means everything, and I think it would be a mistake not to put our team in the tournament.

**Q. Following up with something you guys said, "unity of purpose." When did you guys kind of adapt that**

**kind of mentality there?**

KAMARIA McDANIEL: I think around the time of the shooting. I think that -- yeah, it was at the game after the shooting. We were playing Maryland, and you know what I'm saying, like we just kind of needed a theme because it's like the unthinkable literally just happens to us, like things just happen and happen and happen.

You know, we get down eight times, but we get up nine. Like Mo said, it's the intangible things for this team. Like think about where we could have been and look where we ended up, you know what I'm saying? We don't stop fighting, and we really are just now scratching the surface of our potential. We had to work through so many things that I feel like a lot of other teams didn't have to.

Like Coach Dean is my sixth head coach. So it's just like stuff like that. It's just constant changes. Change is inevitable, but I think we've seen it at a very high rate. I think those records and statistics go into a lot of things, but on the human side, we don't quit, and we've proven that over and over.

We've got tough people like Mo on our team that just will not be denied, will not be outworked. And the intangibles are important, just as important as the statistics.

**Q. Coach, this is the end of your season likely. How proud are you for the team that they battled, as you said, as hard as they did? I know the players addressed this, but how was it filling in for Suzy, which I'm sure was tough. How easy was it to see the players battle right till the end? I wanted your take on that as well.**

DEAN LOCKWOOD: Absolutely. Thanks for the question. It was great. First of all, let me just credit our players and credit our team. They've been very supportive. They've been very receptive. We have a staff who's been outstanding, from our coaching staff, Maria and Kristin, to our support staff. Everyone has been supportive. There's been a synergy in the program.

Stemming from our sport administrator Ashton, our athletic director Alan Haller, it's been great.

I will tell you, directly to your question now, to watch the growth -- one of the things I said just the other day here, I believe, one of the real joys of coaching is to see growth and maturation. Winning is wonderful. Make no mistake, we're all in this to win. If you're not competitive, if you're not in this to win, it's hard to last very long, so that's just a given.

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But one of the real joys of this profession and the real highs of coaching is to see growth and maturation in people, and especially when you see it as a team. There is no question that our team has grown and matured this year tremendously. For that, I am extremely proud of them, and I credit them, I credit the character of them. I credit the families from whom they come. It's just been a journey that has not been without challenge, but I credit them tremendously for the people they are and the character they are.

To your last piece, we're no quit. There is not one ounce of quit in us. So until we see that bracket and we're not in it, we're going to prepare to play in the tournament. There's no quit in us. When we see the bracket and Michigan State's not on it, okay, season's over, but I am not conceding until that point.

**Q. You probably would be higher than a 9 seed in a lot of other conferences. How would you evaluate the strength of the Big Ten this year?**

DEAN LOCKWOOD: Oh, my gosh, and I was in the SEC for 15 years. Some of you may know that, may not. But I will tell you -- again, we could argue this point. It's kind of like the greatest conversation, who's the greatest, all this stuff. You're never going to resolve it.

But I will tell you this, if I were a betting man -- which I'm not, for our compliance people -- I would bet on the Big Ten. This year is the best conference, top to bottom. I think South Carolina is other worldly. They're just really good. I think LSU is having a terrific season, Tennessee is third right now. There's some real good teams in that league, make no shade on them whatsoever.

But I tell you top to bottom I will take our league against any league in the country this year. I think our league top to bottom has shown in non-conference play and now here in conference play and where things are, I think they've shown who we are and of what we're capable. Arguably, it's the best league in the country, and no one's going to move me off of that.

**Q. They did not play yesterday. You guys did. Second half did you sense that there was any bit of -- watching some tired legs against a fresher team?**

DEAN LOCKWOOD: That's a good question tactically. You know, there may have been a little. I don't think a lot. Both teams of their top five, six people, we play long minutes. If you look at Indiana's minutes per game play, they've got several players in the 30 and plus over. We've got a few in that. We've got a lot of people playing long minutes.

I think there was a little portion where we might have experienced -- our press and our pressure just backed off a little bit, and I think that might have been a portion you could have attributed to that.

Again, with the toughness of these young people that we have, it didn't last long. And we rallied towards the end of the game there. We got down ten. That could have easily been a belly up, let's fold the tents, game over, but it was a second wind.

The great Bill Russell said this, I love it, most people don't run far enough on their first wind to realize they have a second. We've had to dip into that second wind a couple times. I think there may have been a little stretch of that, but I did notice a significant piece of that.

I think the biggest thing, you notice the quarter scoring, we had 24 in the first quarter, 27 in the fourth, and I think in between we hit the teens. I think the missed shots, the layups and the missed looks we had, that enabled Indiana to get that cushion. They're awfully good, so it's hard to give them that.

**Q. You've played Indiana harder than most teams this year, even like Ohio State-Michigan who are playing now really struggled and got run off the floor by them. On paper you aren't as good as a team, but you beat them once and almost beat them today and played them much harder than Illinois did in the first game. What's the secret sauce to IU that's allowed you to be more successful against them than teams ranked higher than you?**

DEAN LOCKWOOD: If I could tell you that, there would be an helipad with my chopper waiting to fly me to my island right now.

I'm going to credit our players. Our players embrace a game plan very, very well. In the first game, one of the things we wanted to do is be relentless with our full-court pressure, do a lot of trapping. Again, they were without Grace Berger, so we have to say that in fairness. I credit our players for really executing a game plan, embracing it.

It's one thing to create a game plan. With game plans they have to be good enough that they may be effective but simple enough to be executed, because we can do a lot of things, but you can overcomplicate the game, and sometimes that can happen.

Again, I'll credit our players because in that first game we forced 21 turnovers. This game we only forced 15. Essentially we tried to do the same thing. We tried to take

our assets, our strength, and utilize that. So, again, we know that it's going to be very hard to stand toe to toe and slug it out in a half-court game with Indiana. We wanted to dictate the terms of battle and try to play more pressure, more full court. So that was one thing.

Then again, with our quickness, we tried to move them and drive them a little bit. So those two, I guess in a nutshell, would be the two things from a technical standpoint we tried to do. Again, the credit belongs to our players.

**Q. Coach, Kamaria just had a fantastic game today with 32 points, 7 rebounds. It seemed like she was doing everything out there. Just from your perspective, what did you see that she was doing so well that made her have such a dominant performance?**

DEAN LOCKWOOD: Thanks. I will tell you again, very simple answer: She was taking good shots. When Kamaria takes good shots -- and good shots for her, what I mean, I'm going to be very clear on that. She's open. Hit the three, take the three. We don't care if she misses four straight. She's a good shooter. Take it.

When she's on balance, when she attacks the rim with tenacity, she goes off two feet and she's got a blow-by and there's an open basket and elevates and goes off one, but when she goes strong and she plays with a high level efficiency, Kamaria has shown that she can score points. I think today to your question specifically, that was what she did today. She took great shots. She attacked the basket. She took the shots when she was open. Again, she did -- she played to who she was, and that's, again, so important for any player on any team. She was exactly true to who she was.

**Q. Just with the way that this team has kind of come together down the stretch, how hopeful are you that there is another opportunity for this team to take the court, and how deserving do you feel like this team is as well too?**

DEAN LOCKWOOD: We'd love to play, Brian, as you know, and as you heard from our players, we certainly believe that we could make a good showing.

As far as the hopeful piece, I'm certainly hopeful -- one of the things that's hard. Again, I'm going to make -- you know me. You've been around me enough with the goofy analogies. A fight analogy: We're leaving it to the judges now. We didn't knock anybody out. Now it's to the judges. When two fighters stand in that ring and it's been a hard fought battle and you don't know whose hands -- a lot just depends on what happens with the rest of the country in

terms of tournament play and how the seasons end and whatnot. Then when people get in that room, a lot is going to depend on what happens. Those factors were out of our control.

We told them ahead of time, going into this thing, we're the masters of our own fate, we are the captains of our own destiny right now, so everything is in our hands. Now we've been eliminated. It is not. But I'll tell you, I think this team would make a very good showing, and obviously as we talked about a minute ago, how good this league is. This team is so good. We've been very close against top tier teams, Indiana, Iowa in an overtime game, on and on I could go.

I just really believe this team is worthy and could make a good showing, but that's going to be out of our hands.

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