

# Big Ten Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Saturday, March 8, 2025

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Gainbridge Fieldhouse

**Ohio State Buckeyes**

**Kevin McGuff**

**Ajae Petty**

**Taylor Thierry**

Postgame Press Conference

UCLA - 75, Ohio State - 46

THE MODERATOR: I want to welcome Ohio State to this press conference -- Coach Kevin McGuff, Ajae Petty, and Taylor Thierry.

Coach, we do have one quick question for you to start this off.

**Q. Obviously you guys were defeated in nearly every area of this game, but can you just talk about what you think is the biggest factor that led to this big of a defeat?**

KEVIN MCGUFF: First of all, give UCLA credit. I thought they played great. They showed up focused, ready to go. They kind of jumped us early, and we didn't respond very well. We didn't coach very well. We didn't play very well.

Like I said, UCLA was ready, and we were not today. It was a disappointing loss for us.

**Q. Ajae and Taylor, what was missing today that you think the team needed to compete with UCLA?**

AJAE PETTY: Just like Coach McGuff said, just coming out from the beginning. I think we came out stagnant, and they came out ready to play. They punched us in the mouth, and that's what happened.

**Q. For you guys, kind of two poor offensive performances here in the Big Ten Tournament. What do you guys need to work on and improve to be better in March Madness and the NCAA Tournament?**

TAYLOR THIERRY: Honestly I think just our defense



contributes to our offense. So when our defense isn't good, we're not getting any good looks on offense.

I just think we have to step up on these opportunities we have to just make shots.

**Q. Obviously this big of a loss, I'm guessing, came as a surprise for you guys. What do you guys kind of take from this into March Madness? What can you do with this kind of loss?**

TAYLOR THIERRY: Now it's win or go home. For some of us, it's our last season, so just got to take every opportunity we have and take advantage of it and just play hard.

Like I said, it's lose or go home -- or win or go home.

**Q. One last thing, was there any point in the game that you did feel like there was any chance of coming back, or after that slow of a start did it just start to feel like it was impossible to come back from that far behind?**

AJAE PETTY: No, I don't think that we -- obviously when the time was running down, it's like we lost. But from the big lead that they got, I didn't think that we thought that we couldn't come back.

Once again, it was just honestly just coming out and we wasn't ready. We should have been ready, and we wasn't. UCLA is a great team, and that's what happened.

**Q. First quarter, you hold Lauren Betts to no points. Defensively you're playing from earlier in the season where you're trying to stop her from even getting passes was working out, but the offense wasn't kind of matching that momentum. All season you hear them say defense turns into offense. Was it the offensive performance in the first quarter that really put the team in that mental state?**

KEVIN MCGUFF: Yeah, we had -- I thought we played hard initially defensively. They did make some 3s, to their credit, because we were really trying to crowd Lauren around the basket.



But our bigger problem to start was our offensive execution, which we weren't getting good shots. We had some silly turnovers. And then when we did get shots, we didn't make them.

**Q. A followup to that, you're talking about crashing into the paint. Ajae and Elsa have had previous success in the game and in the first quarter today. Is there any coaching discussion about let's try that one-on-one so those people on the edge aren't available?**

KEVIN MCGUFF: Yeah, we talked about a lot of things because any adjustment we made didn't work. It was one of those nights. Like I said, everything we did differently, UCLA executed in a way that made us pay. That shows you that they were ready and they were focused. They played great, and we played very bad.

**Q. To add to a bad loss, you have Jaloni and Cotie leave with injuries. How much do you know about their injuries at the moment?**

KEVIN MCGUFF: Not much. I haven't talked to the trainer yet. Jaloni was walking, but with ice on her ankle. Hopefully it's nothing long term, but I'll get with the trainer a little bit more here later tonight.

**Q. I guess from a loss as big as this, is there anything specific you have to do to sort of build up the confidence back going into March Madness, or is it just playing better?**

KEVIN MCGUFF: We need really good, focused practices. I'm a big believer in you play how you practice. So we need to get -- we'll take a couple days off, but we need to have a great week here coming up. Then next Sunday we'll figure out who we're playing and what the path looks like and start to prepare.

Really it's got to start with really focused, spirited practices.

**Q. You mentioned in the first practice that you felt like you were even outcoached. Can you talk from your end what made you feel like you were outcoached and what wasn't going right?**

KEVIN MCGUFF: They looked more prepared from the start, and if our team isn't ready to go the start, that starts with me. Like I said, we won yesterday because we fought to literally the last second, and we didn't have that today. That's part of coaching and part of my job is to make sure that they're prepared and ready to fight and play together, and we didn't have that today.

**Q. You just mentioned the fight. A couple years ago you had another fight against Indiana, had that huge comeback, and then again you see in the next game the next day kind of falling flat. Do you think there was maybe too much by the players potentially to put into that Iowa game, or what do you see there?**

KEVIN MCGUFF: If you're on like day 3 or 4, I think maybe there's a physical element, but on day 2 that shouldn't be the case at all. We did put a lot into last night's game, but they played hard too. They had to really play hard against Nebraska. I don't think it was that. Well, it shouldn't have been. How's that?

**Q. Obviously this is -- their loss against either of the top two teams in the Big Ten. How is it going into March Madness not having a marquee win on your résumé like you have had in the past few seasons?**

KEVIN MCGUFF: We are where we are. So we won't dwell on that. More so, what can we do right now to make sure we're as prepared as possible when we get an opponent in our path.

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