

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: Second Round - Utah State vs Purdue

Sunday, March 24, 2024

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Gainbridge Fieldhouse

Purdue Boilermakers

Matt Painter

Zach Edey

Trey Kaufman-Renn

Media Conference

Purdue 106, Utah State 67

MATT PAINTER: Congrats to Utah State. Obviously won their league. Very good basketball team. Obviously that conference had a great year.

Today was just our day. I thought some things after we kind of got settled into the game, and then we were able to establish Zach at the rim, I just felt like that was too much for them, and then we balanced some things out, obviously made some shots from the perimeter.

Two things that really stood out to me, obviously Zach got established there, but I thought Trey Kaufman's ability to rebound the basketball and be a part of the game was big. Then I thought Lance Jones' ability to defend Brown and really give a lot of energy and effort to picking the basketball up and just trying to make it hard on him. Brown is a really good player, and he reminds me of Mike Green who played at Butler, was a really good player at Butler and was a good professional player overseas. Just the way he carries himself, big shoulders, can make plays, can make shots. You saw that dose of it late in the game when he made those two tough pull-up threes at the end. He kind of had superpowers for them here the past six, seven weeks in terms of the plays he made at the end of games.

I thought Lance's defense and Trey -- just a good team effort. The guys that came off the bench, Myles Colvin, Cam Heide, all those guys. I thought they did a really good job. I thought Fletch was really good. You look at his line, 15 points, six assists, zero turnovers, pretty efficient. I don't want to leave anybody out.



But Braden obviously didn't get going in terms of scoring the basketball, got those two fouls, and that was a big step for us. When Braden went out of the game, we extended that lead, and that's having a deep team, and I thought Lance Jones was solid.

At times for him, he likes to hit triples and homers, and just being steady and hitting those singles and being solid, and I thought he was tonight. I thought he gave a great effort.

Across the board, just pleased with our guys. Anytime you can outrebound somebody by 23 and then your turnovers are even, you're going to be in a pretty good position, especially if you're getting to the free-throw line more than them.

Q. Matt, let's go back to Lance. You were talking about how huge that was when Braden got his two fouls. You guys expanded the lead, hit Trey inside and just kind of dominated the first half of that game. Talk again about Lance Jones and how important he is.

MATT PAINTER: Yeah, I thought anytime you can have that combo guard that can play both positions and guard both positions and then you have a quintessential point like Braden, now you have the luxury if something does go wrong, you have that other guy to be solid and run your team but also be able to defend.

We put Lance on points. We put him on twos. At times we'll put him on a three. Just kind of depends on matchups. He's been great for us. I think it's been a little bit different for him because he's always played through his offense, and there's games that with our team and the weapons that we have that you're not always going to get a high volume of shots. You might shoot the ball eight to ten times for a couple games and you might only shoot the ball four or five times. That's kind of hard for him getting him to that point to where he can turn some of those possessions down, let Zach get settled and then let them deal with it.

I always tell him that, if you just wait for him, let him set a ball screen, let him get into the post and just keep things simple, things will really open up for him even more.



Q. (No microphone).

MATT PAINTER: Yes, it was really hard. We had two or three bad shots a game for about 25 games. I told Zach just to go rebound.

It's hard to play a certain way your whole life and then you come and you're not first fiddle. You're not second fiddle. That's okay. There's a lot of people making a lot of money in professional basketball that are fourth and fifth fiddles and accept that role, and he's really accepted that role. But his effort today defensively, just that was great.

Q. Talk about the unselfishness of your team and the sacrifice all these guys make, not just today but all season.

MATT PAINTER: Yeah, when you pass the basketball, and sometimes we will overdo some things, just when you share the basketball and pass the basketball and don't have predetermined thoughts and just take what the defense gives you. I talked to Zach about it today before the game, I said if they crowd you and don't let you dribble, we've just got to shoot open shots. That means you don't get a post move then. If they want to take it away like that, just do it. If they don't, that's his rule, it's always been his rule, when he's one-on-one he scores.

It starts there. It starts with Braden because they dominate the ball a lot for us, but when they start taking Braden and Zach away, that's when a lot of things open up or they overdo some things, whether that's ball screen action or dribble handoff or playing through the post.

But when your best players are unselfish, it's contagious. Guys get in line.

Q. It's unusual to see teams play two posts like you guys start two posts every game, and Trey had a tremendous night tonight. Both guys obviously played well. Was there something that you saw when you scouted Utah State that led you to believe that both of these guys could have big nights?

MATT PAINTER: Not really. I think it can present itself. It depends on how much attention. If you go and double or you mess with it and Zach misses it or you overdo it, you should be in pretty good rebounding position.

I thought Trey was really good in the first game in the second half. I thought in the first half of the first-round game he was getting his hands on a lot of balls but he wasn't grabbing them with two hands, and the second half he was. Today I think he just established himself and got that confidence.

That's what we need from him. Even when things don't go his way, he's just got to stay with it and keep battling because when you have someone like Zach that gets that kind of attention and Braden gets that kind of attention, like now if you stick a couple shooters in there, you're going to get some open looks, and then Trey can get his post-ups or Trey can get the ball off the glass.

Q. Zach, I know you have a lot of belief in your teammates, but when Braden came off the floor, the run -- you saw all but two points of that run were scored with him off the floor. What kind of emotional lift was that, and how did you kind of feed off of that?

ZACH EDEY: I think it just kind of proves to the country that I already believed: We're a really deep team. When I went out, we were good. When Braden went out, we were good. We've got a lot of guys that can go and a lot of guys that can sustain a high level of play.

TREY KAUFMAN-RENN: Just what Zach said. I really don't have anything to add to that. We're a deep team. We know that whoever we put out on the floor we're confident they can make plays and help us win.

Q. Coach, 106 points was Purdue's highest ever point total in a March Madness game, also tied for the highest margin of victory. Do you think that speaks more to your offense, defense?

MATT PAINTER: I think more than anything, our defense. I thought we were really good defensively after we kind of got through the first seven or eight minutes, to Coach sprinkle's offensive plan that they did something to start the game that they hadn't done before, or in all the tape that we watched we didn't see it. They went a four-five ball screen, five-four ball screens. They set the inverted ball screen for their big a lot this year, and so we worked on that, trying to help that, and I think they did a good job there.

But that caused us a little bit of problems, and then when we settled in, we really didn't want to foul. So we wanted them to score over us but we wanted to mess with the dribble. So we wanted to make those things difficult for them, and we just wanted to stay with Brown and really make it hard on Brown and not let their shooters get going.

Obviously Martinez played well. We were familiar with him at Maryland. We knew he could score the ball and shoot it and he really got off.

But I think our defense really set the tone because when we do that, we're a good offensive rebounding team, but

that defense can lead to some transition baskets, and as you get in the tournament and you play quality people, you've got to be able to steal points somewhere. You can't just play in the half court.

I know we stopped them a lot there in the second half, but we just felt offensively if we could run our half-court stuff and keep working on that then we had a place to go with the basketball.

Q. Matt, Zach finishes with 54 points and 35 rebounds in two games here in Indianapolis. You see people around the country, even fans, but even people that cover the game say he's just tall. What would you say to the people that say that that and are only looking at the size and not just the game?

MATT PAINTER: Yeah, they just shouldn't cover basketball. (Laughter).

So like you go to school and you learn things or whatever, but we all don't like every single class we're in. It's kind of a necessary evil. It's like going to work. Like you don't like everybody you work with or you don't like certain parts of your job, and it's tough. You've got to be able to deal with certain things that are difficult.

I just think everybody should take tests on their knowledge of what they're doing. I think all coaches should take a test so they understand refereeing, and I think all referees should take a test so they understand coaching, and I think all journalists should have to take a basketball quiz or test or anybody that tweets, they should have to be able to do it. If they say something so moronic as that, they should have to have a probationary status where they can't tweet for like three months.

I think it'll help society. Just try to knock out the fools, so they don't have to meet at the local Walmart and say things that don't make any sense. (Laughter).

Q. Zach actually became the first player since Kareem to have 50 points, 35 rebounds and 65 percent shooting through the first two games. How good has he felt -- how good has he looked and how good has he performed through the first couple games?

MATT PAINTER: He's just performed like he has here the last couple years. Three years ago he was a good player for us. He caused problems. He did things, but it wasn't where he is now. He's just continued to get better.

We expect it. Like we go into games and like our staff always looks at me and says, what do we need to do? I said, well, Zach needs to get 20 rebounds, and everybody

always laughs at that. But you're not asking somebody to do something he can't do. He can do that.

Just get him to be consistent and explain where you think the double is coming from, and then explain some of the actions -- they're going to attack him. Everyone is going to attack him because they want him out of the game, so just getting him on that -- it has nothing to do with numbers. He has great knowledge of the game, and he understands the game, but he also doesn't have a wall. Most players have a wall to where, are they really listening 100 percent to what you're saying? He didn't have all that s--- from recruitment. So like he just stops, when Coach Brantley talks to him in film, I talk to him about certain things, PJ talks to him about offense, Coach Johnson, Coach Lusk. He just takes it in. There's not a push back. But we also want to collaborate and we want to talk.

So let me know what you're thinking, let me know what you think here, and sometimes I'm wrong, sometimes he's wrong, sometimes -- but the film doesn't lie. So we just try to work through it and just keep growing and keep getting better.

But he's great. He's easy to coach. He's obviously got some great physical skills, but he's pretty intelligent.

Q. Zach, you were up 31 when you came out with 12 minutes and change. At that point did you think you were going to get back into the game, and did you at all lobby Coach to try to get back in as the lead kept going up and up?

ZACH EDEY: I think his job is to coach and make those decisions. Like whatever he wants to do, if he wants to leave me in for the rest of the game, I would have stayed in for the rest of the game. If he wanted to take me out and leave me out, that's how it's going to be. I think it's his job to make that decision, and it's my job to play basketball.

Q. Zach and Trey, you guys are obviously very familiar with Gonzaga in the next round, played them each of the last two seasons. How much is that familiarity going to help you prepare for them this week, especially since it's only been a couple of months since you saw them on the court with this exact same team?

TREY KAUFMAN-RENN: It helps, but they're a different team now. When you go throughout the season, you get better, you get more connected as a unit, you get better defensively, you get better offensively. While they have the same personnel, they're just better together.

ZACH EDEY: Yeah, I think they're a different team. We're

a different team. We're going to approach it like it's a new game.

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Q. Zach, a year ago around this time or a month later, you decided to run it back. Now that you're here at this moment getting to the Sweet 16, is there any level of satisfaction? What are your feelings right now getting to this point and getting to the next round next weekend?

ZACH EDEY: There's no satisfaction. I don't think anybody on this team -- like I didn't come back to make the Sweet 16. I came back to make a run, a deep run. Nobody is satisfied with where we are now. Everybody wants to keep pushing. We're going to keep taking care of our bodies, keep executing, focusing on this game plan and preparing for Gonzaga.

Q. Zach, I think Trey had eight points and three rebounds in the first five minutes of the game. Can you describe what that meant for the impact he had early and then maybe his improvement also you've seen as a teammate over the last year or so?

ZACH EDEY: I mean, it was huge. Gave us a huge boost. They were hitting some tough shots. He got the answer with those two and-ones in a row. He really got us going and provided that offense at the start.

It just kind of shows this isn't like an outlier for him. This is what he can do. This is who he is. We all believe in him, and we all trust him to have games like this every time he steps on the floor.

Q. Trey, what has it been like for you with this team? You have not had a starring role throughout the season. You're usually the first guy subbed out. Some games you only get a couple shots up. How difficult of an adjustment has that been for you and what have you been able to do to make that adjustment?

TREY KAUFMAN-RENN: I don't think it was too difficult. I was looking at last year at this time, like we had such a good team, and where was I going to find a role to help this team win. That's what I thought about a lot during the off-season, how I can just help the team win and improve.

I'm just lucky to -- we had such a good team last year that I even found a role on this team. I'm just appreciative of that.

The guys believe in me, Coach believes in me, for the success we've had so far.

