

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: Regional Semifinal - Purdue vs Houston

Friday, March 28, 2025

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Lucas Oil Stadium

Purdue Boilermakers

Matt Painter

Trey Kaufman-Renn

Fletcher Loyer

Braden Smith

Sweet 16 Postgame Media Conference

Houston 62, Purdue 60

THE MODERATOR: Coach, we'll ask you to make an opening statement, then we'll go to questions for anybody up here on the dais.

MATT PAINTER: Really proud of our guys. I thought we had a great fight tonight and laid it all on the line. That's the only thing you can ask, for your team to give everything they had. Houston was one play better than us, and I thought it was one of those games that both teams deserve to win. Both teams competed hard and played just a good college basketball game. It's unfortunate, obviously, we didn't win the basketball game, but congratulations to Houston. They're a great team.

Everybody knows how this tournament goes, but I think they have enough pieces to win it all. Obviously, they're a No. 1 seed, well-coached, tough, competes, great on the glass. Proud of our guys. Proud of our guys for their commitment, their toughness, unselfishness and just staying with it. I just told them in that locker room when we played Auburn before Christmas, there was a big separation between us and Auburn, and that's why you play Auburn. That's why you play the teams that are that good. We've been that team before and, we're trying to climb back to get to that point and we're really close to making that move again. Our guys didn't hang their head and they fought. Last two, three months, we got a lot better. Had some rough patches, but we stayed with it. I thought our execution was good tonight. I thought our effort was good. Probably had to get a couple more



rebounds, but we got down 10 right there and our guys hung tough, made some played, made some shots, got some stops. That's all you can ask.

Q. Can I ask one for the player and coach at the same time? Matt and Braden, can you both answer this about the defense that Sampson, Houston directed your way, Braden directed your way. They were doubling him all over the court. It seemed like they were not going to let him do what he wanted to do and still had all those assists.

BRADEN SMITH: Yeah, we knew going in that was their game plan. That's what they've been doing to teams, and my job is, when they put two on the basketball, which they did the entire time, is to get it out of my hands. I gave it to Trey a lot, and Trey made a bunch of plays, and leads and assists or whatever, and then -- or I hit a shooter. So that's just part of my job. We knew going in how they would guard its, so we worked on it all week.

MATT PAINTER: Yeah, they're a very good defensive team, and we wanted to get in some different actions and get Braden some more space and play with the pace, but we also knew that he had to get the basketball out of his hands when they got aggressive. So we were trying to get them behind, but we knew that very rarely was he going to come off anything and be able to shoot because of how they defend. I thought he did a good job of passing behind, finding Trey in the short role. He got a couple skips in the second half. When he can get Trey in the short roll, he can get something behind him and get skips. That's what you want because you're not just getting one pass.

Q. Do you know you guys had, I believe, 11 field goals in the second half and he had 11 assists?

MATT PAINTER: I do now.

Q. Ever seen that before?

MATT PAINTER: I don't think so, but that's kind of how we play in terms of putting the ball in his hands or putting the ball in Trey's hands in those short rolls, and then making decisions. And a lot's determined by how they defend. How they defend on film is how they defended tonight.



Braden's a great decision maker.

Q. Matt, on that last defensive possession, did you get an explanation? It seemed like Milos may have shoved off with that arm. I'm curious if you got an explanation on that final defensive possession.

MATT PAINTER: Yeah, I didn't see it that way. I just got asked that question. I didn't answer that because I didn't see it.

Q. I'm not going to try to get you in trouble or make you comment one way or another, but how unusual was it there were so many 50/50 balls that go out of bounds, you can't tell. It's not reviewable yet. And there were so many in big moments, and none of them seemed to go your way.

MATT PAINTER: Yeah, it's frustrating, frustrating for our guys. As long as they get it right, a couple of them, the one thing I didn't understand is why they didn't collaborate and get together. That's the only thing I was asking, like, obviously, they missed the one. And then the other one, they messed that one too, but like at the time, I didn't realize it. Sometimes when it's 50 feet away from me, it's really hard. I didn't understand why they didn't get together. They can't go and review that, but they can get together and kind of talk it through and help each other. There's three people out there. So that was my only complaint.

Q. For Braden, after fighting back down 10, how much does this loss sting?

BRADEN SMITH: I mean, yeah, it sucks. You want to win every single game that we play and going down 10, a lot of teams give up like, oh, that's game. I thought we fought really hard, and we dug down deep defensively to get those stops to come back, and we did everything we could, and we just had a little miscommunication at the end, and they converted on it, so props to them.

Q. Matt, can you take us through the last block play on defense?

MATT PAINTER: Yeah, kind of going through what they could run. So we were going to help out to the outer third, and we talked about the flair going out the other side. When they went that way, Trey's man was able to step to the basketball there, but when you saw Myles make that play earlier and he gets that steal. So we just help out on that outer third, and then the other guy who was guarding the guy coming out on the outer third, takes the ball. So when Braden jumped out to the other side, it opened up that seam and we had to get back there. We just didn't

cover it back up.

Q. Braden, I'm wondering if you can just say a little bit more about what that miscommunication was that you just mentioned?

BRADEN SMITH: I mean we knew that they were going to come off the back screen and Cryer was going to get that shot in the corner. We've seen it in film and stuff. I was just trying to take that away. As we did that, C.J. or whoever it was, we switch it and he takes it and goes back to the ball, kind of like coach explained with Myles where he got the steal and, I don't know, I could have stayed. There's a lot of different things that could have went into it. I just didn't want Cryer coming off to hit that shot.

Q. For Trey and Fletcher both, you guys dealt with the defense differently. Trey in the post and Fletcher on the perimeter. How physical was what you guys had to play through tonight?

TREY KAUFMAN-SMITH: They're a super physical team. They have three or four bigs that they kind of just run in and you can't call the fouls. It's kind of like, you got to just play through it. It's very tough. That's why they're the number one defense in the country, so I think they do a great job.

FLETCHER LOYER: They were just pretty physical throughout, played good basketball.

Q. This one is for Matt. At the end of the season, obviously, you lose 6-9 before you get into tournament play. I know you mentioned some composure, teams having to keep their composure. What did you think of the way the tournament went and how these guys were able to collect themselves and play the way they did here these last three games.

THE MODERATOR: Yeah, I thought they were great. I thought their effort was great. I think sometimes when you don't shoot as well, you can't control that, right? You can only control trying to get quality shots, and we have a lot of guys that can really shoot the basketball, but I thought our effort was great. We were like plus 38, I think, in our first two games on the glass and our guys competed.

That's what you want. We had two really good wins and then, obviously, it was a hard-fought game today, but they responded all year. You're going to go through a tough stretch. If you don't, then, like, you're winning 34, 35, 36 games. Everybody goes through tough stretches, but our guys stayed with it, and they kept competing and kept playing, but I thought we played really well and competed. They emptied their tanks in these games, and that's what

you want to grow into.

You would like to see that as a coach the whole season and playing at that level. That's just not the way seasons unfold. You gotta keep getting better and keep improving. Like I said, I thought a good turning point for us was, you know, Texas A&M and Auburn, like, at that point right there. A lot of people thought we overscheduled, but it's like, you got to have a taste of it if you're not quite there, and we weren't quite there at that time, and you see the improvements through the year, and just feel for our guys. Like I said, they played well enough to win today.

THE MODERATOR: Time for a couple more. Seeing none, thank you, Coach. Thank you, guys. Thank you.

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