

Big Ten Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Friday, March 15, 2024

Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA

Target Center

Purdue Boilermakers

Matt Painter

Zach Edey

Lance Jones

Postgame Press Conference

Purdue - 67, Michigan State - 62

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Purdue, head coach Matt Painter, along with Zach Edey and Lance Jones. Coach?

MATT PAINTER: Thank you. Obviously it was a hard fought win for us, Michigan State outrebounded us, and I think that's the second time that's happened all year. Just a tough group. I think, when you play them, use your ability to stop them in transition and try to get them off the glass while also defending a lot of guys that can make plays and make shots.

So I thought we did a pretty good job defensively. We weren't as efficient even though we only turned the ball over 11 times, which is our average. That kind of kept us in the game as kind of our magic number.

But I thought our guys hung in there. I thought we got some really good defensive stops and did some things. There were some times there, as they got 14 offensive rebounds, that we were getting stops but we couldn't get a rebound. I think they probably look at it the same way because we had 12 offensive rebounds.

We hung in there. We played the first part of the second half and first half without Braden Smith. Lance did a good job. Ends up with only one turnover, which is great. When you get in those types of positions, you've got to play a different position that you're not used to. Just being solid and getting us into offensive sets was great.

He took five charges also today, by an individual player. One of them was probably a pushoff, which you wouldn't count as a charge. Taking four charges and another



offensive foul is a pretty good night. One of his best games. Even though he didn't score a lot, he did a lot to affect the game. He got fouled nine times, which is unheard of for a guard to get fouled that much.

Both of these guys next to me got fouled 23 times tonight in the game. Just we've got to do a better job making free throws, but everybody is trying to make their free throws. As long as we keep guarding and taking care of the basketball, we're going to give ourselves a chance.

Q. Kind of going off of that, Lance, you played extended minutes at the point guard. I don't know if this team has played five minutes without Braden in the game at any point for a long time. Kind of tell me about that role and accepting it. Then this team to extend the lead without Braden in the game was huge going into halftime.

LANCE JONES: Without Braden, it shows us how deep we are and how we can still play together. I just wanted to be next-man-up mentality, carry the load if I had to. You know just keep the game under control.

Q. Zach, I guess asking about Lance and just that steadying presence, especially when you see Braden go down. Michigan State hit a couple tough shots. Just having somebody like that. Coach Painter talks about it's not maybe his usual role, but he's not turning the ball over or making mistakes. How much does that maybe steady you in a moment where a game might get a little bit uncomfortable.

ZACH EDEY: I've got ultimate trust in my teammates to step up and fill whatever role is needed. Lance, he can do that. We're confident in him doing that. I wasn't worried at all when Lance had to step into that role. I've been with him in practice. I know the work he puts in, and I know the type of player that he is.

Q. Lance, talk about this guy to your left. Knowing he's down there, Player of the Year. What's it like playing with this guy? Especially you're the new guy on the team.

LANCE JONES: It's amazing. Just the way he creates for everybody else and just how dominant he is. They send a lot of bodies at him. As Coach Painter was saying, they throw the whole kitchen sink.

You know, he just never gets rattled or anything like that. He stays aggressive and always makes the right play.

Q. Lance, this kind of game, a physical game, where both teams are fighting hard, seems like that would kind of bring the best out of you in terms of your mentality and how you approach the game. How much do you like playing in games like this where you're able to draw four charges and things like that?

LANCE JONES: I love it. It's winning time now. It's March. It's a new season. I just want to bring a different type of edge and competitiveness and aggressiveness.

Q. Lance, you talked about control. How were you able to keep control of the game as at the end there the Spartans' confidence grew so much?

LANCE JONES: We've been through a lot as a team. Everybody just had to keep poised. We knew we just had to get stops and lock in defensively. It started with Z down there and just followed on with everybody else.

Q. Matt, obviously you've been in this big tournament a lot of times, but you've got a coach on the other sideline, the guy is the ultimate competitor. What's it like for you to have to keep playing against this team and doing well with your guys?

MATT PAINTER: We have a lot of respect for Michigan State, just how they run their program, how they play, how they compete. We've stolen a lot from them through the years. If you can learn from competition, that's the best. Like taking losses, learning from those losses, and just trying to enhance everything that you can in your program, through competing with somebody like that.

It's hard to be honest with you. We've got a matchup with Zach that I think really puts them in a bind, puts a lot of people in the bind. We have some guys that can really shoot the basketball. So just trying to complement each other more than anything.

I thought we did a good job of defending the arc. Once again, I thought we had some really good challenges, and we never let them kind of get going because that's a big piece of what they do. Even though it's not astronomical numbers for them, but when they get it going, especially Tyson Walker gets going, he had 30 against us last year in one of the games.

It's an honor, man. It's an honor to be at Purdue and compete in the Big Ten against schools like Michigan State.

Q. Circling back to Lance, I know you've talked about this progressively through the year, but on a day like this, Zach talks about just the ultimate trust in a guy who's maybe not been around as long as some of his other teammates. Stepping into a different role, nobody thinks twice about it. How has he moved that sort of immediate and instinctive trust from his teammates?

MATT PAINTER: I think more than anything you find out -- you know, everybody wants to play, but does everybody want to sacrifice to win? How are you as a competitor when things don't go your way or you're not getting shots?

He was more of a scorer when we got him. A lot of times those guys kind of find their way through a game with their scoring, so they bring that energy when the ball's going in, and then they've got bad body language when they don't.

For him, for the most part this year, he's been great. Whether the ball goes in or it doesn't go in, he's been able to do little things and help us win.

We knew it right away from talking to all of his coaches that he was coming to Purdue to try to help us win. You can't have enough guys like that. Like today, taking those charges, defending those guards, he wasn't a big piece from a scoring standpoint, but he affected the rest of the game. Taking those charges is huge. Who the hell takes four charges in a game, right? It's like unheard of, especially now with the rule changed a little bit.

But he got fouled a lot. Braden went out, and we didn't lose a beat, and he was solid and took care of the basketball. We're very fortunate to have him.

Q. Matt, so whether by players getting banged up or the flow of the game, how important is it that a guy like Myles Colvin comes in and makes an instant impact?

MATT PAINTER: Myles has been great. He's kept a great attitude. There's been games he didn't play or didn't play very much because we have a very deep team. But when you lose somebody like Braden, you need a punch, like you need somebody that can put the ball in the basket.

We drew up a play after a timeout and got him that dunk, which was great. He missed a three, but then he went right back to his pull-up. He's got a great pull-up there.

I thought he played hard. I thought he got a couple fouls that weren't fouls. Sometimes that happens to guys that come off the bench. They're going to call it more on those guys than the guys that play all the time.

But he and Cam Heide really gave us a lift today.

Q. Do you happen to have an injury update on Braden Smith? What was he saying when he came back from the locker room and tried to get back in the game?

MATT PAINTER: He said it was his calf. He pulled a calf muscle or got hit in the calf or something like that. Then he said he was able to go, so obviously we went with him.

I thought he wasn't the same. He wasn't as aggressive. He didn't try to get to his pullup or drive very much. He was just solid out there.

We'll see. Sometimes those things in the next day you're perfectly fine, and sometimes they get progressively worse. So we'll just kind of see what's going on and see how he's feeling tonight and tomorrow morning.

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Michigan State Spartans

Tom Izzo

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THE MODERATOR: We have Michigan State, Tyson Walker and A.J. Hoggard. We'll start with an opening statement from Coach.

TOM IZZO: I'm really proud of my team. I don't throw that word around very often. I thought we battled a lot of people today. I thought that Purdue is a very good team worthy of their ranking. Matt's a great coach. They got just as good a chance as anybody to, I think, win the National Championship.

So where does that put us? I don't know, we're going to find out. I thought we did enough things in a tough situation, and we didn't make many shots.

But we said rebounding would be a key; we outrebounded. We said turnover was going to be a key; we turned over a little too much.

I'm proud of these guys, especially these two up here, and my bigs who battled the bear. But it was what it was.

Q. You guys put up a really good fight tonight. I saw some frustration at the end of the first half with foul trouble. What goes through your head during those times, not being able to help out your team?

TYSON WALKER: It's frustrating. You know, just got to play through it. Things happen. You can't script the game. Just got to be better and figure it out.

Q. Lance Jones took four charges in that game. How much did you think his physicality impacted things when he came in for Braden Smith?



A.J. HOGGARD: When you can take charges and get teams out of their rhythm, now when you're being aggressive, you're second guessing. It was definitely a big factor that he brought to the team tonight.

Q. Your fans travel really well. What did that mean to you having all that support at the Target Center?

TYSON WALKER: It means a lot. I think, if we didn't play so early, there would probably be more people here too, and it is kind of far. But they do travel everywhere we go. You always hear "Go Green!" It's always big for us, especially when we get on a run and you can hear the crowd really well.

Q. For both players, do you feel like even in defeat you proved what you possibly could do to yourselves and maybe to others going forward?

A.J. HOGGARD: Yeah, most definitely. I'm not a big moral victory guy. I'm big on the way we competed. I think we did a good job of competing. I think we have the talent. I think we have the coaching staff to make a run in the tournament.

I think we had everything it takes. We've just got to put it together. I think we put it together for 40 minutes tonight, just made some mistakes to not come up with the win.

TYSON WALKER: For sure. We paid attention to the scout. The bigs played as well as they could play. Battled down there. The guards kind of controlled them for the most part, but they made big shots. Things happen when you get a rotation.

Today just another lesson that we had that we can learn about. Now we've got time to work on ourselves individually and as a team.

Q. A.J., what can you take away from this performance to carry you guys into the NCAA Tournament?

A.J. HOGGARD: Can't take away our competitiveness, our willingness to not give up and continue to fight. Coming



out of halftime, we were ready to go. And they came out with a 5-0 run. We went down 12-0, and we didn't give up.

I'm proud of the guys with the way they competed tonight. We can take that into every game. With the scouting report and the game plan, we'll be fine.

Q. Tom, you talked about not missing shots obviously, but still it's tied with a couple minutes to go. I'm curious what you think that says. And just these guys kind of learning how to win in the margins. You're obviously going to have games where you don't make shots.

TOM IZZO: Give Loyer credit, that was his only three of the night. He hit that big three, and we just missed some shots. There was a couple of tough calls, that charging one with a minute and whatever left.

It seemed like we were overcoming a lot of things. Guarding Edey is a load. We tried it a number of different ways. We tried doubling. We tried digging. We tried regular head up.

Matt does such a great job of getting them the ball in different spots. But that was a war tonight. That was a classic Purdue-Michigan State of 20 years ago. I know Gene was here and Jud was looking down from up above, and I'm sure both of them had to be proud of the efforts given.

But you've got to make some of those open shots. You've just got to make some of those open shots. When you start looking at the stats, and we outrebounded them, that's a miracle. We did have one or two more turnovers, fast break points 18-0. Points off turnovers 14-5. Points in the paint 36-30 us.

We did what we had to do. We were a couple of tough calls and a couple of tough shots. Give them credit. They made the plays, and we didn't.

Q. With where you guys are projected seeding-wise in the NCAA Tournament, it could look pretty similar next week with you guys playing a team the caliber of Minnesota and then short rest and one of the best teams in the country. How can that prepare your guys, especially some of the young freshmen who haven't played in the NCAA Tournament before?

TOM IZZO: I'm not sure I was for this tournament when it started. Jim Delany started it. I remember the meeting with Bob Knight, Gene Keady, Clem Haskins. Not a lot of people were for the tournament. 25 years later, I think it's proved to be something great, something that rivals some

of the great tournaments around the country.

I thought our guys learned a lot today. The timeouts were great. There was more focus. A.J. did a helluva job.

But how about us? We went to Booker in the last minute. Shows you how much confidence I do have in him in that respect. As he gets stronger, he's going to be a helluva player. He'll learn from this. Coen will learn from this.

Hopefully our juniors and seniors will realize that we can play with anybody. We've shown that all year long. The problem is we haven't made the plays down the stretch. We've got to do a better job of that, and a lot of that falls on me. This week I'm going to try to do a better job of it, and we'll see if we can make one of those patented Michigan State runs.

We've now played Arizona. We've played Tennessee. We've played Purdue twice. Those are potentially all 1 seeds. We've played Illinois and Baylor and Duke. So we've been battle tested.

And we've done something else that we've had to rise up from some adversity and some tough times. I think that's a key in a team making a run, can it handle that, and can it work itself out of it? That's kind of the job of this week.

Q. Tom, after two games here, do you go back home feeling better about your team or about the same?

TOM IZZO: In all honesty, I felt good about this team. I think some of my press conference, I didn't like some of the things we did, but I felt like the potential to be where it was never changed for me all year long. That's what was probably frustrating to the media and the fans.

But I feel better about a lot of things. I really enjoyed the way we were rotating so many guys in there because of foul trouble and every guy answered the bell.

Mady Sissoko gets three of the biggest rebounds I've ever seen in nine or ten minutes.

I'm going to say I feel better about my team, and yet we've got to figure out a way to make some big plays. We made free throws down the stretch and big plays. We've got to get to the line a little bit more. For some reason there wasn't a lot of fouls called our way, so we didn't get to the line much. That's probably my fault.

Q. Tom, you spoke a lot about this team's adversity and you're getting wins over Baylor and keeping it within six and five against Purdue. What can you speak on this team's competitiveness and maybe the

difference with this team compared to your others?

TOM IZZO: Well, the most disappointing part for me as a coach is we've been consistently inconsistent. You've got veteran guards. You've got a veteran coach. You shouldn't be inconsistent. So I have to take a lot of that on my shoulders is figure it out.

But this weekend, the film sessions, the meetings, realized that this team was all in. When multiple times during the game we could have folded because there was some adverse things that happened. We were playing without some guys. It was some bizarre things that happened. And we just kept fighting.

You know what, that last minute and a half, we believed we were going to win the game in the huddle. I believed with every eye I watched, including Book and Coen, my two freshmen, that is a very positive sign, and that is a very good feeling. So I'm going to take that home and see what that brings.

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