Big Ten Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Friday, March 13, 2026

Chicago, Illinois, USA

United Center

Michigan Wolverines

Dusty May

Aday Mara

Elliot Cadeau

Postgame Press Conference

Michigan - 71, Ohio State - 67

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by head coach Dusty May along with student-athletes Elliot Cadeau and Aday Mara.

DUSTY MAY: Very hard fought game by two competitive teams. I thought our defense down the stretch was the difference. We were able to buckle down, force some really tough shots, and finish with rebounds.

We struggled in the first half when we did force the misses coming up with loose basketballs and rebounds, and I thought late in the game that was the difference.

Q. Cadeau, last game against Ohio State, you only put up 2 points. This game you looked a lot better. What was your mindset and training like coming into this big game?

ELLIOT CADEAU: My mindset was the same mindset as usual. My goal before every game is to get a double double with assists. Just trying to get my teammates involved. I felt like I played good last game. I felt like I had a lot of good assists and I controlled the game last game.

I felt it was pretty much even the way I played. I just was more aggressive with my shot this game.

Q. Dusty, halftime I think you outrebounded 19-14, a lot of 50-50 balls going OSU's way, and then they ended up with the 3. What was the message at halftime, and how did that in reality end up?

DUSTY MAY: Several of them were strange. In this game, there were three or four in the first half that came right to us, and we just weren't able to come up with them. The ball was a little bit new and it was overinflated. So we were talking about finding the ball with our eyes a little bit quicker and securing it.

Also, there were three or four I felt the ball just caromed to where they were. So I thought those possessions were big.

But the ones that really resonate late were just Rez' and Aday, our big guys going and getting the rebounds above the rim. They got some real ones. I was hoping that Elliot was looking for a double double, rebounds and assists. Get 10 out of him next game maybe.

Q. Elliot and Aday, you have the whole adage of rust versus rest. How much did you guys lay off playing to the effect of today's game?

ELLIOT CADEAU: Yeah, we've been practicing really hard these past couple days. So we feel like not playing was kind of helping us. We felt like it took us a minute to get into our groove in the game, and we started playing better towards the end. And that's just how it goes.

We felt like we shook all the rust off, and we'll be 100 percent our best basketball tomorrow against a really talented team.

Q. For both players, you guys aren't used to being in close games down the stretch like that. What did Ohio State do that you guys didn't expect or did expect? What did they do to you a little bit?

ELLIOT CADEAU: I felt like Bruce had a really good game. Like he's one of the best players in our conference, and it was hard to stop him. He was playing really efficiently, playing really good. He was making big time shots.

Along with the 50-50 balls, it kind of took us a while to get those going to our way. We were just like not stringing together a bunch of stops, which we needed to, and we felt like at the end we were playing defense with a lot more

intensity and a lot harder, which helped us.

Q. Aday, you had a huge second half. I was wondering what adjustments you made at halftime and what you noticed differently between the first and second halves?

ADAY MARA: I think we changed the way we were playing pick-and-roll, and the staff did a great job finding how we can create those advantages in pick-and-roll. As soon as we started getting good looks, I said to the guards they were finally giving me good passes. So I was able to finish. Yeah, I think that was the biggest thing.

Q. Aday, we haven't spoken to you since you won Big Ten Defensive Player of the Year. I'm curious your reaction to that, and can you tell how teams attack you guys differently when you're on the court?

ADAY MARA: For me, I think winning Defensive Player of the Year in the conference is an award that goes for the whole team. I think our defense is pretty good, and that helps me. Like when you're giving good pressure on the ball, the guards they're going to try to get to the rim, and they're going to be tired or off balance. That's when I'm there and I block the shot.

So I give the credit to all my teammates that as I said, pressure on the ball and playing good defense, and I'm able to do the easiest part.

Then I think just many people are scared as soon as they get to the zone. You see that they keep dribbling the ball around the zone. They try to find something else. They pop. They change their game to our defense. So I think that's the best thing.

Q. When Yaxel not having many opportunities, Elliot, do you take it upon yourself to get everyone else involved?

ELLIOT CADEAU: Yeah, we feel like we have a lot of guys that are really, really good. If it's not Yaxel's night, somebody else will step up. You see Trey McKenney step up, have a really good game, make a lot of shots. When he's having a good night, we're the best team in the country. When he's not having a good night, I feel like we're still the best team in the country.

Credit to Yax, even though he didn't get that many shots and he might not have made as many as he wanted, he was playing defense really hard, trying to get rebounds and attacking the glass. He can affect the game in many ways other than just scoring.

Q. Elliot, you mentioned facing a tough opponent tomorrow. Whether it be Illinois or Wisconsin, what will it take to advance again?

ELLIOT CADEAU: Just playing a lot harder than we did today. We lost to Wisconsin, and Illinois is one of the best teams in the country. So we're going to have to kind of have a different mindset coming into the next game, just playing a lot harder because, if we play the way we did today, I don't think we'll win tomorrow.

Q. Everybody knows what Aday can do defensively, but when he has a game like tonight, how much difference does that make for you guys, and how much kind of fear should that put in future opponents that he can go off like he did?

DUSTY MAY: I think everyone knows, when you have a team that's this talented and this connected, a lot of guys are capable. So the game -- I thought Ohio State had a good game plan. They're extremely physical.

We were trying to attack early in the game on the first pick-and-roll, and they were into Aday's body and they were into Elliot's body. We weren't doing a good job of creating space and separation so they could use those gifts. I thought those guys cut harder and screened away from the ball, so they were able to get some opportunities.

Aday, he's got sticky hands. The finishes around the rim, he makes them look easy and routine. I don't know in 25 years if I've ever coached anyone else that can make those types of plays, other than Vlad last year. So he's a unique talent, and we're still finding different ways to utilize his skill set and add weapons, even though it's March.

I thought his jump shot at the end of the shot clock was big. He's making his free throws consistently. When he gets fouled now, we believe that we're probably going to put two points up on the board. He just continues to improve. He's got an awesome attitude about him and a great spirit about him. Typically guys like that who enjoy being teammates and working on their game, they gradually get better. He's done that the last 10 years of his life.

Q. Dusty, you talked about the defense down the stretch. Can you talk about Trey McKenney's play on the ball down the stretch and how he's come along as a defender?

DUSTY MAY: Really want to applaud Trey. A lot of times freshmen in these situations or moments, you've got to get them out of the game. They're just not ready when the game is on the line. This year we even went with older guys -- not better or worse, just older guys that have been

in those moments before. Tonight we felt he was guarding those guys as well as anyone on the roster. He was physical, disciplined, staying down on shot fakes. He had active hands. Tonight was a real step forward.

Also, every game presents different challenges. Yax had an off night because they played him a little differently and had a game plan centered around stopping him. It's the same thing. Each night we have to figure out what's the best way for our team to win that night and just roll with it. Luckily we have a locker room full of dudes that, they embrace that. He's got it going tonight. Not bad body language from me, I'm supporting him. And maybe tomorrow is my game.

Q. Dusty, you just mentioned Yax. I'm just wondering if you can kind of speak to his ability to, even though he's having a little bit of an off night, not force shots, just to stay within the offense, what that means for you guys with all the accolades he has, to be able to kind of stay poised and stay within the game.

DUSTY MAY: He had six assists. I thought he played a good floor game. He just didn't seem like he had a great rhythm for whatever reason. The thing with Yax, if he's on the court, he's giving you leverage and attention on him so you can play some 4-on-4 away from him.

Elliot's assists, a lot of times they're with Yax being guarded differently than maybe somebody else in the corner. Also just his size and length. He'll bounce back tomorrow. That's one thing about Yax. He's a competitor. He can get down on himself, but he always responds. For him to have -- the Big Ten Player of the Year -- to have an off night still be able to beat a quality opponent like Ohio State, is once again a testament to how good of a team we are.

I thought overall it wasn't one of his better performances. He'll bounce back. We know what we're capable of. Most guys who receive those types of awards, they're going to keep firing and try to shoot their way out of a funk or whatever the case. Yax just plays the game, and he wants to win.

Q. I was wondering how L.J. Cason's injuries affected your plan for the rest of the season. And what roles and responsibilities Trey McKenney can be in going forward.

DUSTY MAY: I think we're three games in, and it really hurts whenever you go back and watch the Ohio State game and see how well L.J. played in that. He was really rolling.

That's part of sports. It's more of an opportunity for Roddy, and Nimari and Trey and Will and these guys to do a little bit more. I feel like that second group we played, Elliot -- and once again it also presents a new challenge for Elliot to stay out of foul trouble. When we're balancing the fouls, our rotations are off. We're not near as good.

That was part of our problem in the first half. Once Rez picked up that second, we were out of our rotation. In the second half, we didn't have any foul trouble. It's a new challenge for all the guys to pick up the slack. No one's going to replace L.J.. he's a different bird, man. He can get to where he wants to. He's strong enough. He did an awesome job on Thornton defensively.

So everyone else just has to be a little bit better in their version of their best version.

Q. A game like this that you're not used to, you guys haven't played many games like this -- tough, tight defensively, and everything else. As a coach, do you like it a little bit that you felt it, and did you sort of expect it?

DUSTY MAY: If we win, yes, I love it.

(Laughter).

Jokes aside, to be honest, we just play the next possession. Whether we're up 30, up 3, down 6, we just want to play the next possession and figure out what we need to do to find the next possession and find solutions. We encouraged our guys a couple times during the game, we're going to go on a run whenever we start focusing on our defense and rebounding and not that our shots aren't dropping or we turned it over or they're being physical with us on the ball screen.

Whatever the case, because Ohio State is a very physical, disciplined basketball team. We just get to the next one. Either one, we're equipped. We're ready for the challenge to figure out a way to win that one. Hopefully more of those 30 and 40 wins are coming soon. Those are fun as well.

Q. Back to Aday and Cadeau, you're keeping Aday on the perimeter a lot today and running a lot of dribble handoffs with Cadeau especially. What made that action really appealing for you guys coming into this game?

DUSTY MAY: We just felt like in the first half all of our ball screens, Aday had a guy in his body and Elliot had a guy in his body. We were just trying to figure out a way to get Elliot a little bit of speed and separation so they could

attack.

They weren't putting two on the ball like a lot of teams do. They're sending him to his left hand. Elliot's got a good left hand, but with a guard in his ribs, he's not near as effective or fast. We wanted to give him 12 inches of space or 24 inches of space and let him do what he does. Once we were able to create that space, that gravity, he was able to get downhill and made great decisions.

He missed a couple of floaters that he typically makes, but once he got a couple of dunks, the game loosened up a little bit. But it was more finding a way to give him a little space.

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THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Ohio State head coach Jake Diebler, along with student-athletes John Mobley Jr. And Bruce Thornton.

JAKE DIEBLER: High level game. High level March game against two really good teams. Proud of the fight we showed. Just didn't quite get enough to go win there down the stretch, but our guys battled really throughout.

I thought we executed, for a majority of the game, our game plan well. Against a really good team this time of year, you've got to be able to do that and sustain that for the entirety of the game. We had a couple balls there that just put us in that situation there at the end.

High, high level belief in this team and what we're capable of here down the rest of the season, but big time basketball game and really proud of how hard our guys fought.

Q. Bruce, no moral victories here, but you just played one of the top teams in the country pretty well, better than a lot of teams have. Going into the NCAA Tournament, does that do anything confidence-wise for you guys?

BRUCE THORNTON: Definitely. How we've been playing as a team, how we've been practicing, how we've been preparing, how we've been showing up on these game days, it's just a collective effort -- from the recovery, from the nutritionist, from everything we've been doing day by day to prepare ourselves for the best Ohio State team we possibly can. And I'm glad we just showed it to the world.

Q. John and Bruce, you had a couple 3s that were in and out, in and out, two-point lead there. If you could have gotten it up to four or five, it would have been a different finish.

BRUCE THORNTON: Definitely. Sometimes that's just how basketball is at the end of the day. We've been working on those shots since June. So I'm not having any regrets of taking those shots because I know in a couple weeks we're going to make those shots.

JOHN MOBLEY JR.: Like he said, we don't live or die with those shots. Those were good looks we got, just in and out. We stay in the gym, and we're going to knock them down when they count.

Q. For either of you guys, what did it mean to have Brandon back in this game?

BRUCE THORNTON: It means a lot, especially -- I just know his senior year, his presence, his experience of playing college basketball definitely helps. It was great seeing him back there today, him playing well, him just playing hard.

I'm glad he's had the opportunity to play again after being injured.

JOHN MOBLEY JR.: It was great seeing him back out there. Seeing the countless work he put in, the conditioning, everything, during these eight, ten weeks. No surprise with what he did out there. Shout out to him for sure.

Q. Bruce and John, when you have Aday Mara in the middle, you're driving, it looks like you got something and you see him there, how does that change what you do and how you attack?

BRUCE THORNTON: It's definitely hard, especially his style and his shot altering at a high level. We work with different paths and things like that in our workouts. And the stuff that we work on, like weight, in the gym.

It bothered us a little bit, but I feel like we still shot a great

percentage from 2 as a team. Like I said, I don't feel that was a really big factor for us. I feel like the fouling and the live ball turnover killed us today.

JOHN MOBLEY JR.: Like Bruce said, he's definitely effective in there in that paint. There's definitely ways we can work around that, like a hostage or a court top. Like he said, we're going to knock down those 2s when it counts.

Q. Speaking of Mara, he only had two points at halftime. I know you guys aren't really down low, but what do you think you guys did as a team to prevent him from getting his in the first half?

JOHN MOBLEY JR.: Amare does everything else on the floor.

Q. Mara.

JOHN MOBLEY JR.: Oh, Mara. You know, just being physical, trying to push his catches out. He's really a good player when he's down there on that block. He's really tough to guard. The game plan was to try to push his catches out, try to be more physical with him.

Q. They're obviously playing without Cason, but Elliot Cadeau and Trey McKenney, what sort of challenges do they present for you guys in terms of defending them?

JAKE DIEBLER: I think Cadeau's ability to create for others, and then tonight he was able to get to the rim too much. His playmaking is really important for their team. I'm familiar with McKenney, recruited him. He's a really good young player. He got off to a good start from 3.

Then he's got an ability with his size at his position, uses his physicality well for a young player. Those guys are able to score, it gives them more versatility offensively.

Q. I was wondering what adjustments were made at halftime to help deal with Aday Mara, who had a slow first half, and to limit the 3-point shots? Michigan started shooting really well from the 3 and cooled off toward the end. I was wondering what adjustments you made.

JAKE DIEBLER: I think they adjusted by getting him behind our defense and ball screens and some of that. We had some mis-executions on a couple of those. Then his activity on the glass, picked up a couple. There were a couple opportunities for us to pick up the ball that we just didn't quite get to today, just didn't quite bounce our way.

We certainly had to be more disciplined on the perimeter. A couple of their looks early were too good. Some of them were within kind of what we were doing schematically.

So that was some stuff we talked about. We knew there was going to be a heavy ball screen attack. We had to guard that well. I thought we did for a majority of the game. They got behind us a couple times for the lobs. It's a real weapon with his size back there.

Again, good player. Good player, I thought we made it hard for him for most of the game.

Q. Just wanted to ask about Taison, why didn't he play today? Also, I saw that Christoph was limping a little towards the end there. What's their status?

JAKE DIEBLER: Yeah, Taison tried to be out there. He warmed up, just couldn't quite get to where he was comfortable being able to go. Really worked hard the last -- it happened last game, so he didn't play at the end of the game. Tried really hard. Every time I walked by the room, he was in there getting treatment. Really wanted to be out there, just couldn't quite -- we just couldn't quite get him there in time for the quick turnaround.

Hopefully we don't anticipate this being a long-term thing. As far as Tilly goes, we had to take him out there at the end. He needed one. He needed to see our medical team, and we had to make sure we were obviously okay to put him back in before we did. His size not being out there against them, I think they got an offensive rebound on that possession.

This time, I'm telling you, these guys work so hard to be available. We have an unbelievable group, and they battled through stuff all year and worked extremely hard to be here. There's a toughness with this group that I really appreciate. It just got us here a couple times with those two guys today.

Q. Dusty May gave you a lot of credit for your game plan today. I just want to know what maybe was the difference between now and the last time you guys met up in that phase? He also gave you a lot of credit for being a physical and very disciplined team, and I know you've talked about how this team has been resilient all year. Just take me through like where that comes from and how you instill that.

JAKE DIEBLER: I think, as we've shown, we've improved as the year's gone on. You certainly want to be playing your best ball this time of year. I feel like we're doing that. A big part of that has been our improvement defensively. Being healthy, it matters.

I think it felt like we had to pressure them a little. They're down a ball handler, a really good one. We felt like we need to provide some pressure on the perimeter.

I think the physicality, we've gotten better as the year's gone on playing physical with discipline, and it's really important. It's something we work on all year, and it's just taken us a little bit of time to get to where we're doing it at a really high level. I like the physicality we played with. I like the discipline we played with. I thought our execution defensively, and really has been for an extended period of time, pretty good.

That's a team that their ability to get out and make you pay when you make mistakes on offense is really, really good. So that hurt us in the first half. Once we made them play in the half-court, which was important for us, we felt like then we had to play with that great physicality because, if you let them kind of move and play in rhythm, they've got so many weapons offensively, it can be a real problem for you.

The ultimate part is the glass. It's a team who really hurt us on the glass in the previous game. I want to say they maybe had 16 offensive rebounds last time we played. Big difference today for us.

Q. Jake, Gabe obviously played like 20 minutes today. I just want to hear from you. What do you think he brought to the floor? Can you just kind of talk about him being aggressive on offense a little bit too?

JAKE DIEBLER: Yeah, I thought he gave us great energy. He's really good at pressuring the ball. I thought that helped us. He was able to kind of make them start their offense a little bit higher. Then offensively, he stepped up and made some big time plays.

Understand this about him, he's been battling for some time an injury, and he doesn't complain. He just shows up every single day, works hard, spends time in the training room to be available. There's been times when I wanted him to be more aggressive offensively, and I think he just hasn't felt comfortable doing that with some of the stuff he's battled through.

But showed tremendous toughness, stepped up. We didn't know Taison, whether he was going to be able to play or not today, and I thought Gabe stepped up and gave us some real good minutes with his energy, his ball pressure, and then obviously hit two big shots.

Q. I want to ask about that goaltending call late in the game. It looked like you wanted them to look back at it. What happened there? Was it not reviewable?

Also, how did that change the game?

JAKE DIEBLER: I wanted to see -- I couldn't tell live if we had tipped it on the way up and then hit it after the glass. That's what I was looking for. When Pete back at the bench said he felt like it wasn't something we should challenge at the moment. I haven't gone back and watched it.

There were a couple other situations I felt that played a bigger role than that specific play that could have went either way.

Again, our guys fought, like their fight today was really good. We're playing our best basketball of the year. Certainly got to own the things we could have done better. We talked about that. We felt like there were a couple things we could have controlled a little bit better today, but we're going to keep riding this momentum.

It's an exciting time of year for us, for our program, and we've got to go get some rest. We know how to recover. We've had a lot of work at that this year. We're going to get some rest, get some recovery, and be excited about what the future holds for this team.

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