Big Ten Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Friday, March 13, 2026

Chicago, Illinois, USA

United Center

Purdue Boilermakers

Matt Painter

Fletcher Loyer

Trey Kaufman-Renn

Postgame Press Conference

Purdue - 74, Nebraska - 58

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Purdue head coach Matt Painter, along with student-athletes Fletcher Loyer along with Trey Kaufman-Renn.

MATT PAINTER: Obviously, it was a really good win for our team against a quality program in Nebraska. I thought our ability to rebound in the second half really helped us with the execution. We were getting some pretty good shots. It was even up on the glass at halftime, or maybe we were minus one, so we were plus eight or plus nine on the glass in the second half.

I thought the other night we played pretty good defense for 20 minutes. I thought tonight we had more of a full game defensively, and that really helped us. We weren't great in terms of scoring the basketball in the second half, but I thought our execution was good. I thought we got quality shots. We got some necessary offensive rebounds. Both times we played them, we really benefitted from getting offensive rebounds and then spraying it out, reversing the basketball, getting good looks that way.

These guys here, I thought they played well. Fletch had a really good game. But we had good balance, and that's what we need. We need our bench to come in and help us. I thought we had a good collective effort.

Q. Trey, Coach talked a little bit about the rebounding disparity in the second half, that you guys had the edge there. There's a lot of loose balls that you and Oscar came up with in traffic. What did it take to get those, and why were all the loose balls seemingly coming up your way?

TREY KAUFMAN-RENN: Just trying to work hard. It's one of the best defenses in the country. I think Oscar and I's job was trying to get these guards some shots. We told them just get it on the rim so it gives us a chance.

Then yeah, I don't think there's anything special to it. They switched sometimes so they have cross matches. Then it's a little bit easier to get on the boards. I think it's just effort. I think we did a good job today.

Q. Fletcher, kind of along those same lines, there was a play at the end where there was an offensive rebound, Oscar got the offensive rebound and kicked to you in the corner and you got the 3. How back breaking are those for the other team when they play a good defensive possession, and you guys get an offensive rebound and then get a shot off, like Coach was talking about?

FLETCHER LOYER: That's what win you games. Just keep battling down low. They can play good defense for 30 seconds, but if you don't get on the glass, it doesn't count as a stop. Credit to our bigs for bearing them down low for getting those rebounds and kicking it out when they smother them.

Q. Fletcher, what did this game mean to you, and what does this tournament mean to you and this team?

FLETCHER LOYER: Yeah, it's March. It's what you work for growing up. It's what you work for all off-season. Obviously you want to build that resume in the regular season, but now it's time to really go. Just getting the message across. Glad to see we've played pretty well these last couple games and got some in the win category.

Q. Fletcher, there was the play where Braden got the offensive rebound and kicks across to C.J., and he makes the three. He hadn't made one in quite a while there. Just for a guy who is a shooter like you, what is it like when you have -- you haven't shot very well and you have a shot like that in a big moment and it goes in, just what is that feeling like? What was it like for him to make that shot as a sophomore?

FLETCHER LOYER: When you've got a guy that puts in a lot of work, you trust them to make it. Obviously we shot just okay from 3, but we made timely ones. For our guys to step up and have confidence and keep shooting them is what we're looking for.

Q. Coach, kind of the same question I just asked Fletcher about C.J. He had been struggling a little bit, hadn't been his best game, but for him to step up in that moment and make that shot, what does that say about him as a player?

MATT PAINTER: He had just subbed in too. That's not always the easiest thing until you get loose a little bit. I think more than anything it's just the relief. When you take shots and you don't make them, that's one of the things you get into with your coaching staff when you don't take high percentage shots, right? When you do take high percentage shots, they're high percentage because you've made them in the past, and you should take those.

When you get those, sometimes against a really good defensive team like Nebraska, you don't always get those, but when you do, it's kind of the theory of pass up a good shot to get a great shot. Well, if you do that against a great defense, you're going to pass up a good shot and get a worse shot, so take those. Take those as much as you can. We like our size. We like our ability to offensive rebound. So we love that.

Take rhythm 3s and then get on the glass and try to beat them both ways. I thought that 3 -- I thought it was a big play for Trey to get that rebound and get them back on their heels a little bit because they were gaining some momentum.

Q. A couple of parts to this question. You talked last night about these games back to back nights, trying to maybe spread out the minutes a little bit to keep people from getting tired. Omer comes in tonight for Braden a little bit. Was that kind of, A, trying to get a few minutes off for Braden? Then also, he played really well, so it kind of came through in the long run as well.

MATT PAINTER: For him sometimes it's more mental, rather than the physical two minutes or three minutes he did. I didn't take him out in the second half. That allows him to get that reset, and then obviously Omer played really well. It was good. I thought our guys off the bench did a good job for us, but especially Omer. I thought he had a really productive game.

In that first half, when both teams were subbing their guys and bringing other guys in, when you can get that punch off the bench -- he did that yesterday with two 3s in the first half, he hit another 3 and did that tough pull-up there. That kind of gives you that spark, and it's not letting them dig into your lead.

Q. Matt, you've been around this game a long time. You got a win on Thursday, win on Friday. How does this momentum help you in this tournament and moving forward in the NCAA Tournament?

MATT PAINTER: More than anything, you're beating a quality opponent who you're competing with. You're competing with them for where they go on a seed line. So the fact we were able to beat them twice should help us there.

Yeah, you're just -- you know, it depends on who you look at. Like I always gauge it off of one bracket because they've had the most success. So you just kind of dig into you've got to play. Like everybody else is trying to figure things out, but when you know somebody is close to you, man, it can really help.

Sometimes you get in these situations and you don't play people that are going to help you. It's only going to hurt you if you lose, right? So like that part of it, that gets a little dicey also, but like this is a big win for us. We didn't have the conference season that we planned to have, but we also didn't have that because we've got great teams in our league, and we didn't defend well enough to have a better record.

I thought against Northwestern, the first half we were good defensively. I thought we were much better for 40 minutes tonight. That's got to -- that part of it has hopefully got to carry over into the NCAA Tournament.

Q. It felt like a momentum shift in this game when Nebraska got multiple offensive rebounds and then you guys got that big stop. What specifically worked for you guys defensively tonight?

MATT PAINTER: We were -- obviously Sandfort is a big part of our game plan of trying to stay with him on those pin-downs, just that single-single action coming out of the corner. Then Rienk Mast puts you in a bind as a five -- as a face-up five with his ability to pass. Then we were trying to veer back with it, with just late switch, so he couldn't get rhythm 3s. Then he got a couple on us just from miscommunication. So that's first and foremost.

The other thing is like Sam did a good job of breaking us down at their place, and Lawrence, like we didn't want Lawrence to get into a rhythm. So our ability to guard

those guys and try to keep them out of the paint was very important, but also just to try to keep them out of the middle. If we could keep them out of the middle and keep them towards the base lane line, something they do really well, probably the best in the country at it, and then we had to be really aggressive with our help.

That's kind of the foundation of what we're trying. They'll play in the post a little bit, but not much. They're trying to run their action. If they have somebody out there that's not a 3-point shooter, we try to keep them in help as much as we can with all those back cuts, different cuts, trying to stop from using my language to give it to you.

They make it very difficult. They make you make a choice. Like if you go out there and try to stop 100 percent of what they're doing, like you're probably going to struggle. You've got to kind of pick and choose, like, okay, not just guys you're stopping, but more actions. And then like what are you going to live with?

So I think trying to get Pryce off that 3-point line as much as possible, and then the rest of the guys breaking their rhythm and trying to keep him in front of us.

Q. It seemed like when Nebraska cut the lead to eight, you guys called timeout. It seemed like Braden took over that timeout just for a brief snippet. Number one, did you catch anything he said? Then the second part is how reassuring is that when you have a senior leader who's willing to take over this time of year?

MATT PAINTER: He was talking about the lack of communication in ball screen defense. So he was losing his mind because they weren't calling left, right, whatever. We were trying to calm everybody at that point.

But it was like sometimes you get guys in there that lose their shit and they don't say anything that makes any sense. You're like, hey, I'm glad the guy cares. What locker room are you in, though? What he was saying, he was accurate. So sometimes it's just shut up and sit there. Players that lead the right way and are talking about the things that we're drilling and trying to get out there, it's better coming from them. It just simply is.

Q. Your guys' guard play really complements your bigs. What does it mean for you to have good quality guard play that really sets up your bigs down low?

MATT PAINTER: More than anything, it's -- a lot of people don't understand it. Like some guy scores 25, one game he scores 5, whatever it might be. They think we dictate it. People that follow you, will be like what the hell are they doing? Nebraska's defense dictate what we do offensively. When you face a great defense, you take what's there. It's like a smorgasbord, you're pushing A or pushing B. It's ridiculous when you hear people talk about it.

They're just too good. They're too good. They made us feel like fools through the years. You learn hard lessons, like well, let's just stay away from this. For us, it's just simply doing that.

It's like when we first started to go against them and they got really good at it, we weren't even getting the ball in position to score. We were just making tough shots. Now we do a better job of getting the ball while competing against -- sometimes we haven't had great success. Lately we've been able to do a better job of having low turnover games, getting the ball in position to score. Sometimes you can get the ball in position to score and you don't. People wonder, what's wrong. People that understand basketball say, hey, that's a great shot. That's a great play. That's a good pass. You've got to live with those.

You've got to get your team to have that mentality to understand that. Don't hang your head about a good pass, good decision, good shot. Don't hang your head. That's the play we want. The ball just didn't go in for us.

More or less, I talked about being process based instead of results based more than anything.

Q. Talk about Fletcher's will to win and what that means to him and you and your team.

MATT PAINTER: Yeah, his communication, his leadership, but you see it in random plays, like when he gives up his body, whether he takes a charge. Made a great play today hustling and getting that loose ball and getting on the floor.

Yeah, you can't get enough of that. If you're going to lead and you're going to talk, you've got too back it up with the time you've put in. Fletcher has done everything in his power to be a good college player, whether it's eat right, in the weight room, in the training room, sleep, you name it. He has worked really, really hard to put himself in this position.

But you've got to follow it with action, and he does. He plays hard. He cares, and he wants Purdue to win.

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THE MODERATOR: We're now joined by Nebraska head coach Fred Hoiberg, along with student-athletes Pryce Sandfort and Rienk Mast.

FRED HOIBERG: That game, obviously it came down to points off turnovers and second chance points. That's the game. And just watching after the game in the coaches room, it just had some mindless turnovers in that first half.

Then you dig yourself a hole. I thought we did a nice job fighting out of it to pull back within two, 21-19. I thought we missed some good looks early. Unfortunately they didn't go down, and then I thought we started pressing a little bit just trying to make plays into small spaces. You can't do that this time of year.

Good learning opportunity for our guys, and we'll build off of this one. Obviously our inability to finish off the possessions in the second half really did us in. Our first shot defense was really good, I thought, in the second half. But just inability to finish it off and get the rebound, and we need to fix that.

Q. Rienk, just how similar was Purdue's frontcourt, just the way they went after things tonight, compared to a month ago?

RIENK MAST: Yeah, pretty much the same as what they did last time we played. We saw it on film. We knew they were going to do it. Yeah, they did the same thing they did last time.

Q. For either one of you, I know this is kind of like the way you guys like to play with a lot of the 3-pointers, but what is the sweet spot for you guys in terms of shooting the 3 or pressing for more, especially like in a tournament setting where you have to win a couple games in a row and your 3-point shot may go in and out depending on the situation? Can you talk about the objective there?

FRED HOIBERG: We're looking to take what the defense gives us. In Purdue, their defense protects the paint. They give up a lot of 3s. When you look at their 3-point rate, that they give up, that's what they give up. Unfortunately, we weren't knocking them down early. I think we were both the same, 10 for 31, in the 3-point line. They obviously hurt us inside and the second chance points was 19-8. That's a big difference in the game.

But with our offense, we're always looking to take what the defense gives us. Shots at the rim or we avoid the mid-range or try to get uncontested 3s. Which again I think we got good looks, but unfortunately it just didn't go down today.

Q. In the Big Ten, you guys know each other's tendencies so well at this point in the season. How excited are you for Sunday to find a new matchup and and get into that week?

PRYCE SANDFORT: It will be exciting to see that, but first we've got to go back and learn from this film and figure out what went wrong exactly. We'll do that for sure, and we'll go from there.

Q. Fred, this was another game where self-inflicted mistakes were an issue against some of the turnovers and ball handling against pressure, I guess. What do you chalk up for the reasons that's been such a struggle over the last couple weeks?

FRED HOIBERG: Like I said, they were just mindless. Second half, we had two. We did a much better job of taking care of the basketball, but you give them eight opportunities and points-off-turnover differential in the first half and the inability to finish the possession in the second half.

We did a solid job on the glass. At halftime actually, we were out rebounding them, a team that's a lot bigger and more physical than we are. Then second half that was the difference. First half it was the turnovers, second half it was the rebounding.

We've got to find a way to put two halves together if we want any chance of advancing here starting next week.

Q. Early in the season we talked, and I said something special was happening with this group. You nodded your head in agreement. I don't want to erase any of that, and I want to celebrate it. What's the reset? How do you relocate and redirect this team for next week?

FRED HOIBERG: We found a way to regroup after the disappointing game at UCLA. I thought we played great, especially in that second half at USC. Did not play as well against a hot UCLA team, and then found a way to regroup and focus for Senior Night against Iowa at home. Now we've got to get that same focus back.

Listen, give Purdue a lot of credit. They're playing great basketball. I thought they were terrific last night, and they followed it up with another great game in this one.

Pryce is exactly right. We're going to go back and watch the film and find a way to get this thing back right and hopefully go on a run here starting next week.

Q. Fred, how much of an issue did Purdue's ball movement cause specifically with the way it went after your defense and forced you into rotation?

FRED HOIBERG: It's what they do. They've got the best point guard in the game. He's coming off a 16-assist, 1-turnover game last night, and they get that thing popping, they're so good at getting into the pocket. When they got it in the pocket, their movement was really good.

Again, our first shot defense was great. It had nothing to do with that in the second half. It was finishing the possession, and we just did not do that. When you get outscored, whatever it was, 36-13 in second chance points and points off turnovers, it's hard to win. You've got to find a way to narrow that gap and give yourself a chance.

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