

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

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Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Gainbridge Fieldhouse

Purdue Boilermakers

Matt Painter

Zach Edey

Trey Kaufman-Renn

Media Conference



ZACH EDEY: Not particularly. I think I kind of attack most people kind of the same way. I've gone against size plenty of times in my career. We have Will Berg on our team, who is 7-foot. I practice against him every single day in practice. So it's not like I haven't seen size before. I kind of know how to deal with it and how to attack it, but the game plan kind of stays the same.

Q. With Isaac Johnson on Utah State, obviously they're probably going to try and stretch the floor with you potentially guarding him. How have you guys approached teams when they try and stretch the floor and maybe try and draw you out of the paint?

ZACH EDEY: Well, without like getting too specific into it, like I said, we've dealt with a bunch of different styles all year. We've dealt with the shooting 5, we've dealt with the post-up 5, we've dealt with the rebounding, like, opposite dunker 5, like, every single style we've played against, so we're ready for everything.

Q. As you're going through the tournament and also prepping for life after college and what that might look like, how has that been as you kind of maybe see how your game might translate to the next level? And as you went through the back half of the season or even any time this season, are there things that you might have done as you start to get ready for transitioning to the pros?

ZACH EDEY: My main goal out here all year has just been to help Purdue. It's never been to try to become an NBA player right now. I think there's time for that. I think I have plenty of basketball left in my career to get to there. Right now, I'm focused on Purdue, focused on winning championships, and I'm focused on winning basketball games with my teammates.

I took some things in the off-season, obviously, that probably would help my draft stock and help Purdue, like guarding in space, guarding a ball screen, getting quicker on my feet, playing out of the pick-and-roll more, setting better screens, stuff that will help Purdue and my NBA, but I'm really focused on Purdue right now.

THE MODERATOR: We'll get started with questions for the student-athletes.

Q. Trey, you're a big guy, but what is it like in practice and drills when you're trying to move Zach?

TREY KAUFMAN-RENN: It doesn't work. You can't. That's the short answer. You got to play differently.

Yeah, I'm a big guy, but when you're going up against him every day, you don't feel that way. It's kind of funny when you go and play other teams, like, sometimes I have to realize you are stronger than the other guys, but when you just face him all the time, it's difficult.

Q. You talked about this last night, settling into that game, obviously having a really good second half, what in an environment like that does settle you down, settle you in, just kind of get your comfort when it's a neutral site, it's obviously a big atmosphere, things like that?

TREY KAUFMAN-RENN: I think just playing. Nothing special, to be honest. It's just going out there and playing. Knowing you've done it before, everything that you're doing in the game you worked on countless times. You're teammates are encouraging you.

Q. You beat up on a team at Grambling State that really didn't have much height to compete against you. Now you're going to play a team in Utah State that has a little bit more height. Is there a different approach mentally or in any other way, game plan-wise, that you have to change your approach a little bit?

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Q. What are some things that Utah State you think does really well and what are some things that you think you can exploit from Utah State?

TREY KAUFMAN-RENN: They're just a really good team. The big guy that they have, he's a really good player. We had a player when I first came here, Trevion Williams, that Coach said you kind of reminded us of. So obviously sending help to him, and then the people that they have around him are also really good players, really experienced, and it's going to be a tough matchup.

ZACH EDEY: They're a good team, obviously. They kind of play that 5 out style, they try to spread you with their 5 man that can shoot and also put the ball on the floor and make some plays like that. Obviously, we have some things in place to try to prevent the way they want to play.

Q. When you guys broke down the tape and looked at the opponent for tomorrow, what jumps out for you and what are some things that they do well?

TREY KAUFMAN-RENN: Just like we said, they're really good in their sets -- yeah, I don't know. Really good players, really good team. I don't want to go too much into it.

Q. It feels like we always ask your teammates this question, but asking you about Trey and just how he's developed, and you all spend a lot of time working against him in practice, working with him in practice, how have you seen his growth in the last couple years? What maybe has marked out the steps he's taken?

ZACH EDEY: Yeah, he's taken big steps. I still think he has a lot of room to grow, but the player he is now, he's really good, his footwork in the post, being able to stretch the floor a little bit. There's still like so much room for growth in his game and he's already such a good player, I think that's a really scary thought.

THE MODERATOR: All right. Guys, we'll let you go.

(Pause.)

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with an opening statement from Coach and then take questions.

MATT PAINTER: Yeah, obviously, we're excited about playing. Utah State is a well-coached team, great experience, even though they don't have a great deal of experience together, which kind of shows their ability to come together in a short amount of time in a year when

nobody that scored for 'em last year played for 'em last year. I think one guy sat out for 'em. But Coach Sprinkle and his staff have done a fabulous job with this team. But they to do have experience. They have guys that have been in college four, five, six years know how to play. They have a fabulous point guard, they have a great front line, they have skill. We have a couple guys -- Ian Martinez played at Maryland so we're familiar with him. But he looks really good on tape.

But just the balance of being able to defend, being able to offensively play through their posts, but also play through their point guard, get out in transition, execute their sets, they're just a well-oiled machine. They have a really, really good team. They have had a great year and this is going to be a tough challenge for us.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. I guess sort of a more philosophical question, but what's changed about games like this -- they may be on the extreme end, but when teams can turn over so much in a year and maybe you really do just have one year's worth of tape, I recognize they're kind of an extreme case, but with the portal and roster.

MATT PAINTER: Yeah, they're definitely -- I would say they're an outlier, for a team not to have any individual on their team from the previous year. The thing that I would -- I think the caveat for that is Danny does have two of his players from his previous school that's played for him and they happen to be two of his better players and the positions that are really hard to get, a quality point guard, the guy that can run your team and make a play, especially at the end of clocks, and then a great big that can pass the basketball. Their big reminds me of Trevion Williams, just with his ability to wheel and deal and pass the basketball. Just a really, really good player.

But, yeah, that's today's landscape. I think that's going to continue unless some things change within our guidelines. Coaches that can do what Danny's been able to do are the ones that are going to flourish, because I think we can end up being an outlier too for how we operate because we don't operate any differently because we only play in the portal a little bit here or there. So I don't think we'll take anybody this year. We've taken two guys now, if you count the following year, in four years. So we've had the fewest amount of guys of any High Major school in the country in the last four years.

So I think it does come and find us at some point because you can't control all of that, but I think you just have to have a pulse on your situation and a pulse on that particular year because you have to be able to do it both ways, in my

opinion. I don't think you can keep doing that every single year. There has to be some growth from year to year. You just want that as a coach, right? You want experience, but you also want experience of being successful together.

Q. I know you have seen probably every tactic under the sun as far as teams trying to play around Zach Edey, but what are you expecting in this matchup with how you expect Utah State to play Zach in this one?

MATT PAINTER: Yeah, there's two things that can happen. You can watch who they've doubled. Even though there is not guys like him in their league, there's some guys in their league, they have an All-American in their league at 6'-8", 6'-9" who is a different type of a player. So you can watch them, how they have dealt with low post players, even though the game doesn't present that as much as it used to say 10, 15 years ago.

Then you also have to be -- the expectation has to be there could be something they have never shown before. And I know it's a quick turnaround, but they weren't preparing for Purdue going into the TCU game. They're preparing for it TCU. So now they've got 48 hours. So you look at what they do, and this is how you handle any opponent, you see what they do, you think that's what they're going to do, but you also prepare, which we just did, for a lot of different things. So we have a series -- you can double from the top, you can double from the bottom, you can cover down ball side, you can come traditional, you can wait until he dribbles and scrapes, you can stay one-on-one. If you've got something else, then you're better than I am. That's about it, right?

It really comes down to decisionmaking on his part, and then our guys getting where they're supposed to be. So we have rules to what we do, just like they have rules to doubles. The doubles come, and then you can set it up differently so the rotations change, and now they have to be able to -- the guys that are really good at doubling the post or playing there, they give a great effort, first of all, they're quick with their doubles, they're aggressive, they don't foul, and then they set their rotation, and they know what they're doing. So that's why we try to change up things and mix things up so the rotations are a little bit different. But that's about it when it comes down to it.

But for us, it's taking care of the basketball and him getting the ball where he needs to get it and when we take care of the basketball and we keep getting quality shots, we really help ourselves.

Q. General question here. You were a shooter in your day, you've got a lot of really good shooters. How important is it for guys to shoot a lot of shots? Do

good shooters need to shoot a lot of shots between games?

MATT PAINTER: I think just getting a dose in the environment they shoot at. Like, sometimes guys, that's kind of their religion, right? They want to shoot every single day. If you find a good shooter, he just doesn't go and get extra shots when he misses. He gets extra shots no matter what. That's what made him great, that's what continues to keep him at that level and that consistency. But each guy has a little bit of a different feel, each guy has a little bit different rhythm. For us, like, Zach likes to do 10 minutes after everything is over with. He likes to do a series of jump hooks, left side, right side, in the middle, off the glass, straight on. So that's his routine. Even though we just did something for an hour and 10 minutes or whatever, that's his routine.

To me, I think it's two-fold now because we play, which to me, it's just crazy, we play with probably six different basketballs during the course of the year. So I think that piece is important. If you can get the basketball that your opponents are using -- obviously, you're always practicing with the ones that you use. So we use a Nike ball. But then sometimes when you go to other places, they use different basketballs, so we have those in storage. So when we've got three days to practice before an away game or a neutral site game, we use those basketballs.

So I think that. It used to be, like, check the floors. Coach Keady used to always tell you to check the dead spots. I don't know if there's any more dead spots. But dribble the floor, check the dead spots, check the rims, shoot, just to get familiar.

Q. I wanted to circle back on what you were talking about in terms of the portal and you feeling pretty comfortable that your roster's secure going into next year, not having to hit the portal. What is it about Purdue that you've built there culture-wise that makes guys want to stay, even if maybe they're not getting the playing time that they want and look for greener pastures somewhere else. What have you built that maintains that stability?

MATT PAINTER: I think it starts with education and people. I think we have great people at our place, we have great education. And then I think we've done a better job in the last eight, ten years of evaluating. I think everybody puts a big emphasis on recruiting. I think if you go and evaluate the people that want to be at Purdue, that education is important, and just having a level of discipline. So when you -- like, okay, I'm going to leave Purdue. Well, then you're not going to get your education at Purdue. Like, you're going to be a former player for 50

years. Keep stuff in perspective. Like, you know what I mean?

But it's really hard to have perspective when you're 20. You didn't have it, I didn't have it, none of us have it. We all are looking, like, where can I play, what kind of style of play, why can't I shoot more, why can't I do this, and then put a big emphasis on winning. Like, are you coming to Purdue to shoot or are you coming to Purdue to win. Like, right now, we have some guys on our team that don't play as much as they did before and it bothers 'em and it should bother them, but it's not a distraction because winning supersedes that. That's what you're looking for. I don't want 'em to be happy in terms of their own situation, but I want 'em to be happy for their teammates, I want 'em to understand the big picture, I want 'em to understand that we just won two Big Ten championships, we went back-to-back No. 1 seeds. Like, you're putting yourself in a great position.

But it starts in the evaluation because when you sign somebody, you just don't get them, you get 'em all. So you get Uncle Billy, you know, you get Cousin Jed. You get 'em all. Like, they're all coming. You're going to hear it. Like, you hear it from everybody, right?

So you might as well do the right thing because no matter what you do -- I always tell coaches when we talk about stuff, no matter what you do, someone's going to be mad. My wife and I, we have five kids between us. Like, no matter what we do somebody's pissed. Like, you might as well make the right decision, right?

But make the right decision in recruiting. Like, make the right decision with that person and then don't take him and be like, oh, man, he's going to be a handful. This is going to be tough. Don't take him, then. It's not a school district. Take the guys that fit your program. And then if you're a little bit shorthanded and not as athletic or whatever, you know, who cares, right? Who cares. Let's just play basketball and take care of it and it's not that big a deal.

But know who you can coach and know who you can't coach and more than anything know who you can get to. Like, I got a lot of second and third place ribbons in my garage, and I had no chance of getting 'em. No chance. But then after awhile -- just understand just get out of that race. Like, just save a year of your life and get out of that race and recruit people that want to come to your school.

Q. Along those lines, the portal opens tomorrow. What are your thoughts on the timing of when that opens and how does that impact roster construction building and has there been a lot of discussion amongst coaches or would you want it later on after

the tournament to be over to kind of level things out?

MATT PAINTER: We're not in the position right now, unless some people are going to leave our program, to really dive into it. So it just depends on your situation. Like, if you're starting over, you're in a much different position than someone who's been at a school for 19 years. If you got guys leaving for the pros or you got some guys that are unhappy or -- we got teams in our league that have been successful doing it, we have other teams in our league that are somewhere in the middle, then we've had other guys that kind of struggle.

If you can take somebody -- like, Lance Jones was about winning. He didn't say one thing about name, image, and likeness, even though he obviously gets money through name, image, and likeness. But he didn't say one thing in recruiting about that. So there's nothing wrong with that. There's nothing wrong with him wanting that. But that can't supersede winning. Like, a lot of times people in the portal, because they don't like their role, but they want to win, but they want to win playing shortstop and leading off, right? They want that. Which, there's nothing wrong with having that dream and wanting that. But it's easy for me to talk about your problems, but it's hard for me to talk about mine. I just look in the mirror and see something different than you see. You know what I mean?

So each individual -- but think how you are when you're 20. Like, you were way worse when you were 20 than you are today, right? And that's where they are. So when I'm looking at somebody or you're looking at those situation, like, if I bring in eight people, like, what's the average of those eight people going to be successful? Four? Right? Because I got five guys returning. You have 13 scholarships. So like when you have a large number, you're going to take people and you have to realize, if you're coming in that kind of class, some of those guys aren't going to be successful. Like, I don't like that piece of it. Like, when I take somebody, I look at -- and not all of 'em have been successful. I want to say, here's our plan, here's what we want to try to do. Now he's got to go out and earn playing time, he's got to go out and earn these things, and I'm always going to do what's best for Purdue, but I want to think that I have a plan for their success.

I mean, it eats at me when somebody -- I got a couple guys that started for me last year who don't play. It kills me. But I have to do what's best for Purdue. I have a job, right? So, like, when you look at all those things, those kids need to look at that, the people around those kids need to look at that, and say, hey, I'm going to go and get some money, I'm going to go and do this. Your happiness is going to lie in winning or losing. If it doesn't lie in winning or losing, then you're not a competitor and you're not a real

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basketball player because that's how it is as a coach. Like, all these coaches are now moving and the money is extreme. And I know this, if you can go somewhere and make a bunch of money and you lose, you're going to be miserable. You are miserable. And if you go and you don't make as much and you win, you're going to be happy.

So, like, everybody needs to take a step back and understand their own happiness, whether you're a player or you're a coach, and make their decisions through that because, like, I would rather play 15 minutes and win a bunch games than play 30 minutes and get our brains beat in, right? I would rather do that. And then at the end of the day, like, I did this and I didn't get the education I could have gotten at this other school, that doesn't make sense.

Q. Tomorrow you guys, by all probability, are most likely going to win. You guys have all the favor. Like, if you're looking at the, you know, stats and whatnot, like the history behind the matchup between you two, what's your mentality going into the game and what are you telling your players?

MATT PAINTER: All right, let me explain something to you. Everybody in the NCAA tournament is really good. Now when you go to that 32, everybody is that much better. They're a really, really good basketball team they are well coached. This is going to be a dog fight, all right. It's going to be a dog fight. We've had a lot of experience here, all right, and we've had some disappointing days. Like, there's no way we are looking past these guys. These guys are real. If you watched that game from TCU, TCU is tough, they're hard nosed, they're well coached, they got big-time players, TCU has big-time players. They beat quality teams in the Big-12, all right. They handled 'em. They handled 'em. So we know this is going to be really difficult. They have a great point guard, they have a great big, and they got a bunch of other dudes that can really, really play. And like I said before, Danny Sprinkle is as good of a young coach or any coach at any age as there is in the country. Very few people can do what Danny Sprinkle just did. Very few, all right. You just, he has nobody that played for him last year, like, you go watch us run stuff and do stuff, I mean, I got a bunch of guys that played for us, everybody is on the same page, we get it. Like, we get it. How the hell do they get it, and they have been working since Jun like that. It's because they got a great coach.

Q. Johnny Hill an was assistant for you or was a player for you and now an assistant at Utah State. Danny Sprinkle joked that he's keeping him out of meetings because he doesn't want him to leak anything to you. Just give us your memories of him as a player and what he meant to your program when he

played for you?

MATT PAINTER: Yeah, he was fabulous. He was a grad transfer. He didn't start for us. I think he started three games for us. He backed up PJ Thompson. He practiced hard every single day. Every single day he practiced hard, he had a great attitude, it was infectious. He came every single day and laid it on the line and helped us win. He sacrificed to help us win and that's what it's all about, man, that's, he was great. And I've tried to, at every stop, tried to help him in his coaching career -- I tried to stop him from coaching, because that's what a true friend does. But no I'm happy for him. He's with a really, really good guy and he's growing in the business and I wish him all the success in the world.

THE MODERATOR: All right, thank you.

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