

# Atlantic Coast Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Thursday, March 5, 2026

Duluth, Georgia, USA

Gas South Arena

**Notre Dame Fighting Irish**

**Coach Niele Ivey**

**Cassandra Prosper**

**Malaya Cowles**

Postgame Press Conference

Notre Dame 69, Miami 54

NIELE IVEY: Just really excited for this win, being a part of ACC obviously is a really competitive tournament. Just excited to be in postseason, excited to be in March, and I'm just really proud of my team. I've said that for the past several weeks. This team has really grown. We've matured. We've fought. We believe and we've trusted each other. That's why we're at this point peaking at the right time. Looking forward to our matchup tomorrow, and again, really proud.

**Q. Just wanted to ask about Hannah. She broke the single season ACC steals record. If you could just speak on her dominance and how you've seen her evolve over the season.**

NIELE IVEY: Yeah, that's a huge accomplishment. She's broken every record almost, especially at Notre Dame. Breaking the ACC single steals record is phenomenal. She's just having a phenomenal season. She's just relentless. She loves to play defense. That's her superpower. She brings her all defensively, and she does a great job, and just breaking another record. But she's been playing amazing, and I'm just really proud of her.

**Q. Can you speak to over these past few games this momentum? Is there anything in particular on offense or defense or both that's really clicking now?**

NIELE IVEY: Yeah, I mean, this team is resilient is what I'll say. They believe. They trust each other. We've been fighting. We've been working all season long. Have had some injuries, have had some highs and some lows, but



they always come to work every day. This is an incredible group of young women I get a chance to coach. I love them so much, and everybody has gotten better. Everybody trusts each other. Our chemistry is phenomenal.

Like I said, they believe in each other, and I think the momentum is coming from the way that they've worked, and it's translating on the court, on our successes, because of the way that we work. I would also add that KK Bransford is a big part of this. The last several weeks having her back into our roster and being healthy has really helped us. Cas, Lay, everybody is so unselfish, and I love being around this group because they play so hard and they play for each other, which I love.

**Q. For you, Coach, and Malaya, how has it been transferring from Wake to Notre Dame? And how have the transfers stepped up for you on your team?**

MALAYA COWLES: Yeah, it's been amazing, just like diving right in and just getting to know the program and stuff. It's just been amazing, and I'm loving my time here.

NIELE IVEY: I will say Lay has been an amazing addition. I feel like I hit a home run with our grad transfers. I love the impact, the immediate impact that they've all made. They're special young women, and I'm fortunate to be able to coach them.

**Q. For the players, could you sense a time when things sort of clicked and got better and things were going the right way the last couple weeks from that standpoint? Coach, with this group, this second life, so to speak, of the conference tournament and then obviously the NCAA Tournament potentially, do you feel it's a second chance for you to keep on what you've been building the last couple weeks?**

CASSANDRE PROSPER: Yeah, Coach Ivey talked about it a little bit, but KK coming back, she gives us that spark and she's really the glue of the team. I feel like with her coming back, we were just a lot more confident. Now it's just keeping that momentum and just keeping on trusting



each other.

**MALAYA COWLES:** Yeah, I'll speak to that. I really feel like our defensive communication has stepped up a lot and just that comes with trusting each other a little bit more and just really building off of just our principles more.

**NIELE IVEY:** I'll just agree with everything. KK is a big piece of that, and this group knows that we've been trying to get better day by day. We're seeing the work. We're seeing the success with the work that they've put in. But the trust with each other, the commitment that this group has, and then the addition of KK has been the reason why we've been this successful and peaking at the right time.

**Q. Can you talk about the decision to challenge in the fourth quarter, and also, what goes into that process? I saw it looked like your video coordinator was working the iPad there. What does that look like?**

**NIELE IVEY:** A lot of the girls, a lot of our team -- but it was right in front of me. So learning to use the appeal a lot this season, I've had a chance to use the appeal and it's been successful a couple of times.

But I had a time-out, so I thought that was a big point of the game, getting the ball back and having the opportunity. Because our offense got stagnant a little bit in that fourth quarter. But I trust my staff and our video coordinator and our team. That was a good call.

But a lot of help. The whole support staff is awesome.

**Q. I know the league is testing locations for the tournament. Can you speak to what you've enjoyed so far here being in Duluth?**

**NIELE IVEY:** I love it here. This is just -- Atlanta, great city, big city. I think everybody that has worked this arena has been phenomenal. They've been awesome. It's all about the student-athlete experience, and I feel that our student-athletes are having an incredible experience.

The arena is beautiful. We had a really good crowd. It was loud. Then just bringing the brand of ACC in a different location. I think there's value in that. Yeah, Atlanta has been awesome.

**Q. Cas and Malaya, it's obvious how much Hannah changes the way that you guys play when she's on the court. From you guys' perspective, how much does she change the way the other team plays when she's on the court in terms of both offensively and defensively?**

**CASSANDRE PROSPER:** Yeah, I think her defensive presence, I think they're just on guard. They're hesitating. It makes us just be able to anticipate passes better.

Then offensively she just pushes the ball so quickly up the court. They have to guard her. Then that frees up the ball for us.

Or she's able to just attack and just make space for us to be able to attack, as well. Really her presence, everyone feels it, offensively, defensively. She's just amazing on the court.

**Q. Niele, how have you seen this team -- Miami goes on that run to start the fourth quarter, but this team didn't panic. You were able to hang with those punches and end up winning in dominant fashion. How have you seen this team do that throughout the year where they aren't so dependent on runs and they're confident in their ability to roll with those punches?**

**NIELE IVEY:** Yes, we've been tested all season long with our schedule, being on the road, being in the fire a lot this season. I think those experiences have helped us mature in games where teams go on runs. Like I said, we've been in these type of environments and we know what to do. This group knows what to do. And credit to our leaders staying poised, having that calm presence.

I think just being tested early has put us in a position where we can withstand teams' runs.

**Q. Coach, what is the importance of not just the way that you guys responded to the fourth quarter Miami run, but Miami got ahead in the game to start and you guys were able to turn that around. What do you see in this team that enables them to do that, and how big is that to turn a deficit into a first quarter lead?**

**NIELE IVEY:** Yeah, I thought Miami had a really fast start. We talked about it, and we still stood the course. We knew exactly what we need to do offensively, defensively. This team is really locked in on the game plan. And again, just having poise, being in these scenarios before.

Honestly, at our place, Miami started off really strong, so we watched a lot of film on the way that we started the game a month ago. We were prepared. And again, just being in those moments, having those experiences helped us fight through. We had to fight through.

Everyone stepped up when we needed to step up, and we really, I thought, brought our defensive intensity way higher in the second quarter.

