

# NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - UNLV vs Michigan

Friday, March 17, 2023

Baton Rouge, Louisiana, USA

Pete Maravich Assembly Center

**Michigan Wolverines**

**Kim Barnes Arico**

**Emily Kiser**

**Maddie Nolan**

Media Conference



EMILY KISER: They had a really strong inside game. We knew that coming in it. It was something we really wanted to lock in on. 23 is a really good player. We wanted to bring some of that physicality that maybe they hadn't seen as much. Every single say in the Big Ten we get to play against that caliber of post player, so we had a little bit of experience and really just wanted to try and lock that down.

**Q. To build off of that, it looked like there was a really high level of defensive intensity. You guys were diving for loose balls, tipping, blocking. Can you talk about how important that was to the game?**

MADDIE NOLAN: Yeah, I mean, I think we've highlighted it all year, like the sticker plays, taking charges. Elise did a good job on 23 in the beginning. Diving on the floor. Even like Leigha dove on one, and she didn't get it. But it kind of brings us together, brings up the energy, brings up the intensity, and we know if someone's willing to do it, like we should be able to be willing to do it for them. It's win or go home now, so those plays really make a difference.

EMILY KISER: That second quarter we had a little bit of a drought offensively, I think everyone saw. So to keep that caliber of defense really helped us get this win.

**Q. Curious, you do a lot of film work, you study the opponents' tendencies, you know what they're going to do. When you actually get out there and you're on the court and you see the person, like how do you figure out how to adjust or does it confirm sometimes for you like this is what they're going to do and I know exactly what's coming at me?**

EMILY KISER: They were super disciplined team that was going to run their offense really well. We tried to watch as much film as possible, but you just don't know these teams as well. We tried to call out a couple of their plays. We were dead wrong. So you just kind of have to go off the fly. That's where you kind of play basketball, stick to your defensive principles. Yeah, everything -- I mean, you can guess which hand a player's going to use more, you can guess which plays they're going to use, but at the end of the day, just play basketball out there, I think.

THE MODERATOR: All right. We'll start with an opening comment from coach and then take questions for the student-athletes.

KIM BARNES ARICO: Thank you. I thought it was a great basketball game. UNLV is a really good team. It was super competitive game. Really proud of our kids. I thought we came out and established ourselves early. I thought we set the tone defensively in the first quarter and did a tremendous job.

Obviously, these two next to me, as well as many other players on our team, really stepped up and contributed. It's great to still be playing in March.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the student-athletes.

**Q. Emily, I saw you and Coach react kind of a certain way when you heard you had six assists, so wanted to ask you what prompted that reaction, why did you react that way?**

EMILY KISER: I think it's not super normal in the post that you have that many assists, and also, I mean, the team's got to knock it down. Maybe some of them were to Maddie as well. But it's not usually my thing. Sometimes when that double comes, I have a little more opportunity to get a couple assists, but yeah, a higher number than my average, I would say, probably.

**Q. We talked to the other team and they talked about how physical you guys were in the post today. Can you talk about how important that was to your game plan?**



MADDIE NOLAN: Yeah, I think just like with our team, trying to make in-game adjustments. If we notice something, we try to tell the whole team, whether it be a play, whether it be a player's tendencies. So just trying to -- obviously watching film, but adjust on the fly because, like you said, it can change during the game.

**Q. Today obviously you were 4-6 from deep. You were scoring on all three levels. Can you talk about what your confidence was like today making four 3s? And then, Emily, can you talk about what that brings to the team?**

MADDIE NOLAN: Well, first of all -- I mean, I talk about it every time, like, I wouldn't be able to hit those without my teammates finding me on the floor, so shout out to them. Yeah, like we talked about the whole year, just I know the coaching staff, all my teammates, have complete confidence in me, so it was nice to see a couple go down today.

EMILY KISER: She saved us a couple times. When that score starts to get closer and closer, a three is huge. It's just a huge momentum change. So Maddie hits those in huge moments. Didn't really miss a whole lot either today, so very helpful.

**Q. UNLV said that their thing is kind of press and zone. Knowing that, did you feel like your shooting would be even more important today? And then secondly, earlier when you were talking about hustle plays, I think you said it was sticker plays, is that what you said? Where does that come from?**

MADDIE NOLAN: Yeah. We have these things called stickers. So whenever you get a charge or you dive on the floor for a loose ball, we have like a block M in our locker room, and you get a little basketball sticker. So it's kind of a -- it's not a competition right now because Emily has way more than everyone else, but usually it's a competition to see who can get the most hustle plays, and it's something we really value on our team.

But for your first question, yeah, we had watched them press, we had watch them play zone, and we knew that we could get their corners open or even if the corner wasn't open, I could suck the defense out, Emily and could flash middle and we could get a cut. So just trying to take advantage of the different areas.

EMILY KISER: We have lock-ins on our lockers. I guess I have two now. Does anyone else have two?

MADDIE NOLAN: No, Emily. (Laughing.)

EMILY KISER: Oh, okay. I didn't mean it like that. (Laughing.) All right. I didn't mean it to be a flex.

**Q. So that begs one question, which is do you know how many stickers you have for the season now? But second, really the more important question is, when you come into a high-stakes game and you've lost three out of your last four and one of your best players is just really coming back, can you say now that the game's over whether you had any anxiety at all about what your recent form had been, and then how much this performance confirmed what you thought your identity as a team should be?**

EMILY KISER: Stickers individually or as a team, like total? Do you know?

KIM BARNES ARICO: Well, I know on each one, I think is like about 25. So I think you were up to like 44 or 45.

EMILY KISER: Most of mine are charges, most of the time. I got a couple loose balls.

KIM BARNES ARICO: But the next highest is 18, so that tells you her separator right there.

EMILY KISER: They're getting there. They're getting there.

MADDIE NOLAN: Progress.

EMILY KISER: Do you want to answer that?

Oh. No, I think, honestly, we had confidence going into this game, just getting Laila back. I think she brings so much to our team, changes the look. Just her ability to get down the floor and really put some pressure on 'em offensively gave us a lot of confidence. She also brings so much on the defensive side. I think we've kind of touched on it a couple times already how much we really take that into our identity.

Like I said, in the first half, when we weren't scoring, when we weren't -- we were trying to get those stops, and that has to be a mindset because when you aren't getting those stops, or if you're not scoring, that can affect you sometimes on the defensive end. But that's something we really try and strive not to do.

But it felt good to have everyone out there, yeah.

MADDIE NOLAN: Yeah. I think going off of that, like we talk about like being 15 strong, and we have complete confidence in the kids that did step up when Laila was out.



So whether that be Jordan Hobbs, Ari, Elise, Stuck, you saw her play really hard today, we know those kids can come in and make a real difference for us as well.

**Q. Emily, I had a chance to have a long talk with you last year right after the game ended against Louisville, and you were really not sure what you were going to do, and you took your time and decided to come back. Has it been worth it?**

EMILY KISER: Oh, a hundred percent. Yeah, without a doubt. I was just thinking about how quick this year has gone, because I remember that exact conversation. But, no, not -- this has been like the greatest year ever. I was so worried, I think, about it really living up to my first four years year here because I had the time of my life. My class was a huge part of my time here.

So kind of scared that what would this year hold. But it's not even the wins or losses. Obviously, we found success this year. I know a lot of people were worried with what we lost last year, that we weren't going to be able to do it again. But a lot of people put in a lot of hard work and made this year really awesome, and love the teammates, Maddie Nolan over here.

So, no, I had the best time, wouldn't change it for the world.

**Q. It's March, win or go home. How excited are you guys for the next round? How happy are you after this win?**

MADDIE NOLAN: Yeah, I mean, like you said, it's win or go home. We have found ourself in this position the last three seasons, so I think like that experience going into it is going to be huge. But we talk about it every day, like every win we're going to celebrate it, because you never know what's going to happen next. So we're just grateful for this one. Going to celebrate it and then refocus for Sunday.

EMILY KISER: A hundred percent. I think that's something I focused on -- really, the whole team last year, is just putting so much pressure like to get those wins and just not enjoying the moment. So we're just going to play basketball, have fun with it. Who knows when -- I mean, obviously, this is my last March Madness, but we've kind of told the team, who knows when you'll be back here. You got to take advantage of the moment, go out there, have fun, and leave it all on the court.

THE MODERATOR: We'll take questions for the coach.

**Q. You mentioned yesterday in the presser that a lot of people put you as being a first-round upset. Obviously, you weren't today. What's that do for your**

**confidence? And I think all season long there's been that story of you have something to prove without Naz Hillmon. What does this win, especially with, again, so many people picking you to be upset, what does that do?**

KIM BARNES ARICO: I think our team really had a little bit of a chip on their shoulder, and I know that we were kind of projected all year long to potentially host too, and we lost a couple games down the stretch. But we weren't completely healthy down the stretch too. We didn't have our total team down the stretch.

So with everyone back, I think our players really have that confidence. They also have that experience. I mean, we made that run last year to the Elite 8, the year before to the Sweet 16. That type of experience is something that a lot of programs don't have. I think that really helps us as well and it helps to give that confidence. Obviously led by Emily, Leigha, and Maddie, who have been there before.

So I like kind of the position that we're in in terms of we do have something to prove and they're hungry and they don't want to go home and they have been on this stage before.

**Q. What are your impressions on what Kim's done here in Baton Rouge in just a short time?**

KIM BARNES ARICO: Yeah, obviously, I used to feel like I knew her when I was young and that was a couple years ago. I don't feel like I'm so young anymore. So she's a little bit older than me, but I've known her for a really long time, and I've watched her teams. You study people that have been successful, and I've really studied her through the years and we've developed a friendship over the years.

When I saw her yesterday, the first thing she said is, What is the NCAA have with us being in the same bracket all the time? Because it does seem as if we have been in the same bracket four or five times in my career, which seems like a lot.

But I just have a tremendous amount of respect for what she has done, what she did at Baylor and what she's doing hear at LSU. And to be able to do it in such a short period of time, now where, you know, basketball has changed, the landscaped has changed, the transfer portal is a new thing, so you can do it a little bit quicker than having to build it. But she's been able to do that. And not only do you have to get players, which she does a tremendous job of, but then you have to coach 'em. I could tell in just a short period they are like, they listen, they're well coached, they're a great team. They buy in. So she's just, like I said, I have a tremendous amount of respect, she's done a great job and she always has her teams well prepared.

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**Q. Emily had the big numbers tonight, but can you talk about Cam Williams performance in the post alongside her, especially on defense.**

KIM BARNES ARICO: Yeah, I mean Cameron is definitely an X factor for us and she's someone that I really was trying to pump up pre-game and post-game. Because sometimes like she doesn't show a lot of emotion and she's just been so great for us all year. Sometimes I'm like, Cameron, get excited. And she's like, oh, you know. But she is just, I think she's had a phenomenal year and I think she's a little under the radar because of our senior class. But what she brings, her athleticism, her strength is second to none. Probably the best on our team. Her ability to rebound the ball, she had a couple great finishes for us in the second half. She's really efficient around the basket. So, yeah I'm really proud of Cameron. I think she's just had an unbelievable year for us and she had a great day today.

**Q. What was the strategy defensively today? Felt like you tried to front the post and then on the catch send double, triple teams on the help.**

KIM BARNES ARICO: I challenged Cameron earlier this week when we found out who we were going to be playing and when I watched some film on Desi-Rae I challenged Cameron. Like, can you defend her. Like, you have to be active. She's super quick. You can't just sit behind her, like you just really have to be active, have to be active. I thought Cameron really was trying to be active. I think we frustrated her early. At halftime I looked at the stats and I don't think she had made a bucket. So I thought that that doesn't always show up in like the box score for Cameron, but she was phenomenal on her. We just wanted to throw different looks at her, we wanted to make sure we would continue to be active. We really wanted to pressure hard on their wings and establish ourself. I know you said, somebody said that they said our physicality and our strength was another level and I think we talk about the Big Ten and facing that night-in and night-out. That's something we were prepared for. So we knew Young was a tremendous player, but we have faced players like her in our league, night-in and night-out. I thought our post defense was really exceptional.

**Q. If it is LSU, you've been in this spot before, took down Tennessee a couple years ago. Is there anything from that experience or just your team's, your program's recent tournament runs that give you confidence going into round 2 on a short turnaround?**

KIM BARNES ARICO: Definitely. I think even heading into today it's a bummer when you have to play on someone

else's home court, of course. And I know this place will be rocking for sure. But I do think the experiences that we have been in over the last couple years and the challenging schedule that we have had to play and going on the road this year in our league. I mean when you go to Iowa you're going to play in front of 15,000 screaming fans. When we went to Indiana we played in front of 15,000 screaming fans. The same with Ohio State. So I think all of those situations have prepared us for Sunday. I also think our league truly has prepared us. I've been saying this for years, but now it's like really, really, really true. The Big Ten, like come on, it's stronger than it's ever been. There are teams, our rankings are higher than they have ever been. Our seeds are higher than they have ever been. I think our league has prepared us for moments like this. So the experience our kids have and our league, I know we're going to rely on that stuff. I know it's not going to be easy, like I said, we've had, I've personally have had an opportunity to play against Kim-coached teams. If they win -- you know, they're playing right now. There's no guarantee. And we know that our kids know that it's going to be challenging. Like you said, a couple years ago we had to play against Tennessee. The SEC is a tradition-rich basketball conference. It will certainly be challenging. But I bet every round of 32 game is going to really be challenging. So we're just fortunate that we're still playing and we'll be excited for Sunday.

**Q. One of the things you talked about a lot today at the shoot-around was if you make a mistake, forget it, move on, hustle back. You only had 13 turnovers today and defensively I didn't see a lot of those mistakes that you were correcting earlier in shoot-around. Do you feel like they played through whatever mistakes they were and just battled to hustle and make up another play somewhere else?**

KIM BARNES ARICO: Yeah, I think, somebody asked Emily this question earlier and I think it's a really important point and it's something that I had to learn as a coach who's been coaching for a really long time. Last year we were in positions that we had never been in before. When we went to the Elite 8 and down the stretch of our season our kids got super tight and they felt a ton of pressure. Emily was definitely one of those kids. And they were living and dying by each play. They started to not have any fun with it anymore. They were so stressed about winning and they felt so much pressure to win.

So this year we kind of went in and we're like, we're going to be the best Michigan team we can be today. I know everybody says that and I know it's easy to do, but we try to, like preach that on a regular, so they don't feel like, oh, my gosh, like my life is depending on me being successful today. Or if I turn the basketball over, like everything's



going to crumble. And then what happens is they have another one and they have another one and another one. So we really try to just work on like letting it go and just worry about the next play. It's easy to say as a coach, it's super hard, and as a competitive player it's really hard. But I think our team did a great job and our team has been, this year's team has been way better at it. I think it's something that it's like part of the process of being where we are to get to the point -- that's another reason why I'm so happy that Emily. I mean, I think that was just a tremendous question to her, decided to come back. She thought about it for a longed period of time. Like all her buddies were leaving and people were moving on and what would this year provide for her. But I think she's been so much more relaxed and so much more confident and really just had such a tremendous IQ. She's a first team all-conference player -- who reminded me she only played 93 minus as a freshman. So just to see her story, but also everybody just take a deep breath and try to enjoy it. It's been great.

**Q. Maddie obviously had the numbers, but she did a lot of other things too. Playing point guard to alleviate Leigha from that spot a bit. Floor general, coaching people on the court, pointing them here or there. Can you speak about her leadership and how she's grown into that role as a senior?**

KIM BARNES ARICO: Yeah, there are different points in people's career where you sit back as a coach and you go, holy cow, like where did this come from. And that has been Maddie Nolan probably the last three weeks. She was just a shooter, a shooter. Her confidence right now is at another level where she's like, give me the ball. I'm a playmaker. I can score at all three levels. I can shoot it. I'm going to -- when Laila went out, I'm going to defend the other team's best player. Okay Leigha's not 100 percent, I'll be the point guard. I will do whatever our team needs me to do to help us be successful. She's just playing at a whole another level. I think when teams prepare for her in the past they would be like, okay, shooter, shooter, shooter. Now you just can't do that. So I'm just really proud of her as a coach and she's just been awesome.

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