

# Big Ten Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Saturday, March 9, 2024

Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA

Target Center

## Michigan Wolverines

## Kim Barnes Arico

## Laila Phelia

## Jordan Hobbs

### Postgame Press Conference

Iowa - 95, Michigan - 68

THE MODERATOR: We'll start the Michigan press conference with an opening statement from Coach Barnes Arico.

KIM BARNES ARICO: Somehow I lost my voice in these last couple days. Well, I guess specifically today. So I probably won't say too much.

Iowa is a great team, and I thought we came out in the first quarter and were exceptional and were able to match their pace of play.

We weren't able to score with them later in the game, and they were able to pull away from us. But I think our team did a phenomenal job all week and potentially ran out of gas a little bit against a tremendous Iowa team.

So credit to them, and it should be a great championship tomorrow.

**Q. It seemed like Iowa was really getting going in the paint and scored most of their points in the paint. Can you just talk about what was so hard to defend with them inside the paint?**

LAILA PHELIA: I feel like the biggest thing was that we were worried about the shooters. So we just needed to do a bitter job of being able to gap in and get out to the shooters.

JORDAN HOBBS: I feel like we weren't really helping each other as much as we game planned and weren't really loading onto their big men. Even when Clark was driving downhill, we didn't really load. So we were



definitely worried about their shooters.

**Q. You guys lit it up in the first quarter, both you two and Lauren and Brett were all perfect from the three. What allowed you to get that success in the first quarter, and what happened after that and kind of slowed it down a little bit?**

JORDAN HOBBS: I think getting some paint touches early, and we were just sharing the ball a little bit better than we did in the second half. We kind of just went one pass and shot in the second half, and that didn't work out for us very well.

So I think definitely moving the ball and getting those paint touches and getting the defense to sink in.

**Q. When you came into this tournament, I feel like maybe your March Madness was -- you guys were pretty much on the bubble. But now I'd say, especially after one win and especially after yesterday, I'd say you guys have fully cemented yourselves in the tournament. Now obviously this part of the season is over, but what does this next week look like for you, and how excited are you to continue to play?**

LAILA PHELIA: Definitely very excited to be able to have the chance to play in the tournament, but this next week, I feel like we're just going to be really locking in, working on ourselves and what we need to do and get better at, so we're ready for whatever other teams throw at us.

**Q. It seemed like Iowa was changing up defense throughout the game, and when they went to zone, it really switched up how your offense seemed to be working. What did you see when they switched that zone defense?**

JORDAN HOBBS: I just think we weren't really getting the ball inside as much as we wanted. The flash was wide open, but we didn't get it there as much. When it did, we got Laila on a few cuts.

So just trying to get back to that and reading what they give us. We faced zone the past couple days, so just going



back to what works.

**Q. How hard is it to game plan for Clark, especially in that first quarter where she comes out and she's really looking to pass more than she is to shoot?**

KIM BARNES ARICO: She's arguably the best player in the country. She can score the basketball better than anybody, but she can pass the basketball better than anybody. I think that's what makes her so special.

You try to keep the ball out of her hands because she's such a great decision-maker. But she's tough to guard. I don't know if anybody's figured it out.

**Q. When people talk about Iowa, they talk about the perimeter shooting, but today they were really successful in the paint. Was that something that you expected coming into this game for them to have so many points inside the lane?**

KIM BARNES ARICO: No. They were able to get downhill in the first half, and we talked about it at halftime, our ability to rotate over and take some charges, especially when Clark picked up a foul early. I thought we really could have rotated over early, and we didn't do that.

Then in the second half their two posts who were in foul trouble in the first half came back in the second half, and then they just isolated super high four shooters and just went in a one-on-one situation inside.

I think we totally could have done a better job of helping from the weak side, and it's something that we've practiced and something that we've emphasized through the course of the year. But I just think with the quick, I mean super quick turnaround -- and I'm not trying to make excuses for anyone, but we got back to the hotel last night at 11:00, and we had to turn around and be here today at 2:00.

So that was a super quick turnaround and not a lot of preparation. We did a walk-through at the hotel, but our kids, it's important to get prepared and get ready. Even in the NCAA Tournament, you get a day in between, which you can really prepare for.

I'm not making excuses. They beat us fair and square. But I think we got worn down and really weren't locked into the game plan as much as we were yesterday. And even yesterday when we struggled in the second quarter, we were able to call a timeout and kind of really regroup to what the game plan was.

I thought we did a phenomenal job yesterday loading and took away their paint touches, and today we really didn't

load and take away those touches.

**Q. This is technically a neutral site game, but we all know the environment. How do you teach your kids? Is there any way to teach for that kind of environment?**

KIM BARNES ARICO: Yeah, we were the lucky ones that got to be at Iowa when Caitlin broke the record, so we kind of were in the same environment, similar. It was a little bit crazier there, but very similar to today. Any time they made a run, the place erupted, or any time there was a big play, the place erupted.

A couple years ago we went to the Elite Eight, and we played in Wichita, and South Dakota brought all of South Dakota. So it was a neutral court, but it was their home court.

So you try to prepare for those environments in practice. We try to put fan noise in the background. You try to prepare as much as you can. But I think when you get in them, it's a little bit different.

I think that type of pressure led to our quick shots sometimes. When they were making their run and the place was going crazy, we got the ball back and wanted to make a fast play and wanted to match that, and then if we missed it, it was a quick shot and their transition down the other way. That's why they're so dangerous because they can push that pace.

But what an environment for women's basketball, what an environment for the Big Ten. The game has grown so much even over the last five years that there are going to be Caitlin Clark type players continuing to come up. You see a similar one potentially in JuJu Watkins, who's going to be in the Big Ten next year.

I just think it's a tremendous time for women's basketball. It's a tremendous time for the Big Ten. I mean, if you're a kid out there watching, what greater league to come to than a lead that's selling out their tournament, that's selling out all around the country, and that has elite, elite level players.

**Q. What did you see when Iowa started switching up its defense in the zone? What adjustments do you try to make there?**

KIM BARNES ARICO: It definitely slowed us down. You saw that it slowed us down. We were able to certainly push pace, and I think they had to go to zone because we were pushing pace and we were matching their pace.

We were able to do that last night too. We talked about

that in the second half last night. We kind of switched Laila to bringing the ball up, and we did that early in the first half. It really helped our pace of play. I think they had to go to zone because our pace was really good.

The switching -- and sometimes it does this. The other night -- I don't know if it was Minnesota went to zone, and we were 5 for 5. Boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, they had to get out of the zone. They were doing make/miss, and it was messing with our kids. We needed to handle that better. We shouldn't have allowed our pace to switch because they were switching on a make/miss, but it did. So they kept switching it make/miss depending on if they make, and it really made us stagnant a little bit.

We were open, so it made us also pass the ball and shoot it because we were open, and we made those shots early. But we weren't making them in the second half, and that kind of allowed them to get a ton of touches.

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