

Atlantic Coast Conference Basketball Tipoff Media Day

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Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

Notre Dame Fighting Irish

Coach Niele Ivey

Hannah Hidalgo

Liatu King

Olivia Miles

Women's Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Happy to introduce the Notre Dame Fighting Irish. You're reigning ACC champions. Head coach Niele Ivey and also joining is Liatu King as well as Olivia Miles and Hannah Hidalgo.

We're going to start off with you, Niele. Short span as a head coach, but you continue to raise the bar for this program. Can you kind of talk about just what some of the fundamental foundational principles are that you have built this program on?

NIELE IVEY: Yeah, definitely being unselfish and competing at the highest level. It's something, again, I try to instill in this group, playing with passion, playing for each other.

I'm just blessed that I work with an incredible group of young women that want to win, but they also want to win for each other.

THE MODERATOR: I think the million dollar question everybody wants to know is you have had two consecutive years, two of the most dynamic playmakers on your roster.

Unfortunately, Olivia couldn't play last year. What's this coming season going to look like to have both of them back?

NIELE IVEY: It's going to be electric. I think everyone is going to be really excited to see those two play together. Like you mentioned, they're the most dynamic point guards in our game: High tempo, fast tempo, fast-paced. We like to score. We like to get out and run.

But, again, just playing very smart basketball, very



unselfish, and very dynamic is what you are going to see.

THE MODERATOR: We can talk about the scoring and the passing, but it's also the defense for these two. Are we going to see anything different with both of them on the floor this year from a against perspective?

NIELE IVEY: I think you're going to see the entire team. We're committed to playing and being disruptive this year, playing with a lot of fire defensively.

Hannah, as everyone knows, one of the best defenders in the country, led the nation in steals. But you're going to see that level of defensive mentality from the entire group. We're playing hard defensively and just they're really committed to defense.

THE MODERATOR: Olivia, give us kind of a preview of what the team is looking like so far in practice?

OLIVIA MILES: Yeah, we are looking scary. We're committed to our craft every day. We love to compete and push each other and communicate. Obviously the chemistry takes time. It's a new group with new faces. We're so committed to each other and committed to leading each other and playing well together so we're excited.

Q. (Off microphone). What was that time off of basketball like for you, and what did you do every day despite itching to get on the court? What did you do to help encourage your teammates from the sidelines?

OLIVIA MILES: Yeah, that time for me was a time of learning, reflection, and growth. I was able to kind of look at the game in a different light and develop such a gratitude for the game that I hadn't had before.

The way that I kind of translated that into my teammates was kind of learning how each person likes to be talked to or needs to be communicated with. I think as a point guard that's vital because you have to reach your teammates, especially if they're in their head or if they're having a really good game. You need to keep motivating them and encouraging them.



I learned each of my teammates' tendencies and the way at the can be reached and talked to.

THE MODERATOR: When I look at this roster, you got a run for a Final Four. I know that's the expectation at Notre Dame. Outside of health, what else are the keys for you to make that run?

NIELE IVEY: I would say consistency. Being first playing a certain way at a high level every game. Setting the tone.

Like you mentioned, we have a lot of talent on this roster, and it's really exciting to see the talent. I think we are great in every position. You really -- we have a lot of weapons. We talk about pick your poison with this group because everyone is so talented and contributes in such an incredible way.

Having that consistency every game and playing at a high level and setting the tone and being dominant, having that dominant mindset every game is going to be what we need to do.

Q. Hannah, can you just speak on -- you had a pulse on your IG saying "love the pressure in the summer because it's diamonds in the winter." Can you speak about the off-season work you put in, ACC rookie of the year, defensive player of the year last year. How do you top that and elevate your team going into the season?

HANNAH HIDALGO: I think, again, I think consistency. I think just having that consistency and not being complacent. Elevating my game, bringing more exciting, bringing more fire, making my teammates' lives easier, still being that post on defense, and doing what I need to do for my teammates to help us win, because I'm here to win regardless of my stats or kind of what that looks like. I'm here to win.

So with the offseason, that just required me to get stronger, work on my left, work on my range, and it required a lot of things. I just think going into this next season, I don't want to be complacent. I want to get better.

Q. Hannah, you were one of the most electrifying players not just in women's basketball, but in college basketball last year. Last year we had Caitlin Clark and Angel Reese, and they are doing amazing things up in the WNBA. Looking forward to the future, it's you and JuJu from USC. Can you talk about the impact that you think this has on women's basketball?

HANNAH HIDALGO: Yeah, I just think being a part of a

generation where women's basketball is on the rise is truly a blessing. I just remember being younger and seeing women's basketball not getting that talk where I feel like we deserve it.

To see people like Caitlin Clark and Angel Reese, and before that Aaliyah Boston and Zia Cooke and how women's basketball is on the rise and seeing how many people are talking about it, I just think being a part of this generation is truly a blessing.

It's only up from here. We're still growing, and women are progressing now. We see women dunking now and stuff like that. It's just a blessing to be a part of this.

Q. Coach Ivey, can you speak on -- when you are speaking to your point guard having that next-play mentality, being calm, poised, and collected, ignoring the bad and keep elevating the team to the next level. Speak on that with your point guard.

NIELE IVEY: Yeah, I'm fortunate that I played the position, so I understand how hard that is for Olivia and Hannah. I talk to both of them. You just mentioned having that next play mentality. They're the extension of me on the court. I have a lot of confidence and trust in both of them of making sure that we run the right plays and doing a great job of kind of facilitating the offense. We have a talented team.

You have to get to the next play. If not, you can have that carry on, which will, in turn, you lose your focus, but they do a great job.

It's something I say a lot, but Liv with the experience she has and Hannah with the experience that she had last year, you're looking at two of the best in the business when it comes to running the point.

THE MODERATOR: You're the reigning most improved player in the league, and now you're making the transition. Communication is a big part of this transition. You learned to sign at nine months old. Can you talk about how that and your background has enabled you to make this transition a little bit easier because of your communication skills?

LIATU KING: Yeah. As you stated, I learned ASL when I was nine months. Both of my parents are deaf. Just having to grow up in a household -- and I'm the oldest as well, and so having to grow up in a household where I was the vocal point for my parents and just having to do a lot of things that kids my age really didn't have to do, going to doctors appointments, being an interpreter at the doctors appointments, going to the grocery store, being an interpreter there.

To me that put things in perspective for me, and it matured me at a very young age. It made me have tough conversations with older people at a very young age. That kind of set me up for, you know, going into college and just being able to have tough conversations, being able to be able to be uncomfortable in those situations.

Yeah, it started there.

Q. King, going back to you, you come into this Notre Dame program after being with Pittsburgh for a while. What brought you over to Notre Dame specifically? And also, is there any unfinished business with you being a graduate, and why at Notre Dame is that the best place for you to finish said unfinished business?

LIATU KING: Yeah, So the coaching staff, Coach Ivey, she was very big on getting me here. As you might hear, what you see is what you get, and that's 100% true. She is down to earth, but when it's time to go, it's time to go. That's what I really love from her.

Also, the team. When I came here, everyone was nice. Everybody was cool. It seemed like everybody liked each other, but, I mean, that's what it seemed like. That's what it was. Obviously being a part of that now.

The skill set here, it's on another level. Just trying to get to that next level, that is what it's going to be. I think the transition from Notre Dame to the next level, it's one of the best.

As you can see how many people Notre Dame puts in the league. That's something to also account for.

What was your last question was --

Q. Your unfinished business. (Off microphone).

LIATU KING: Yeah. I just seen what they did in the tournament, and I think me being here can help us go even further. We know what our goals are and we know what we're trying to do.

I think putting injuries to the side, we can do that. We can accomplish our goals.

THE MODERATOR: Hannah, you have played against Ms. King here now. What's it like having her on the court with you?

HANNAH HIDALGO: Yeah, when I heard we were trying to get Liatu I was, like, we better get her because she was shooting on the floor against us. She had, like, 30 points

against us. I was, like, man, if we don't get her, that's going to be a hard loss.

Just having her on our team, she's the same player when we played against her and they were killing us. She's a dog. She goes after every single board. She has a phenomenal midrange game, and she's becoming that vocal leader for us also.

She's going up against the guys we're playing who look like football players. She's trying to battle in with them. Just having her on our team just brings a different level to our game offensively and defensively.

THE MODERATOR: Olivia, unfortunately had to sit out last year. What did you learn more about your coaching staff by having to sit out than maybe you had learned your freshman season?

OLIVIA MILES: Hmm, let me think. No, Coach Ivey is actually a very funny and down to heart and wholesome --

THE MODERATOR: You learned this about her when you were sitting out or you already --

OLIVIA MILES: I learned this about her because when you're in the thick of it you are kind of always stressed. You see her getting worked up and putting her passion into motions, but seeing her in those times where, you know, before the game in the locker room where she's just chilling and playing a card game or something, you see how down to earth and how wholesome and how at the end of the day we are just playing a game.

It made me kind of realize that basketball isn't everything and to just enjoy life and enjoy the people that you are with.

THE MODERATOR: Can you give us a couple of -- as of right now here in October -- the strengths of this team and then a couple of things that maybe are keeping you up at night right now about this team?

NIELE IVEY: We have a lot of strengths, so again, very grateful for that. I think we do a great job of sharing the ball. They're very unselfish to the point where they're always looking for -- there are so many open shots right now. That's probably why it's keeping me up at night because they're being so unselfish just sharing the ball.

I think we have incredible ball handlers that can get downhill. So I think we have -- and all of our posts as well. Our versatility with our forwards, they can get downhill. I think we shoot the three really well. Everybody has come back with a better three-point shot.

Again, defensively I think we're doing a great job of guarding the ball, which, in turn, is going to help our defense just in full force. The ability to get downhill, our three-point shooting is really improved. Our pace has got a lot quicker. Obviously with Olivia back. But adding size with Kate Koval and adding Liatu and Liza who are very versatile in that position helps us be better rebounders and to core really well in the paint.

THE MODERATOR: Ladies, I'm going to ask each of you, give me the one teammate right now that right now maybe your fans don't know about or maybe just outside of the gym people don't know much about, but give a couple of weeks into the season, and it's going to be a household name.

LIATU KING: I mean, I heard you guys already say it before and I think we all can agree, but I don't want to speak for you guys. But somebody who is going to be a household name that's going under the radar now is Liza. She brings experience. She was a household name at her previous school.

And just the grit and everything that she has shown in practice so far we're very confident in her abilities to help this team.

OLIVIA MILES: I'm going to take a left turn here and actually say Emma because we haven't really gotten to see her in full action, but the way that this girl shoots the ball is incredible.

You guys will be hearing about her when she's on the court because she's going to make noise with her three balls.

HANNAH HIDALGO: Well, then I'm going to take a big left turn and not say the same as everyone else. I'm going to say Kate. I know coming out she was top 5, of course. She's up there, but I don't think people really understand how great of a player she really is.

I mean, she's just extremely smart. Her decision-making is phenomenal. She can pass like a guard. She can shoot. I mean, she just has so many elements that come to her game. I just think that people don't understand how good she really is.

THE MODERATOR: Do you want to answer this as well?

NIELE IVEY: No, they answered it perfectly.

THE MODERATOR: Last question: Three new teams coming into the league. Did you and your staff do anything differently this past offseason to prepare for now it's an

even greater gauntlet of an ACC season.

NIELE IVEY: I think when that time comes close when we're preparing to scout for them, we'll probably do obviously a deeper dive. I know we played Cal two seasons ago, so we actually have the film on the way that she coaches and their philosophy and style of play. I'll definitely take a look into that.

We're grateful that all three institutions are joining us. I think they'll really enhance our league, and also with the coaching staff. We're excited.

THE MODERATOR: Notre Dame, Fighting Irish, thank you so much and good luck this season.

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