

# NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - Michigan State vs North Carolina

Friday, March 22, 2024

Columbia, South Carolina, USA

Colonial Life Arena

**Michigan State Spartans**

**Robyn Fralick**

**Moira Joiner**

**Theryn Hallock**

Media Conference

North Carolina 59, Michigan State 56

ROBYN FRALICK: First of all, congratulations to North Carolina it was a heck of a game. Fought a very, very good opponent.

And I'm proud of our team. I think we were down two with two minutes and 22 seconds left in the game and gave ourselves some hope there right to the end. So the last games are always really hard and you don't always know when they are going to come but you know, I think about this game and there's going to be things we are going to think we can do better and this and that and we are going to be able to pick that apart but the bigger part of this game is, I'm just really, really proud (tearing up) of our team for this season.

And Mo and Tory, our seniors, I think -- I think one of the best feelings you can have as a coach is when you know when two players finish their careers that there is literally no regrets and I think that's hard. I think that's hard to be able to do and for Mo and Tory, that's a really cool thing about them is they really gave us their best the whole season and they wore the Spartan jersey with a ton of pride and I'm really thankful I had an opportunity to coach them.

**Q. Mo, I just wanted to ask you, what Coach talked about, obviously being emotional your senior year, but with you talk about what it was like to play for Coach in your final year?**



MOIRA JOINER: Bear with me, I thank the coaching staff in the locker room and I just told them I loved them. I'm just super happy that they came to Michigan State and they decided to trust our program and just the players that were already here, and I wouldn't have wanted to go out with a different coaching staff. I'm so grateful for Coach Fralick and the rest of them and Dean Lockwood for staying on staff and just stupor grateful. Like wouldn't change them for the world.

**Q. You hit the three, five seconds to go, it's an uphill fight the whole game. Are you thinking, at that point, you might actually do this? What's going through your mind in a game where it seemed like it was never going to be your day before that?**

THERYN HALLOCK: We had to play one play at a time and after I hit the three we came together and I said, we have to get a rebound right away and we struggled to get the rebound but we knew what we had to do, and we stayed together through it all. But I mean, honestly my mindset was we made the shot, but we are not done yet. There's still time on the clock and we can't give up.

**Q. Was it one of those, you get foul trouble, extreme foul trouble, you're back in, 21-7, checking back in with three fouls. Was it one of those games, did it feel like the uphill fight that it looked light?**

MOIRA JOINER: Oh, sure. North Carolina is tough. Congrats to them. They are a really tough team. I feel like whenever you get into a big game like that, you always get into foul trouble. That's just how it goes.

And so I'm grateful for them to put me back in and trust me like that but I just knew, like this could be possibly our last game, which it was. But I think you had to play smart and you had to go back out there. Julia did the same thing. We were all in foul trouble. So you've got to give it your all. Both of you increased your scoring averages and a bunch of players on the team did the same thing. What was it about there staff that allowed you guys to excel when it comes to scoring?

MOIRA JOINER: Honestly, offense is part of it, practice is



part of it. Getting work in the gym preseason is part of it but it's really just a trust piece. When your coaches trust and you they trust what you do with your game, that gives you confidence as a player and I think they did a really good job instilling confidence in all of us.

**THERYN HALLOCK:** I think for me coming in as a guard I've been focused on speed. They wanted me to work on my shot, and every since I've gotten in the gym with them and stayed consistent with my shooting, I've never felt more confident and I give all the credit to the coaching staff because they have trusted me through that and I think I can probably now say that I'm more than just a fast basketball and multiple shooter.

**Q. In the first half, things were not going exactly the way you guys wanted it to. Can you talk about being able to stick in it in the fourth quarter and taking down shots when you needed to?**

**THERYN HALLOCK:** As Coach preaches every day, togetherness is key. We knew our shots were not falling and we knew we had to get back in transition. But we came together in our huddles and we said, our shots are not falling but we have to keep shooting them because we're getting good looks. Our ball movement was a little iffy because we were standing too much but that comes with the game. It was a big game and we played a great team but at the end of the day we still came together in our huddles and fought back.

**MOIRA JOINER:** I can't remember --

**Q. How the team was --**

**MOIRA JOINER:** Yeah, I just think that's kind of been all season long. You know, that's us. We are tough. We are not going to give up. Teams might think we're out of it but we are still right there behind you. I think we proved that today. Wish it was a different result. But we are a tough team and we are not going to give up.

**Q. Can the two of you put this season into words? You wanted to get to the NCAA Tournament and you did that, and you obviously wanted to win today. Can you put into what you're feeling right now and be it gratitude or whatever you're feeling in this moment?**

**MOIRA JOINER:** Yeah, gratitude is a great word. I just think -- sorry. (Tearing).

I'm from Michigan, so playing in the green and White for five years has been like the world to me. It's been a dream come true, and I just think that like I'm so grateful for the team and I just told them like in the locker room, like you

guys have so much to build on. Like don't be satisfied with this season. And like go get a Big Ten Championship next year because we have a ton of people coming back and other teams don't.

So I think, I mean, we're moving on right now, and I think the returners are going to make a great mark next year.

**THERYN HALLOCK:** Yeah, probably have to second that with gratitude. But we said it a lot through the year, we are a redeem team. Everybody looks at us as the underdog and 90 percent of the people had North Carolina winning today but they didn't know what fight we could bring.

So I think that redeem team is a good place to put us because people always think we're going to come in and lose the game. The coaching staff took a huge role -- she came in and changed the program and I can't wait to see what I can do in the next couple years with her as a coach and for the future and all the culture of this program.

**Q. Can you speak to what felt different?**

**THERYN HALLOCK:** Yeah, they came in with consistency. We had a little bit of consistency before but they came in and this their core values and we stuck with that every day and we talk about it every day, there's a different core value every day, it's an every day thing, every day, everything they say, everything happens that day. I think that we built, like, the most trust I've ever had with a coach I built with this coaching staff. Like I've never been so blessed to have a coaching staff that trusts me but also I trust them.

It's just the consistency every day that we get from them and like we know what we are going to get so that's just what motivates us as players and keeps us locked in.

**Q. You do all this prep for a game and when it starts like that, and all of a sudden you're looking at foul trouble decisions with two of your best players, two and three fouls early, how much goes out the window a little bit and how differently do they have to play? What's going through your mind when it's like 21-7, 23-7 and you're just trying to hang in there?**

**ROBYN FRALICK:** Yeah, for us, the difference in the game was the first quarter. After that, we kind of found our way. Yeah, we had Mo and Ju in foul trouble. We were out of sorts. And credit to North Carolina, they have been a very, very good defensive team. They have hung their hat on that. They are really big. You know, I think their length and size, I think it took us a bit to adjust to that. That's not something we see every day and we for sure don't see it with ourselves going against ourselves.

And yet, I know like Mo we played her with three fouls because we trust her and we need her and I thought drew grew up tonight even with playing with two fouls from where we were in the Big Ten Tournament.

So yeah, I thought, unfortunately, the first quarter really changed the game for us, but it took us a minute to sort of get adjusted to some of their length and size.

**Q. You talked in the beginning, when you look at this team, your maiden voyage with the program, what will be their legacy to you and how will you remember them?**

ROBYN FRALICK: What I've loved about this group is how far we've come as a team. I can think back to a lot of first things. You know, first individual meetings, first team meetings, and what I love about it is that I love -- I love the 18- to 22-year-olds are at such a cool age.

They are really kind of funny characters, right. And to watch them -- and we have got a group that they are all different but we had a group that really kind of figured out the power of a team, and figured out the power of working hard, and believing in new people. That's hard, right, when you come in, and the whole staff is new. We are lucky Coach Dino stayed. I feel really grateful. I'm just constantly remind the about the power of human nature and belief.

You know, they stood side beside with us. We were learning, too, and we were honest about it. There were so many things that we had to learn and we didn't know, and they were willing to walk side-by-side with us in that.

**Q. How much of what we saw this year is when you picture what you want the program to be, and obviously when you recruit and change the roster, how much of this is what you want it to look like, what are the key essentials moving forward as you assess things?**

ROBYN FRALICK: I loved our speed, and I love coaching with speed. So that was a pretty fun match, I thought, from the start. What do we need more of? I mean, clearly, the size was a huge problem tonight. We got out-rebounded by almost 20, and that's back-to-back nights and we got killed on easy second shots, and we didn't get any of those.

That makes the game really, really hard when you're getting really -- you know, when the different -- rebounding difference is so significant, so clearly that's something we have to figure out moving forward.

But it's our job as coaches to figure out what you have, and how to make the most of it, and it looks different every single year. Even when you've been there awhile and you've recruited, it's always your job to figure out how to put your team in a position to be successful.

**Q. Talking about the sense of togetherness the team has had that started in summer of last year, can you talk about how that will play -- now that you've comforted yourself into the program and you'll have the full summer to get ready for your program and how that will look for your team?**

ROBYN FRALICK: I think there's always a process. Now the process begins to look different because we know each other better. Usually things can speed up for growth and development and things like that, but I know as a staff, we are not -- we are motivated. I think you get -- it's hard to get your -- it's hard to win here, and when you get here and you're really close, I think that gap just really creates a catalyst of continued motivation.

So I know as a staff, we'll feel really motivated to continue to find ways to help us get better.

**Q. Theryn was talking about how she's never felt more confident on the floor. What did you do as a staff to help the players feel confidence?**

ROBYN FRALICK: You know, the credit goes to them. Nobody can buy you could have had. Nobody can hand you confidence. I think confidence, it comes from within.

So I give them credit. Confidence comes from getting in the gym and shooting a lot. Confidence comes from practicing hard. So it's kind that she said that but I'm going to deflect back to her because she became a better player this year because she worked at it, and when you work at it and your habits better and you perform better and you perform better and your confidence is better. That's on them. It's our job to find paths for that and it's their job to build their confidence.

**Q. You mentioned your relationship with Courtney and she said you guys were out having ice cream last night. Obviously you guys are friends beyond this. Why was that important to get together with her and have your families interact that way?**

ROBYN FRALICK: The coaching world is quite lonely, and I think we need each other. And she's been a good friend through it, and we help each other, right. We share secrets -- I don't even think there's secrets. We share things. We learn from each other.

So when we have an opportunity to be in the same place at the same time, how cool that we can connect. We both want to win on game day. That doesn't change the competitive spirit, but in this coaching world, we all need a few buddies.

**Q. Can you describe that loneliness in your position?**

ROBYN FRALICK: Oh, it's just part of the deal. Part of the deal of figuring out how to manage a lot of people and perform and compete. I don't think it's a bad thing. I think it's a motivating thing. But I think it's our job in coaching to find ways to, we have to find community so that we can help each other navigate through all of the nuances that come with coaching.

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