

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

Friday, March 21, 2025

South Bend, Indiana, USA

Purcell Pavilion

## Iowa State Cyclones Coach Bill Fennelly

**Audi Crooks**

**Addy Brown**

Media Conference

Michigan - 80, Iowa State - 74

**BILL FENNELLY:** Quickly, on behalf of Iowa State, I really want to thank the committee for inviting us to this event. I think we more than proved our worth.

Thank you to the University of Notre Dame. Their staff did an amazing job, everyone. So gracious and helpful. I've been doing this a long time, one of the best situations we've ever had here. Thank you to all of them.

Certainly want to congratulate Michigan. Outstanding basketball team. Played very well.

And I guess the last thing I would say is I really could not be more proud of our team. Obviously disappointed in the result of one game, but this team has done so much for our school, I think for women's basketball, for the Big 12. And probably, more importantly, that he have done a lot for me.

As I get to the end, it's nice to be associated with people that do it the right way and represent themselves and our families at the school. It hurts today, but I tell our teams all the time, don't cry because it's over. Smile because it happened. And what happened to us was really special. I hope they can embrace that when we get through this one.

**Q. What do you think in terms of how the game played in terms of just constant runs. Seemed like every time you went on a run, they went on a run, back and forth. What was that like?**

**AUDI CROOKS:** It was a lot of fun, first of all. I enjoyed myself, despite the results. But you put it simply -- it's a



game of runs. Sometimes it ends in your favor, sometimes it doesn't.

They were a fun, competitive team, but we threw our punches as well. It just came down to the wire, really.

**ADDY BROWN:** It was an exciting game. Lots of good basketball being played, lots of good players on both sides. I think everyone saw it today who watched.

Just couldn't return some of their hits, and we stayed in there, fought all the way to the end. Just proud of our effort.

**Q. Felt like in the second quarter, end of it, that's when you hit your stride. What was kind of going right during that time frame?**

**ADDY BROWN:** We kind of settled down. First half we were still a little, I think, excited. We let them rush us into some bad decisions.

Second quarter came around, we got to slow down. I think we were really connecting inside and transition. I was bringing the ball up more, reading the help side. We were able to create some things there.

**Q. What do you feel like allowed them to kind of get back into the game during that third quarter where they kind of heated back up?**

**AUDI CROOKS:** They were just able to hit some shots. I think they adjusted to our defense from the first half. They definitely made some adjustments and focused more on kind of an inside/out game. They worked the gaps in the zone pretty well. That opened up the 3-point line and some mid-range. And they drove the basket.

Honestly they scored on all three levels. That's the adjustment they made that allowed them to get a few more points.

**Q. Can you talk about the pace of today's game that Michigan presented to you guys and how you sort of approached that throughout the whole thing?**



ADDY BROWN: I mean, it was a quick-paced game. We knew they were going to look to the floor. That's what they do best. I think we handled it pretty well. We got back in transition.

I mean, we knew we couldn't spend too much time crashing the boards because they were going to run it up the floor. It was hard to keep up with them. I think we did a good job overall. They're a dangerous team when you let them get out in transition.

**Q. Audi, the first quarter it looked like your teammates were having a real tough time getting the ball inside to you. But something clicked in the second quarter where the rest of the game seemed almost seamless. What happened with that?**

AUDI CROOKS: I don't really know. I wasn't the one throwing the ball. But, yeah, I mean night in and night out, they do a great job getting the ball inside. Certain teams just make it a little more difficult.

Just a patience thing. I'm never going to harp on them because I know they're handling a lot of pressure on the ball, bringing the ball off the floor and reading double teams and whatnot. So just yeah, I don't know, they got it done, though.

**Q. Addy, I guess from your point of view, what changed with your guys' ball movement where Audi was getting so open after the first quarter?**

ADDY BROWN: I think, again, just the first quarter we were rushed. We rushed into some quick passes, whereas we had a little more patience in the second. For myself I had to throw in a ball fake first to see where the defense was going to come from and read it there. Once I did that, slowed down a little bit, it was a little easier.

**Q. Now that the season is done, how would you evaluate how it went for you guys, what you accomplished and maybe what you would have wanted to accomplish?**

AUDI CROOKS: I'm not going to harp on too much that what we would have, could have, showed have done because that's over. That's not going to help us in any way, shape or form. I'm sure we all would like a few possessions back, but that's not what we're about.

I think we had a really successful year. Got a lot of wins. Showed up. Showed up today and all the times we played here in March.

Super proud of this team as individuals and as a collective. I think that we competed. We wore the jersey with pride. And not looking back on any regrets.

ADDY BROWN: Just proud of us for sticking through it through the good and the bad. A lot of resilience this season and people had a lot to say. We stuck together through it all and I love these girls. Just proud of us.

**Q. We were talking to Emily Ryan in the hallway. I know it's hard to look forward, but she said she's really excited about the future. How do you guys feel about down the road?**

AUDI CROOKS: There's a lot to be done. There's a lot left to do. So we definitely look forward to that. And like Addy said, there's a lot of people that have a lot of things to say. But we care most about what's happening in our locker room. We're just excited to get back at it. All the more to prove and a lot more ball to play.

ADDY BROWN: Really going to miss her, Emily's presence. She's the ultimate teammate. Just going to be really hard to see her go, but we'll do our best to continue to keep up what the program expects and what she expects from us.

She'll be in our corner forever. So super grateful that we got to play with her. We're excited for the future, for sure.

**Q. What was the challenge of facing Michigan when they were running five guards for most of the game?**

AUDI CROOKS: It was different from our defensive philosophy, I think, because a lot of times, in the Big 12, especially, we're matching up -- there's some big, tall, strong post players. They don't really operate that way.

So I think that, I mean, kind of challenged us. I think maybe in the second half more so from the defensive end. But offensively I think we kind of took advantage of that on the interior.

ADDY BROWN: It goes both ways. It was kind of weird for us. We haven't seen that in our conference really, five-guard starting lineups. They're all very talented and great team. We did what we could to stop that.

And I think, again, like Audi said, it was a mismatch on our side, too. But just a great team overall.

**Q. What was your message to the team afterward?**

BILL FENNELLY: It's hard to give any kind of pertinent message after a game. Everyone's disappointed. I think



the biggest thing is, number one, I thanked them. Number two, I told them I loved them. And number three, I told them that I've been blessed to be the head coach at Iowa State for 30 years. And this team was truly a team I really, really enjoyed being around.

I thanked them for the way they represented our school. And I told them we're not done. Clean the locker room. Be gracious when you leave. Deal with the media.

Basically the message that we give our team every game is you want to walk out of the building, no excuses, no regrets. And we don't have any.

We played as hard as we could play against a very good team. Evenly matched. We have a wide-open shot to tie the game. If you look at the stats, they're eerily the same.

We got outscored at the free-throw line, but other than that, it was two teams, I thought, both played well. Both played hard. It was an entertaining game for women's basketball. This tournament is about one or two plays here and there and they made them and we didn't. That's a credit to them.

**Q. What are your thoughts now in reflection mode when you look back on this season? And how would you evaluate what, I'd kind of asked them what they accomplished, and how would you evaluate it all?**

BILL FENNELLY: My evaluation is obviously going to be very different than most people. But I thought our team did everything right. They sort of joked, but they showed up. I think showing up is a skill in life. They showed up every day. They did things the right way.

They won a lot of games. We played hard in a good league. We played a great schedule. We played in the NCAA Tournament again.

So I don't know there's a whole lot I'd go back and say we should have, could have would have. Emily Ryan was in and out health-wise.

Again, from my standpoint, I could not be more proud of what they did, and I think they accomplished a lot and that's all that matters is what they think. And I would agree with their sentiment.

**Q. You brought up like, A, I'm at the end of my kind of road. Does this type of team push you to keep going, or are you kind of -- basically what I'm asking is what are you saying when you are saying you're at the end of your road? What's that look like?**

BILL FENNELLY: It means I'm 67 years old and my time is

about up. I don't know when. I really don't. I haven't really thought much about it.

But it's just this business has changed so much. We're not going to go into all that. But I think what's happened with our team -- I can just speak for the people in our locker room -- they have embraced the way that I believe Iowa State should do things. And that's been refreshing at a time when it's become so transactional. Our team is not that way.

Now, who knows when we go home and the portal opens on Tuesday, all hell could break loose. That's the world we live in.

But it's just -- I've been really blessed to do what I do and been blessed to be around so many phenomenal people.

I joke with -- my boss is sitting right there so I've got to be careful -- I always say that when I leave my house, I'll know I'm going to drive by Veenker Golf Course, turn right to my office or I'm going go straight to her in Jamie's office and giving my keys.

That's when it's going to happen. I don't know when that will be. But I just really have enjoyed what happened this year.

**Q. You mentioned yesterday that Michigan's the first time you've played five guards. What was the challenge of that going in? And how do you think it affected the game on both ends of the floor?**

BILL FENNELLY: It was a tremendous challenge. They're very skilled. Interchangeable parts. Obviously it put us in -- puts our defense at stress because there's not a match-up for Audi that she normally would guard.

And I think what played out in the game is probably what we could have all sort of predicted. We had a really hard time guarding them. And they had a really hard time guarding us. And that's why the game was so close. The stats were close.

They hit a couple big 3s. They made a couple of plays in transition. Like I said, we lost the free-throw line battle, which is always big for us.

It kind of played out like we thought it would as far as the styles. But I think it was entertaining and probably both sides were, like, what are we going to do. They did it a little bit better than us.

**Q. How would you say that pace affected the game today?**

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

BILL FENNELLY: I thought early we weren't as locked into their transition offense. We gave up a few things in transition. But their pace is -- it's not frenetic, but it's quick. And I think we play sort of that way.

I don't know that it was a huge disadvantage. We gave up a couple transition shots because we didn't get matched up right. But other than that, I thought it was okay early, couple mistakes. But overall, I don't think it was a huge part of the game, from where we were sitting, anyway.

**Q. In the second quarter, Audi really got going. Did you see a shift that helped your offense get the ball to her more?**

BILL FENNELLY: I think we just, like they mentioned, we were trying way too -- we were trying to get in there way too fast initially. And I think we had seven turnovers in the first quarter. It was just -- one of the things we tell our team all the time is you've got to see the play and then you've got to let the play develop and not just -- yeah, she's going to be open. It might take a second.

I thought in the second quarter we were much more patient. They weren't double teaming nearly as much as they did early. Addy Brown did a great job. She's not a point guard but we had to play her there and facilitate our offense.

I think it was more we were a little wound up at the beginning and tried to get in there too much. But after that, it was pretty good.

**Q. You're up five points at halftime. Then you played them pretty close throughout the third quarter. What's just your thoughts going into that final frame?**

BILL FENNELLY: I think when you play a game in this tournament or any game, especially this tournament and you're playing a really good team, we tell our team, like, let's get to the fourth quarter and have a chance to win. That's what you want. And we did.

And to Michigan's credit, they made some really big plays. They made a couple big shots that were open and we had a couple great looks that didn't go in.

That's the beauty and the agony of this event that Syd's shot goes in or someone's shot goes in and there's misses, the game is different. But that's the beauty of basketball and the beauty of, in my opinion, the greatest sporting event in our country.

Michigan deserves all the credit. It's a great team --

well-coached, very skilled. They'll be a tough out for whoever wins the game going on right now.

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