

# NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: Second Round - Virginia vs Iowa

Monday, March 23, 2026

Iowa City, Iowa, USA

Carver-Hawkeye Arena

**Virginia Cavaliers**

**Coach Amaka**

**Agugua-Hamilton**

**Kymora Lee**

**Paris Clark**

Media Conference

Virginia 83, Iowa 75

AMAKA AGUGUA-HAMILTON: Obviously super proud of this group. Super proud of our program. Every player, every staff member, just all the hard work that went into getting us to this point.

But we were just so resilient in this game. It doesn't matter what Iowa -- Iowa is a really good team. They're a 2 seed for a reason. No matter what they threw at us, we just did not get rattled.

We just believed that we were going to win this game before it even started. Every time they punched, we punched back, stayed poised. Had so many people hit big shots, Paris, Mo. We had to battle their bigs. I'm just really proud of our fight today.

**Q. Paris, middle of the fourth quarter you're down nine and you hit consecutive three-pointers and then you had a jumper to really chop that lead down to one. What were you thinking when you got out there? What were the shots like? Was that something you were focused on is making an impact like that to bring you guys back?**

PARIS CLARK: I was just trying to do whatever to win, to help my team. It's win or go home, it's March, and like we say all the time, we know what we're capable of, we know what we can do. I think just really trying to do whatever to get us back and win this game.



**Q. Kymora, how much did the comeback against Georgia give you confidence that you guys could do it again, even after you fell behind after three quarters tonight?**

KYMORA JOHNSON: I think we had confidence going into the Georgia game, going into the Arizona State game. Just coming into March, we're a confident team, and I think we believe in all the work that we've put in.

Not a lot of people have. They've written us off. We came into March trying to show what Virginia is about.

**Q. Kymora, you just played 50 minutes, you're on your third game in four days. Will how do you feel?**

KYMORA JOHNSON: Hungry and tired. But blessed and happy to be able to get the dub and be able to play 50 minutes.

**Q. You're the native of Charlottesville. How does it feel to represent?**

KYMORA JOHNSON: I mean, it means everything. This is what you dream of as a kid. Even just playing in front of 15,000 people, that was insane. Credit to Iowa's fans because they get into it. It's just a blessing, and I am really excited and really happy for this team?

**Q. For both players, Coach talked about the fight. You guys talked about the fight yesterday. How much of that got you through the fourth quarter and then the overtimes?**

PARIS CLARK: All of it. I mean, Iowa is a great team. Like Mo said, they have a great crowd. But again, it's March. It's win or go home. So we fought, we had to fight, we knew we had to fight, and ultimately get the dub.

**Q. You guys have talked a lot about helping the program get back to national prominence. Paris, as a fourth year, knowing that the team will be going to the Sweet 16 for the first time in 26 years, what does that mean to you?**

PARIS CLARK: It means everything, honestly. This is a really special moment for us, just being here all these three years, coming to Virginia, seeing the vision of Coach Mox. It's hard to put into words but I'm so proud of this group, I'm proud of our coaching staff, just the trust that we have in each other and this program. It just means everything to finally see it comes into place?

**Q. You were asked earlier about -- I think you scored eight straight points in the fourth quarter. Romi hit two shots at the beginning of the quarter, so went from 9 to 5 which seemed more manageable. What was the effect of her getting those baskets for you right out of the gate?**

PARIS CLARK: It was important. We had to cut the lead.

KYMORA JOHNSON: Romi is a senior and she's win-or-go-home mentality, as well. We all are. But she stepped up in big moments and that's what she does.

**Q. Kymora, to stay home and play for Virginia, you could have gone a lot of different places, is this what you envisioned, and how much faith do you have in your coach because it's a leap of faith to play for a program where you can go just about anywhere?**

KYMORA JOHNSON: For sure. When I committed to Virginia, Coach Mox and the staff hadn't even played a game at Virginia yet. It was definitely a leap of faith, but I put my trust in the Lord and followed my heart, and it got me here, and I wouldn't go back and change anything.

**Q. Question for Kymora, just from feeling unsure whether this program was where you wanted to play to committing to this program because of your trust in Coach Mox so now being on this stage, can you talk about how your relationship has evolved with her and what it was about her that brought in a immediate trust?**

KYMORA JOHNSON: Yeah, four sure, when she first called me I'm going to be honest I was not coming to Virginia, but I gave it a couple rings and finally picked up. As soon as the first conversation happened, I knew this was where I destined to be. I followed my heart and it led me to Virginia.

I literally live five minutes from ground, and I wouldn't want it any other way. We have a great relationship, and not a lot of players can say they have such a good relationship with their coach, so I'm really blessed to be in this position. I love you.

AMAKA AGUGUA-HAMILTON: I love you too.

**Q. I saw you kind of look up at the ceiling when they brought up about this first Sweet 16 since 2000. What does that mean to you to be able to get this program back to that level?**

AMAKA AGUGUA-HAMILTON: When I looked up at the ceiling, I was just praising God. All the glory goes to my Lord and savior, and I do that all the time. But it means everything. That's why I came to Virginia. I chose Virginia. I had a lot of options. We had a great run at my last school, and I wanted to go to Virginia for many reasons.

When I was growing up, Coach Ryan, Debbie Ryan who's here and has been a great supporter since we've been here, I watched her, and I joke a lot, I'll say that even now because she didn't recruit me when I was growing up, but it's cool, we're friends now.

But I watched her and also Dawn Staley and a lot of the greats that came through here, Wendy Palmer, Tammi Reis, list goes on and on. But I knew where this program has been, and I always remembered wanting to play at Virginia, and I just wanted tock a part of bringing it back to the glory days.

Carla Williams, who is our athletics director, I believe in her vision for the program and who she is as a person and what she stands for and how she leads. So just to be a part of a first-class institution like this has been a blessing, and it's been a grind.

I've talked about it before. We had to do a lot of rebuilding when we got here in all facets of the program, even just rebuilding the community, the energy. But resources, players, culture, everything.

I knew it was going to be a large task, and it was no small feat. But at the same time, I knew we were going to get it done. I didn't know when, but I just keep all my trust and faith in the Lord, and I'm just blessed to be a part of leading these young women to help them reach their dreams and goals and leave a legacy.

That's what we've talked about ever since they came here in the summer because I felt like it was a special group.

Yeah, we took some bumps along the way, but at the same time, I just knew this was a special group.

**Q. I wanted to ask about Kymora. What was it like recruiting her? She's local. That's a win you probably feel like you need to get in recruiting, and what she's been able to do in these three games but all season long as an all-ACC player, what she has brought to this**

## **program and how she delivered in the postseason?**

AMAKA AGUGUA-HAMILTON: Yeah, she's a phenomenal human being. When we got here, obviously the transfer portal was really starting to pick up and collegiate athletics was changing.

But I really wanted to build a culture. We talk about culture wins all the time. It's up in our gym. I wanted to get young kids that could grow and we can build this thing, we can lay a foundation rather than -- we utilize the transfer portal, but rather than going in and getting a whole bunch of older kids and we can't sustain some kind of culture, and Mo led the charge with that, and she's somebody that it was very difficult to get her on grounds. Like it took -- she lives less than two miles away, and it took probably two months, my first two months there to even get her to come and talk to us. I literally passed her house on the way home every day.

Once she did and once we clicked, we knew we had a special kid. It's not just her talent. Obviously you see she can do whatever she wants on the basketball court and she works hard. She's gifted, but she wants to master her craft. She's a student of the game. We watch film after games, all that stuff.

But it's who she is as a person and her selfless nature, her giving nature, her high character. She really is like an ambassador for our sport and obviously for our program.

I love the fact that she gets asked a lot of things about herself, but she always turns it back to her teammates and how much she loves and cares for her teammates, and she's just happy to share this journey with them.

**Q. Kymora commented on the atmosphere in here tonight. To win a game like this on an opponent's home court in front of this many fans who are that vocal, does that make the accomplishment feel even greater and more gratifying?**

AMAKA AGUGUA-HAMILTON: Yeah. I mean, I think Iowa City, first of all, hospitality has been great. But the fans, they show up and show out. I think they've sold out like 51 or 50 something straight games, and they make it a difficult environment to play in.

But it's just an awesome environment. I think it's great for the game. It's great for women's basketball. I spent eight years in the Big Ten, and coaching before I got my first head coaching job, and Iowa has always been a tough place to play.

I was very familiar with them and the coaching staff.

Obviously different players. But it's a great environment. Will I just think we need more of it. I love the fact that the people here support women's basketball in the way that they do.

But yes, of course winning a game in front of a crowd like that where we just had our little section of orange is awesome. You've got to be able to win on the road in March.

**Q. I just want to touch on Paris, when she banged those two threes, and what you saw in her, and was it complete green light in that second half? Was that the ultimate scenario of a player who did not want her career to end?**

AMAKA AGUGUA-HAMILTON: Yeah, I mean, what we saw out of her, that was huge moments for Paris, but also Romi, too. We saw some senior urgency. Obviously they were game planning for Mo, trying to trap Mo, put two on the ball, things like that.

But you need your seniors to step up. They don't want this to be over. From the time we played Arizona State, we've been talking about one more, just fighting for one more. So one more moment, one more memory, one more practice, one more game, one more team activity, whatever it is.

That's what they were playing with. They were just fighting for one more. The game started to -- they started to gap it a little bit, and Paris was like, no, not ready to be done, and she stepped up.

**Q. You spoke of Sa'Myah Smith the other day and the struggles she's had with her health and losing some family members. What does it mean for you to see her get this far?**

AMAKA AGUGUA-HAMILTON: Oh, I mean, I'm proud of her. She even got banged up in this game, but I'm proud of her perseverance, her resiliency. That's a lot. I'm somebody who's also lost my mother and I was a similar age to her. So I know you don't ever know -- everybody's relationships are different, but it's difficult to navigate, especially at a young age.

So I'm just proud of her to be able to continue to fight through that, and it came on the backs of already having injuries and surgeries, so it's a lot, and then she lost her grandfather, like I talked about.

Sa'Myah came to Virginia to help. She really wanted to play with Mo, she really wanted to play with Paris and the rest of the kids that are on the team, but she wanted to be

a part of elevating this program.

She really believed in the vision and she wanted to be a part of that and leave a legacy.

**Q. What does it mean for you and this program to not only follow through on that endeavor to put this program back on the map but also showcase the progression of Virginia women's basketball on the biggest stage?**

AMAKA AGUGUA-HAMILTON: I mean, it means a lot. As a competitor, you always want to win, but as a mentor and as someone that wants to continue to help and equip our young women for life after basketball, it means a lot for me to see them be so resilient and persevere through so much injury because we know life is going to throw so many things at them.

The fact we didn't fold this season even when we had ups and downs, even the way we ended the regular season, things like that, that's growth, and that's going to help them when this ball stops bouncing.

I'm proud of everything. I'm proud of our program. I'm proud of their growth. I'm proud of winning. I'm proud of just the resiliency.

So yeah, it's not really about me. I do it for -- to honor God. I do it to fill the purpose that he's put me here for, but also for those young women. I love seeing them with so much joy on their faces. That's really why I do this.

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