

# NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - Vanderbilt vs Baylor

Friday, March 22, 2024

Blacksburg, Virginia, USA

Cassell Coliseum

**Vanderbilt Commodores**  
**Shea Ralph**

**Jordyn Cambridge**

**Iyana Moore**

Media Conference



meant that in a bunch of different ways, but she's never been to an NCAA Tournament, and she's the heart, soul, and engine of our team.

I know that she's been driving the bus for a long time. So to be able to be here and see her achieve one of her goals as a basketball player -- and this is her last basketball game -- it's a joyful moment for me as a coach, but also I'm just really happy for her because I don't know there's another player that deserves this moment.

I appreciate her investment in Vanderbilt and in me and in building this program.

Iyana Moore came off a really rough year last year where she was playing like a pro and her season was taken underneath her. There's a lot of ways players can respond to that. I would hope, if anything bad happens to this one -- adversity is going to strike. That's guaranteed -- that she'll respond the way Iyana did, and she'll fight her way back to doing what she loves to do, to being a great teammate, to understanding what it looks like to be great at anything -- sports, school, family, business, it's all the same.

So we coach basketball, but we're trying to help them understand what it takes to be great in life. These two women are amazing, incredible ambassadors for our program. I couldn't be prouder of them and our team.

I'm looking forward to next year because this is just the beginning, guys. It's a stepping block. It's a building block. We're going somewhere special.

Hopefully we were able to show, just in the couple games we played, that and represent Vanderbilt in that way.

Again, I couldn't be more proud to be the coach of this team and to represent Vanderbilt in the NCAA Tournament, and I'm grateful.

**Q. Jordyn, how much did this whole run mean to you with it being your final game today?**

JORDYN CAMBRIDGE: I'm going to start by saying any

Baylor - 80, Vanderbilt - 63

**SHEA RALPH:** This is Maysen, my 5-year-old. Also a 2037 commit to Vanderbilt, so everyone back off.

**THE MODERATOR:** We're honored to have your presence here, Maysen, on the dais with us.

Joining us on the dais from the Commodores, Jordyn Cambridge, Iyana Moore, Maysen, and Coach Shea Ralph.

**SHEA RALPH:** First I want to congratulate Baylor. I thought they played as well today as I've seen them play in a long time. That's how you want your team playing in March. They looked great.

I know Nicki's excited to move forward. They also had a great year, so congrats to them. I look forward to watching them compete.

I'd also like to say, while I'm disappointed obviously in the loss because you come here to win and we prepare to win, and we were here with a purpose, I'm really, really proud of my team. I'm proud of our university. I'm proud of our program.

I'm really proud of the two young ladies you see sitting up here for different reasons. I want to give Jordyn Cambridge her flowers. I already got the tears out, so I'm going to do real good with not crying.

When we got to Vanderbilt -- and we talked a little bit about this the other day. Jordyn was one of the few people in the room where she said all she wanted to do is win. She



emotion that I have is not sadness. Obviously I'm disappointed, but I'm really, like Coach Ralph said it, I'm really proud of this team because nobody thought we'd be here. Only the people on our campus thought we'd be here. We knew we'd be here. I knew we'd be here.

I'm proud of how far we got, and I'm proud of the way that we continue to fight through adversity. And I'm proud of myself because six years, oh, my gosh, it's been a long time, and I've been through a lot. Even this year it was really hard for me.

Nobody, except for the people in our program knows -- sorry, Iyana. Nobody knows what I had to do just to be able to step on the court every time, and I wouldn't have had it any way, any different way for my sisters, for my coaches. It was just really special.

Obviously I'm upset that it ends here, but I'm proud and I'm excited that I get to start the next phase of my life because it's time.

I'm super grateful for Coach Ralph and everything that she's taught me and everything she's helped me accomplish, all of those things.

So thank you to my coaches and to my teammates and to my mom. I'm really proud, and I'm really happy for this team and this program, and I know that they are going to like be very special, do great things, and I can't wait to come back and watch and see how successful they're going to continue to be because we have a great leader running the show and obviously we have great players coming back. So I'm excited for them.

**Q. So for your younger teammates who are coming back next year, what do you hope they take from this year's run to go forward into the future?**

JORDYN CAMBRIDGE: That we're capable and that we can do it. I think this year everything that we went through as a team showed that now we know what it takes, and obviously there's some things that we could have probably done better and cleaned some stuff up. It was a first experience for all of us.

So I think going into next year, as they begin to prepare -- and take some time off, get some rest. As they come back in the summer, it's just going to be like we know what it takes, and we know that it's going to take June 1st, whenever they come back, and it starts then.

I think Coach Ralph and everyone else is going to have them prepare for the moment, and they're going to go even further next year without a doubt.

**Q. Iyana, can you talk about what it's like to play with a leader like Jordyn Cambridge?**

PAIGE MEYER: I mean, gosh, where do I start? Jordyn's great. She's like the perfect role model to have on the team. Okay, so I'm not going to get emotional. This is not what I do.

Just like through everything, my injury, she was right there in my corner. On the court, through all the injuries, all the battles she's gone through, she still gave everything she could give.

She's just an excellent person. She took me under her wing, took everyone in that locker room under her wing. She's never been here, but she still showed us the ropes, what it's like to be on Vanderbilt's campus, what it's like to be an athlete under Vanderbilt.

She's just amazing. She gives her all, gives her everything day in and day out.

**Q. With the experience of playing in March Madness, Jordyn, if you could just go back to the last home game with the Vanderbilt community, can you talk about what the fans meant for you and what you hope to do to stay involved within Vanderbilt just beyond this season?**

JORDYN CAMBRIDGE: My Senior Night was awesome. The fans were awesome. It's really fun to see, when I got here not having many fans at all, to my last game at Memorial being so loud in there.

Everything's about the journey for me, so being there six years ago when I came in at 18 and now being 23 and having that kind of fan base and knowing that we're going to just continue to grow, it's really special. I'm really excited. I'm glad that I got to have that experience.

Obviously it's something that I longed for for a long time, and I'm just really glad that I got to do it this year in my final year of basketball.

I just know it's going to continue to get bigger and better, and Vanderbilt is going to go back to what Vanderbilt was when I was a kid and I used to come to the games and I couldn't even hear myself think and that kind of thing. So I'm excited for this program.

THE MODERATOR: Iyana and Jordyn, congratulations on a great season. Thanks for being here with us. Jordyn, congratulations on a great career.

Questions for Coach Ralph.

**Q. Shea, obviously it's bittersweet to see Jordyn play her final game, but what kind of legacy do you think that she has left behind?**

SHEA RALPH: Well, I think it's hard -- I don't think I have enough time to talk about all the things that she's done, that she's left behind.

What I hope you see from Jordyn -- and we've talked about this -- she's resilient. There hasn't been a kid that I've coached -- and I've been doing this a long time. We won't talk about years but -- that's gone through more than that kid.

It would have been really easy, the easy choice when we got here would have been for her to go somewhere that was a sure thing because she knew her years were limited, her time was limited. Her experience here hadn't been the best to that point for a bunch of different reasons.

But she didn't do that. She invested. She took the road less traveled. I think that's one of the reasons I respect her so much, the legacy that she leaves. It's not easy to do what she did.

We connected because I kind of did the same thing. It would have been easy for me to stay where I was until the sun set on my career, but I wanted to be able to do something that had never been done before in a holistic way.

I think you can win at a really high level, and I think you can do it by helping your kids grow into more than just great basketball players. You can do it with humility. You can do it with grace. You can do it with empathy. You can do it intensely, all the things, and that's how she is.

So right away from the first day we met, her and I connected on that. Through all the ups and downs, because there's been a lot of them, there's been a lot of them here, she has stayed true to who she is. She has stayed true to who we are at Vanderbilt and what we represent.

There isn't a kid who's given more of herself to a program and a university than Jordyn Cambridge. So hopefully what our players are seeing is what it looks like when you just -- when you risk it all, you go all in for something. You have a goal, and no matter what, no matter if you reach it or you don't -- because I know we wanted to win today. We wanted the opportunity to continue to play in the NCAA Tournament.

But no matter what, she's going to rest her head tonight knowing she gave everything she had. I think that, once the sting of this goes away, she's going to feel really great about that. She'll have no regrets. There isn't one thing that kid could have done more.

As the players behind her in our locker room, the recruits that we have that are coming in, when they talk to her, they get the sense. That's why you hear Iyana talk about her in that way. That's why you see our program being built quickly is because we have a leader in the locker room like Jordyn. That's the legacy she'll leave.

**Q. What do you hope the younger players, the ones who do come back next year, end up taking from this year's run?**

SHEA RALPH: I think the biggest thing -- like Iyana said, we're capable, but I'm hoping the experience we had at the NCAA Tournament shows them what it takes. You can't just come here and say now we're ready. There is a level of intensity that you have to bring every day to training, to classroom work, to individual meetings and workouts with coaches, to the passion that you have and the will that you have to win.

You've got to be that. That's got to be who you are because everybody in March is fighting for their lives. I'm hoping the experience today shows them and ignites a fire in them that will stay consistently lit.

Listen, our season was like this. We had like wow, and then it was, oh, my God, what's happening? Five-game road streak in the SEC where we just didn't look like ourselves, even throughout the course of games.

Hopefully what they take is, hey, we can do this, and we weren't even at our best. What does it look like if we go all in like Jordyn Cambridge and we prepare all in every day? What is the greatest thing we can conceive to happen? How do we maximize our full potential?

I'm hoping the experience of the whole year, but specifically the NCAA Tournament, lights that fire consistently in my players.

**Q. This group as a whole, can you talk about why they were so special to coach this year?**

SHEA RALPH: You can tell your professor that you're the one who made me cry. Maybe you'll get an A-plus for that.

I think the thing that connected me so much to this group and to this program, you know, when I got here and I brought our staff here, we had a goal in mind, but just like

everybody else, just like players, just like you guys that are working here and your lives, you face adversity.

The things that you love the most that you're working towards, you're tested. You're tested, do I really love this that much? Do I really love this that much that I'm going to keep trying to get it?

I remember feeling that way as a player. And as a coach, when I had my daughter, my love was tested for what I do because there's so many people that say you can't do both.

Then when I talked to Candice, it took me five minutes to understand the values aligned and that she believed that she could do it a certain way, and I had never heard an athletic director talk about running a department the way she talked about doing it. I was going to run through the phone to get to Vanderbilt to work for her.

Then when I met the team, all of the things that they had been through, COVID included, their love for what they did, their love for being at Vanderbilt, their love for being student-athletes was tested, and they were broken.

I think what I appreciate most about the team, the program, my staff, our athletic department is that we healed together, that we found our love for not only each other, but for the process of becoming great as human beings, as basketball players, as ambassadors for Vanderbilt, as student-athletes.

And we talked about loving that process and loving each other through the hard times, and then they actually did it. So what makes them special is that all the things we talk about, it's easy to talk. It's really easy to talk y'all. I'm up here doing it a lot right now. It's easy to talk, but it's hard to do some of the things you see these athletes do.

You're watching all these games, that's hard to do. It's hard to get to that point and perform at that level. It's hard to do on a team that hasn't done it in ten years. And this team did it. They said this is what they wanted, and they did it.

This has definitely been the best year of my coaching career having been part of this team, this program, this department. I couldn't love them more. I couldn't love them more. I'm just so grateful to be on the journey with them. I can't wait to see what's next.

**Q. Coach, I hate to bring up negativity in a night we're talking about a lot of emotions, but just talk about what went wrong behind the arc tonight.**

SHEA RALPH: I think there was a lot that, when we go back and look at, we could have cleaned up. I thought we started slow. We had a really slow start. We started in a zone, and our rotations were just off, so we gave one of their better three-point shooters three wide open looks.

We looked like we were back on our heels a little bit, and by the time we figured it out, we were down by 16 or so. We just could never climb out of that hole.

I also thought we missed, what was it, 16, 13 free throws, something like that. That's also not characteristic of us. We lost by 17, we missed 13 free throws. I feel like, had we not started the game the way that we did, we would have been in better position and not felt like we had to fight out of that hole the entire game.

It felt like the game was super physical. It's not like we haven't seen that before this year. But combined with all the things that happened in the beginning of that game, it put us on our heels. We got in a little bit of foul trouble, and we just weren't able to overcome all of the adversity together to make it a ballgame in the end.

**Q. Shea, you mentioned that, when you got here, Jordyn was one of the few players who talked about wanting to win. You've been saying since the beginning of the season that you feel like this team did have that kind of desire to win. So how have you seen that transform from a team that kind of had a losing culture to one that has gotten in a position to win games?**

SHEA RALPH: I think the biggest thing that -- and that would be a great question for the players too. I'd love to know what they think. The biggest thing from my vantage point is consistency in the way that we invest in them.

So I ask my players to show up a certain way every day. I can't ask them to do that and me not do that. I can't show up, and they're like what version of her am I going to get today? Is she going to be angry and mad? They can't be that. There has to be an understanding between my team, my staff, my players that this is how we're going to show up every day, no matter what.

I think the one thing I'm really proud about is how we invest in relationships with our players. Right from the beginning, when we talk to them about coming to Vanderbilt, right from the beginning when I met with the team when we got here, these are my expectations. These are the standards. In return, this is what you're going to get from me.

I think in the beginning it was tough because they didn't trust, but then they started to trust what we were doing,

they started to trust me, because we have a level of investment in them as human beings. Yes, they're basketball players, and we're hired to win basketball games. But they know outside of that, I care about them as people, and that has taken time.

So great things take time. Trust takes time to rebuild. But I think what you're seeing is the shift in the culture is that they know no matter what, I love them and I care about them. I'm going to push them to be great because that's my job, not only as their basketball coach but as a person that's responsible for their growth.

I think you're seeing that shift in our culture because of that.

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