

# NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Four - Holy Cross vs UT Martin

Wednesday, March 20, 2024

Iowa City, Iowa, USA

Carver-Hawkeye Arena

**Holy Cross Crusaders**

**Maureen Magarity**

**Cara McCormack**

**Bronagh Power-Cassidy**

**Janelle Allen**

Media Conference



attention to the team, which was great, I think just kind of having that moment. They say the luck of the Irish, but I think with the way our season went, there was nothing lucky about that win, it was a lot of hard work. And our coaches, regardless of what game day it is, do a really good job to prepare us for any day of the week. No, it was a funny coincidence, it made for a fun day.

**Q. Playing in the First Four in the environment here, how do you, having to come in with a little less crowd, how do you create your own energy for a gym, like that in a gym on a little bit different day and time like that?**

BRONAGH POWER-CASSIDY: Yeah, I mean, as a team through our conference and non-conference schedule we played in a lot of different gyms. We faced a lot of different environments and whether it was our final having a packed arena at home or we played away and it was just happened to be a day of the week that nobody was really at the game, one of the great things about our team is we kind of create energy between each other, we kind of celebrate each other on the court and that energy feeds into our offense and we kind of hold pride in our defense and that kind of gives us energy. So I think the crowd can be an X factor, but a special thing about this team is we kind of just create that buzz amongst ourselves and don't really let outside influences dictate how we play, because we kind of create that for each other.

**Q. Janelle, playing in this First Four is a quick turnaround. How has it been for you and the team from Sunday finding out where you're going and getting here and being ready to go today?**

JANELLE ALLEN: It's definitely been a roller coaster. From watching the Selection Show to packing, to being on the charter plane, it was definitely very fun, very exciting. I think that we kind of take those moments and make it as positive as we can. We don't let the quick turnaround effect us, we find joy in understanding that we're still playing and a lot of teams aren't. We're put in this position, we're blessed to be in this position, so we try to be optimistic in any way that we can. But we're definitely very excited, and I think our excitement is taking over and overshadowing all the soreness and the games that we just

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with questions for any of the players.

**Q. Cara, you've been in the tournament before, you were in the tournament last year. What do you remember about last year's experience?**

CARA McCORMACK: Obviously the NCAA tournament is everyone's dream growing up as a basketball player. Last year I remember it was just a super big stage and I don't think this year's any different. I know we played Maryland last year, it was super exciting. To play at Iowa's arena also is a really exciting opportunity. I know the whole team is really looking forward to it.

**Q. Janelle, maybe you could tell us a little bit about your season and how this team got here.**

JANELLE ALLEN: Yes, we had an amazing season. We faced some adversity a little bit, but of course we overcame it. I think this group this year is very special, very strong, we had a goal and we stuck to it, we stuck to the game plan, we took it one day at a time, one game at a time. We're very happy, we're very humble to be here, yet we're very confident in where we are as a team.

**Q. Bronagh, as we see that you're from Dublin, Ireland. Was it any significance to playing on St. Patrick's day.**

BRONAGH POWER-CASSIDY: Yeah, it was a happy coincidence, I think. It just kind of brought a little more



had. But we're very excited.

**Q. Cara, going back to you. A veteran team, is this year being in the tournament different for you? Do you feel like your older players are able to help the younger players be prepared for tomorrow's game?**

CARA McCORMACK: Yeah, we have everyone returning from last year's tournament appearance and I think last year was really a learning curve for us, and being in that environment was really exciting. I feel like we have a different mindset going into our game tomorrow, and just being competitive and really being locked in and using our experience from last year. I don't think necessarily the upperclassmen are motivating the underclassmen, because we've all been in the same experience last year, so I think everyone's really locked in and ready to go for tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: All right, thank you and good luck tomorrow. We'll have coach in, in a few minutes.

(Pause.)

THE MODERATOR: All right. We'll get started with questions with an opening statement from coach.

MAUREEN MAGARITY: Obviously very excited to be here. Dream come true. Back-to-back with such an amazing group of young women that really battled through a lot of adversity this year. Senior-laden team that's been through a lot from their four years. I came in with them, COVID, a lot of upsets, championships. So I'm just really, really proud of their resiliency this year, and what an amazing opportunity to play in the NAAs, just such a connected group. So, we're thrilled to be here, really excited, and obviously we have a huge task ahead of us playing UT Martin.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for coach.

**Q. I wanted to ask you about Bronagh. She's had a tremendous career, obviously, and a tremendous season. What makes her go, and she's a Scholar Athlete of the Year in the league in a very talented academic conference, and what is her personality like and where do you think she will go after this?**

MAUREEN MAGARITY: Yeah, I could go on and on and I know I have over my four years of talking about Bronagh and just what, how much she's meant not only to our basketball program, but our Holy Cross community as a whole. Even in the Worcester community, she's just the most well-rounded human being I've ever been around, to be honest. Not just an as basketball player but like you

mentioned as a scholar athlete, just one of the most ultra-competitive people I know in everything that she does. Just such a great teammate, so coachable. She's just a natural-born leader. I think the moment she stepped foot on campus you just knew she was a special person. Played at prep school in Connecticut. When I got the job, it was COVID, had to recruit her over Zoom while she was in Ireland. I will forever be grateful that she believed in me, without ever meeting me, committing over Zoom and playing at Holy Cross. But she's just made, is going to forever make a lifetime lasting impression on everyone that she's met at Holy Cross and she's truly one of the greats that will have ever played at Holy Cross.

**Q. You seem to hang your hat on the defensive side of the ball. Defensive Players of the Year under you, everything like that. How important is the defensive side of the ball when you get in, especially when you get into March?**

MAUREEN MAGARITY: Yeah, I'm really proud of that. All the credit goes to the players. They have really bought into that over the years. Our Patriot League has some great players that can really score the ball, so we knew a few years ago that we had to change something. We had to adjust and really focus on our defensive effort. Really emphasizing team defense, rotations, rebounding has been a huge piece to our success over the years. Then, obviously, once you get to the tournament, anything can happen. I'm really excited about just our confidence right now and just the matchups we've had to face over the last three games in the Patriot League tournament, and the game plan that my amazing staff put together, and the team really stuck to it and knowing personnel. You have to be able to do that. Once you get to tournament time, anything can happen as far as shooting and when you're on neutral courts and home courts, so I'm really excited about that. We take a lot of pride in that as well. It's not always pretty for us, but we always seem to find a way. That's just, I think, who this group is. Just tough competitors, gritty, and our defense obviously has helped us win a lot of championships.

**Q. This second straight year, I know you've been in the tournament, I can't remember if you were in before that, but how have the experiences been different thus far? I think you took a bus to Maryland, which I'm sure could be challenging, especially the direction that you're having to go. Then versus a charter flight here. How has that experience helped shape your team this year and then coming into the tournament?**

MAUREEN MAGARITY: Yeah, it's been -- obviously last year was the first time for all of us. We only had one senior on our team, Addi Cross, last year. Kind of, I think,

surprised a lot of people making a run at the end, so we were just, obviously, thrilled just to be in the tournament. Yeah, I think the travel piece, it didn't overshadow what we experienced and how amazing it was to play at Maryland. But this year, obviously, it's a different situation. We have four seniors, it's our last run at this. We were picked pre-season to win, reigning champions, all of that. So there was a lot more pressure. When we found -- we had to play our best basketball when it mattered the most. So to be able to get the reward of, wow, we get to take a charter and experience all that has been incredible. I can't put into words how special it's been just to watch the players -- and myself for that matter, I've never been on a charter flight -- my daughters, my parents, they made the trip as well. But just to see their faces boarding the plane and everything, this has been incredible. Since we've landed here in Iowa, just the people are just so gracious and helpful and kind. We get here -- we just went to the locker room. The volleyball locker room is unbelievable. We're just having the time of our lives right now and really excited to practice here. We actually, last night, went to the men's NIT game, so we could really experience what it's like to sit in the stands. And we could see from afar, far across the way in the Arena, Caitlin Clark was watching the game, so that was pretty cool. We're just taking it all in right now. Then, obviously, we know we have a really, really tough game ahead of us, and we'll prepare the best that we can as a staff, so that we're ready. With this group, it's been amazing. I'm just so excited. And, of all the groups I've ever been with, they deserve this. They really, truly do. So it's been really special.

**Q. You talked about coming to Iowa and the atmosphere around this. Women's basketball just really feels like it's taken a huge jump in the last two years. We feel here in the midwest with Caitlin and Iowa and everything like that, but how does the atmosphere around women's basketball in your league, in that area, how does that feel like it's elevated to make March even feel more special right now?**

MAUREEN MAGARITY: Yeah, it's an incredible time for women's athletics, but obviously specifically for us, for women's basketball. Our last two Patriot League championship games have been incredible as far as atmosphere and the buzz around campus. Last year it was at Boston University, sold-out crowd, it was incredible. This year at the Hart Center on our campus, it was the ticket, the ticket everybody was trying to get, you know, on a Sunday afternoon at 12 o'clock. It was packed. Not only were people there, but they were so invested. BU did a great job, too. Our league has done a tremendous job of just making people want to come to our games. I think at our level, at every level right now, Mid Major level, this level, on the biggest stage, it's exciting. So many people

are watching basketball, I can't tell you how many people even reached out to my parents, saying, wow, they saw our game, you know, on CBS and, wow, that was the most amazing championship game I've ever watched, and that's Holy Cross/BU.

So it's just such an exciting time. I'm so proud to coach women's basketball right now. And obviously, here in Iowa, Caitlin has just made such an impact on that. Just the excitement and her style of play. She's changing the way that -- I have two daughters, I mean, they've watched more Caitlin Clark games than I have. I think, if we're lucky enough to get to Saturday, I'm going to have my oldest probably help us with the scouting report, to be honest. I mean, she's just changed how the game's played. I think it's so exciting for young girls, young boys that watch, college-age, I mean, she's made such an impact. It's a really, really special time.

**Q. Two of your players, Janelle and Lauren, are from Illinois, just a couple hours away from here. What was their reaction like to being able to come to Iowa and have you talked to them about that?**

MAUREEN MAGARITY: Yeah, really exciting. We've always tried our best to get, to play games back where our players are from. So the closest I think we got for them, we played at Marquette two years ago. Actually, Janelle Allen's brother is on the football, the Iowa football team here. So that was really neat, you know, when she found out that, we came to the game yesterday, I think we're going to try to see him after, do a tour of the football stadium. So it's exciting. Any time you can play anywhere in the country, but especially a place like Iowa where women's basketball is just at the absolute peak right now, it was neat. I think especially those two were really excited and obviously for their families as well.

THE MODERATOR: All right, thank you, coach for your time.

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