

# NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: Regional 3 Semifinal - Tennessee vs Texas

Friday, March 28, 2025

Birmingham, Alabama, USA

Legacy Arena

## Tennessee Volunteers

**Tess Darby**

**Jewel Spear**

Sweet 16 Pregame Media Conference



TESS DARBY: Ultimately, I don't really think that we care who we're playing. We're just grateful that we have another opportunity to play. We look at every opponent the same. We don't overlook any opponent, but we play close attention to detail in what they do.

Yes, Texas is a very aggressive team on the defensive end. Just like Jewel said, we know we have to take care of the basketball, but ultimately, we have to do us and do what has got us here.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the Tennessee players, please.

**Q. Question for Tess: You and your sister finished off your high school careers with a state championship. How do you guys plan on finishing off your college careers?**

TESS DARBY: Yeah, I hope we're holding up a national championship trophy, but just it's kind of surreal because we both came from a small town, represented a small school, so now getting to represent and wear the University of Tennessee across our chest and ultimately just playing for something bigger than ourselves is a dream come true.

**Q. Texas is extremely aggressive on the defensive end. How do you plan to protect the ball on the perimeter and prevent those turnovers?**

JEWEL SPEAR: I would say just, like you said, taking care of the ball and knowing that possessions are going to be very important in this game. Sharing the ball and just making the easy pass, that just goes into taking care of your turnovers.

**Q. Tess or Jewel or both: Do you like playing teams that are in some ways similar to you, the way that Texas is as focused on defense, but do you also like the fact that they are not a team that shoots a lot of threes like you do? I just wonder about that, the matchup, because you have already faced them. What is it you like about playing a team like that and that you feel like you can maybe take some advantage of?**

**Q. Defensively it seems like a change of pace with Texas playing a lot of their basketball down low. What's the game plan heading into that?**

JEWEL SPEAR: I couldn't hear. Sorry?

**Q. Defensively it seems like a change of pace with Texas playing a lot of their basketball down low. What's the game plan there?**

JEWEL SPEAR: Oh, yeah, they have really good post players on the offensive side, so we just have to make sure that we rebound. I remember the first time that we played Texas we didn't do a good job of rebounding as a team and boxing them out. They have a lot of size, so that's something we are focusing on.

**Q. What's it like having the coach back on the bench for this game?**

JEWEL SPEAR: I think it's special. I think Coach Jenna did a good job last time we played them on the road. She stepped up for us and played a huge role of us competing in that game, even though we came up a little short.

It's special to have Coach Kim back. That's our leader, and she sacrificed a lot for us this season. We're trying to do those little sacrifices for her as well and just as a team.

**Q. I saw y'all saw Rickea before you left? Did she give you any advice? What was that experience like?**

TESS DARBY: It's always really exciting to see players come back, especially the ones that you played with. Just



really motivated us. Then she gave us a little gift.

JEWEL SPEAR: Yeah, it was cool. I remember just seeing, like, Kate and our camera people in the back, and I seen the cameras. I'm, like, Why are the cameras here? I turned around and seen Rickea. I was like, Oh, my God, Rickea.

It's just really cool, like Tess said, playing with Rickea and being close to her and her coming back knowing that this is a special moment for us and our program. She just told us, Go win it.

**Q. For both Jewel and Tess: I know Ruby has already posted a video of she's going to wear two different color shoes. Are either of you planning to do anything unusual, and Coach Kim Caldwell doesn't remember saying that. Do y'all remember her talking about the shoes if you got to the Sweet 16?**

JEWEL SPEAR: I don't remember personally, but that probably was a conversation with Kaniya and Ruby. The conversations that we had with our assistant coaches and head coaches, whether it's with the team or individually, those are things that we do remember. So I'm proud that they did get to remember that, and I'm happy for Ruby and whoever else wants to wear different color shoes.

I personally will not, but I think it just speaks to, once again, our culture that we have here at Tennessee and Coach Kim being a player's coach and just allowing us to have fun while also competing.

TESS DARBY: Excited for the others that are really excited to wear different color shoes. I'll be sticking to my Sabrinas, but yeah, I'm basic (laughing).

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