

Atlantic Coast Conference Basketball Tipoff Media Day

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Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

Notre Dame Fighting Irish

Coach Niele Ivey

Hannah Hidalgo

Madison St. Rose

Women's Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon, and welcome to the 2026 ACC Tip Off Q&A. I am happy to welcome Notre Dame to the stage. Head coach Niele Ivey entering your seventh season, All-American Hannah Hidalgo, and Madison St. Rose.

Welcome, ladies.

Niele, you led the Irish to your fifth consecutive Sweet 16 and an Elite Eight appearance. Fighting Irish returned three players, as well as bringing in two newcomers, two of which are transfers, and eight first-year players.

How do you go about recruiting and building a team, especially around such a talented point guard like Hannah?

NIELE IVEY: Yeah, I knew we were going to lose about five players. Cass went to the draft, and we had four that were fifth-year seniors. So the thought process was to bring in a really big freshmen class, a class that we can really grow with and develop with.

Every year, you know, just trying to bring in the right pieces that can complement what we have. So Madison St. Rose was a no-brainer; somebody that can come in with her experience, really complement Hannah in the back court. Then Anaya Hardy, somebody in the front court with great athleticism.

That's pretty much the process. You know, just having the right complements and the right pieces that fit our culture on and off the court.

THE MODERATOR: I said it last year, and I say it every year, and I'll say it again because it's still true. Death, taxes, and high expectations for Notre Dame women's basketball. What is the expectation for you as a lady



coach with this group now that you've practiced a couple of times? What should we expect from a style perspective this season?

NIELE IVEY: Yeah, I mean, I always have that expectation of wanting to be the best. Our standard of excellence at Notre Dame is always at an all-time high. So for this group, again, you know, we want to be the best, we want to grow every day.

My goal for this group is to get better every day, but our goal is to be the strongest in the ACC. Our goal is to get to the Final Four. They got a taste of it as far as getting to the Elite Eight last season, but our goal is obviously to win the whole thing, but to also compete and get better every time we step on that court.

THE MODERATOR: Hannah, obviously so many accolades, and they're building and they've brought in players to play with you and build around you. One of those is sitting next to you, Madison St. Rose. Tell the ACC about this young lady's game and what they should expect this season.

HANNAH HIDALGO: Yeah, Madison, she's great. She's a great player. She plays both sides of the floor. I can't give you too much because I don't want to give you guys the scout, but just know that she can score on all three levels. She's picking up with me for 40 minutes. She's not going to get tired. Even if she is, she's not going to show it, and I won't let her show it.

You know, she's just a great all-around player, so it's truly a blessing to have her to be a Fighting Irish.

THE MODERATOR: Kudos to your sports information office for this saying, but from rookie of the year in the Ivy League to now your first season with Ms. Ivey. I love that, but how has the transition gone, and how have you elevated your game now to prepare for the ACC?

MADISON ST. ROSE: Yeah, I would say that the transition has been pretty smooth. Being a fifth year, kind of basketball is something that I've played for a while, college basketball. So I think just trying to pick up on the

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terminology, the offense that's being ran and then also just the tempo of the game now.

We like to play a fast pace, so I'm getting kind of used to that and bringing my energy, so...

Q. We've already mentioned that you're a freshman-heavy team. How do you prepare them for the nonconference schedule that you have, which is probably the hardest in the league this year?

NIELE IVEY: For right now it's a lot of communication about it, because you know I'm stressing to them that when we start the season you're going to be in the fire. Our first game is in Rome. Our first game is the first collegiate game that's being televised against Villanova, a really tough opponent. So I'm trying to prepare them in practice as much as I can.

We have an exhibition game. We have a really great scrimmage against IU, so I think that will help us. But a lot of the things they're going to have to learn on the fly. So trying to communicate that with them is what I'm doing in our practices. We have a great practice squad says, so our practices are really challenging. We're scrimmaging a lot. A lot of the things they're going to learn is just by being in it and being in the fire.

This group is ready for that. We have great leaders that are preparing for them and helping them along the way with their learning curve, and they're ready. This group is very hungry. This group of freshmen, they are sponges. They want to learn. They want to grow. They're contributing right away. They're ready just to do whatever it takes to help contribute.

Q. Just like the men, a lot of the players now come into this level thinking that they belong in the WNBA. That's their goal. How do you coach them hard but yet keep them -- help them to understand that they have to be developed first?

NIELE IVEY: Well, I feel like in our program we have the blueprint of getting players pro-ready. The transition to the league from Notre Dame has been very successful, as you see so many players that have graduated from Notre Dame that have had successful and amazing W careers.

That's something that we take a lot of pride in, our development, player development. The system I think translates very well to the professional level. And we pick the right players. Honestly, it's the right fit with our system, and again, it translates really well.

That's something that, again, we take a lot of pride in

making sure they're ready to be pro-ready.

THE MODERATOR: Hannah, I want to piggyback that, because Notre Dame has become known as Guard U, and you're the next in the line. The common denominator, though, is your head coach. What makes her -- we know it's skill development, but what makes her so good in that development and just helping you be better on and off the court?

HANNAH HIDALGO: Yeah, for one, Coach Ivey, she's been everywhere that we're trying to go. She's won the national championship. She's been to the Final Four. She's played, you know, in the W, and now she's been an assistant coach. She's done everything. She's just so special. I think with her having that experience on all the different levels, it's just special, and not every coach can say that they've played at the W.

And Skylar was actually just telling us that Coach Ivey used to come in and practice and used to bust them, so that's also special too. She's just done it on every level, so it's a blessing to have her as a head coach when she's done it all.

THE MODERATOR: Niele, is this crew just too soft that you can go in and bust on them.

HANNAH HIDALGO: She can't do that. No, no, no (laughing).

THE MODERATOR: Madison, you I'm sure have watched Hannah during your previous playing experience, but now you get to watch Hannah on a daily basis. What has been the biggest surprise to you, and what makes her so good?

MADISON ST. ROSE: I would say the biggest surprise is actually that watching her on television, she brings a lot of energy, but she brings that same amount of energy in practice. Like, it's not fake.

She's so competitive, so loud. Just is so loud, so vocal. Just a really good leader. I think that's just really special. Not every great leader can do that, and especially good player too.

So I think she really just challenges us and makes us better players and just, yeah, continues to push herself and the team.

Q. Hannah, obviously like you just mentioned, you are a leader on the team with so many freshmen and, of course, transfers coming in. How do you think your leadership this year is going to impact the team?



HANNAH HIDALGO: Yeah, it's going to be so big. Of course, like you said, it's a completely different team. They don't know what it means to play Notre Dame basketball. Me being what's going on my fourth year, I know, of course, what Coach Ivey wants. I know the system.

So just helping them in that aspect and just being patient with them.

I also make sure that I'm really intentional with knowing how my teammates want to be talked to and how they want to be led and which teammates -- I have to meet them where they're at -- and which teammates can be pushed and yelled at and which teammates I have to pull to the side and talk to.

So it will be very crucial because they need that confidence. Of course, with them being younger and then, of course, we have transfers, them being new, they need that confidence to know that they can play here on this level.

Coach Ivey recruited them and brought them in for a reason, and they're special. Constantly every single practice instilling that confidence in them is how I try to lead them.

THE MODERATOR: Madison, and this could be you, but which of the newcomers on this team do you think everyone will be talking about come ACC play?

MADISON ST. ROSE: Oh, wow, this is a good question. I really think -- I mean, we have a lot of talented freshmen that I think you're just going to hear their names constantly. Like Jacy, Jenica, Amari, Bella. They just bring so much energy, and I think that's kind of what we need.

Especially being a freshman, sometimes people might not, like, expect them to have just like big roles, but I really do think they're going to have a big role and they're going to make game-changing plays and just do things that he with need them to do to help us be successful.

THE MODERATOR: Hannah, obviously a lot has been made about your relationship with your head coach. What is the message that you have shared with your teammates in regard to playing for her? What would your message be to future recruits?

HANNAH HIDALGO: What it means to play for Coach Ivey? Good question. I would say Coach Ivey, she's going to push you, and she tries to push you every single practice. But I think for me a really big thing and really important thing is that she cares about you outside of just being a player.

She's going to push on the floor, and then when you step off the floor, she's loving you, and she's inviting you over to eat dinner and, you know, she's just showing you all the love. Not every player can say that they have that in a coach. I think the biggest thing is to not take that for granted and not think the grass is greener on the other side.

For me, of course, I found my home here, and I don't think I can get that anywhere else. Having a coach that's going to push you and challenge you, but also love you off the court too.

THE MODERATOR: Niele, we've already mentioned, you start the season against Villanova in Rome, but that's the first of seven NCAA teams on the schedule. A lot of coaches knowing you have a young team would shy back. How much of this tough schedule is because you want this team ready for ACC play, and what was the genesis as you created that schedule?

NIELE IVEY: I think I'm always trying to challenge this group. With Hannah being a senior, again, adding Maddie St. Rose, just knowing that this is going to prepare us for ACC. ACC is one of the best conferences in women's basketball, and I'm going to challenge them early.

We had some great opportunities with the Players Era, with the Eternal Tip-Off in Rome, and I thought, what better way with the ACC/SEC Challenge? We're on the road. It prepares us for tournament, and it prepares us -- excuse me, for the conference and the NCAA Tournament.

I just feel like I had one of the best leaders in the country, and I knew regardless of having a young group, I knew that she would be somebody that's going to come helping us get there.

THE MODERATOR: This is for both players because you both have accomplished so much in the first part of your careers, but in this last year for both of you, what's the individual and the team goal? Madison, I'll start with you.

MADISON ST. ROSE: I would say the individual goal for me is just to be a consistent player, to show up to every game ready and focused and not showing the fatigue or the mental or physical fatigue. Just, like, basically showing up and giving what Coach and the team expects of me.

HANNAH HIDALGO: Team goal.

MADISON ST. ROSE: Oh, sorry. And the team goal --

THE MODERATOR: Nice assist there, Hannah.



MADISON ST. ROSE: Yeah, I would say that the team goal is -- obviously the biggest one is to win, but to just, yeah, win as much as possible, to win the ACC, make it to the Sweet 16, go far in the NCAA Tournament.

HANNAH HIDALGO: For me I would say an individual goal is I would say more intangible is to just to be a better leader and just be a better person and really grow just I would say as a person. I feel like I've accomplished a lot, like you've said, on the court with all individual accolades. Of course, those are a blessing, but I think the most important are the team goals. That's to grow as a team, to click at the right time, and of course, to win a national championship.

For me it's not even just getting there. Not even just getting to the Final Four, but getting to the national championship and winning. I think for me that's the biggest thing.

THE MODERATOR: Death, taxes, and high expectations at Notre Dame. This last question is for each one of you, and Madison, I'll start with you. Give me the one-word description to describe this Irish team.

MADISON ST. ROSE: I'd say gritty.

HANNAH HIDALGO: I was going to say something similar, but I'm going to say tenacious.

NIELE IVEY: I'm going to say hungry. We've said that in the past, but this group is -- they want to get better every day. They come in focused, and they've gotten better every day, honestly, with the work ethic and what they present on the court and the weight room. They're just hungry to get better.

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