

# Big Ten Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Thursday, March 7, 2024  
Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA  
Target Center

## Michigan Wolverines Kim Barnes Arico Cameron Williams Laila Phelia

### Postgame Press Conference

Michigan - 76, Minnesota - 57

**THE MODERATOR:** Michigan press conference will start with an opening statement from Coach Barnes Arico. Go ahead.

**KIM BARNES ARICO:** We knew tonight was going to be a tough game. Minnesota is a great program. I know they have a couple of injuries, but they're still really well coached. They play incredibly hard. They execute their stuff.

Amaya Battle was coming off a tremendous night last night, and she had another great night tonight. So we're just really happy with the way our team came out and established ourselves from the beginning of the game. On the defensive end, I thought we really set the tone and played a great game.

I thought Laila Phelia was awesome, as well as Cameron, who is here with us today too.

**Q. You guys had really great ball control today. What helped you limit the turnovers to seven? And what impact did that have?**

**CAMERON WILLIAMS:** I think we always play our best when we move the ball. We try not to have like a one-man game. When we're able to move the ball, get it inside out is when we play our best.

**Q. This goes for either one of you. I think you guys both know where you stand: Some people have you on the bubble. Some people have you in. Was there an extra sense of urgency to make sure you got this one tonight?**



**CAMERON WILLIAMS:** Yeah, for sure. Every game matters at this point. This is March. We're playing for everything at this point. Every game, we want to play like it's our last.

**Q. Laila, tonight you flirted with your career high of 23. You were able to get downhill a lot into the heart of the defense. What was going well for you tonight?**

**LAILA PHELIA:** I definitely feel like just being aggressive and setting the tone, I feel like that helped me a lot. Just staying aggressive and then also moving the ball. Then on defense, I feel like that plays a big role too, getting stops and being able to go aggressively on offense.

**Q. Elissa Brett also had a great game. Six rebounds, three charges, and only that one personal foul at the defensive end. Can you talk about her impact on the defensive end?**

**LAILA PHELIA:** You need a player like her honestly, just how aggressive she is and her toughness, her effort. It's amazing. And being able to play with someone like that helps us a lot.

So she definitely played such a big role in today's win.

**CAMERON WILLIAMS:** She's a difference maker for sure. I love playing with her. She's always doing the things that you need, the little things that you need to do to succeed, whether that's rebounding, getting charges, getting on the floor. She's doing it all.

**Q. It seemed like you guys were really able to get a lot of stops on defense and then quickly push it back in transition on offense. Can you talk about that aspect of the game, how that defense really translated into offense.**

**CAMERON WILLIAMS:** For sure, defense really translates and fuels our offense. Again, we pride ourselves on defense, so when we do get stops, we really try to push the pace and advance the ball, so we can really get that transition offense.



**Q. Coach, obviously you guys have Indiana tomorrow. Back when you guys last played them, you know the result, but we're uncertain about Mackenzie's health. How do you go into that game?**

KIM BARNES ARICO: The first time we played them, they played exceptionally well. They started the game, might be a record this year, 15 of 15 from the floor. So we know how great of a team they are. We know how talented they are.

Obviously, we don't know about their injury either, so I guess it's a wait and see until tomorrow, until we find out.

We're just trying to be the best Michigan team that we can be, and I think that's really important for us moving forward. I think we totally took steps in the right direction with that tonight and our toughness and the way we battled. Obviously Elissa Brett setting the tone with the rebounding and the defense, but also our ability to take care of the basketball.

We limited our turnovers, and we had 20 assists. So we took positive steps heading into tomorrow's contest against a really great team.

**Q. Kind of just go back to Elissa Brett a little bit. We kind of talked throughout the year about how her aggressiveness can lead to fouls, but today you saw the results without getting that foul. I think her foul came in the last two minutes of the game. Can you talk about how she was able to get the charges and rebounds without getting into foul trouble.**

KIM BARNES ARICO: Last game she had 11 rebounds. I feel like she's dialed it up. She was injured for us at different times during the course of the year. She was injured the beginning of the year, she missed for a long period of time. She got injured the last time we played Minnesota in the fourth quarter. You guys were there. So she missed for a period of time there.

I feel like she's finally healthy, and she's really playing at another level. I mean, her ability to impact the game never shows up really in a box score. You might look at it and be like, oh, that kid's okay. Then you come to the game, and you're like, holy cow, that kid's a difference maker.

She's a coach's dream. You love a kid that will sacrifice herself for the good of the team. Taking those charges, I'm sure she's going to be all bruised up. Getting those rebounds, mixing it up. Just her toughness is just another level.

**Q. I'd be interested in getting your perspective on Battle. You mentioned her earlier. You've seen her now for two seasons. Did you get the sense she maybe kind of went to a different level in this tournament?**

KIM BARNES ARICO: I actually spoke to Christy Winters-Scott when I was interviewed after the game, and I'm like holy cow, we have to face that kid for another two years. I don't want to think about that today. I'm going to just celebrate that victory.

She is playing -- I mean, she made some plays today. She kept her dribble. Last night she was phenomenal and finished the night without a turnover. She's just really take the next steps.

I think she had to when Mara went down. She's had to take on a different role, but she's kind of embraced that role and kind of putting the team on her back. She's just doing a heck of a job.

**Q. Can you talk a little bit about Laila's night offensively, as well as her guarding Battle most of the night on defense.**

KIM BARNES ARICO: Sometimes people, that doesn't show up in the box score either, don't realize how much of an effort Laila exerts every night. She's like, all right, Coach, who's the other team's best player? I want that job. I want to own that role. I want to take on that responsibility.

So as much as we need her on the offensive end, she wants to do it on the defensive end as well. She just has an incredible ability to get downhill. She's a three-level scorer. She's a dynamic player. She found a way to get to the free-throw line tonight and just played her butt off.

In my opinion, she's one of the best players in the country, and she was recognized this week as a first-team All Conference player in our league, which is really special. So a great night for her.

**Q. Tonight great ball control really helped you guys to like stay in momentum throughout the game. What impact did that have, and is that something you were really focusing on leading up to the tournament?**

KIM BARNES ARICO: You've been with us all year, so we always say we're a work in progress. But really our best games this year have been when we've had over 16 assists and we've really taken care of the ball and made good decisions with the ball.

I think it's something that we emphasize every single day in practice. Some days we're not so fortunate, it doesn't show up in the game, but we work on it every day. I thought we just did a tremendous job of making extra passes, of finding our teammates, and of taking care of the ball.

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