

# Big Ten Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Thursday, March 6, 2025

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Gainbridge Fieldhouse

**Michigan Wolverines**

**Kim Barnes Arico**

**Olivia Olson**

**Syla Swords**

Postgame Press Conference



**SYLA SWORDS:** Even watching yesterday, they're a 3-point shooting team, 24-0, they're known for their three-point shot, some of the best shooters in the league right now. So we knew, if we locked into that 3-point line, it was going to be a little easier for us to be successful.

**OLIVIA OLSON:** We knew we had to scramble on their actions. We worked on their actions a lot, so just working on communication and getting over those screens.

Michigan - 66, Washington - 58

**THE MODERATOR:** Welcome Michigan to the press conference. Here with us is head coach Kim Barnes Arico, Olivia Olson, and Syla Swords.

At this time we'll ask Coach to make an opening statement.

**KIM BARNES ARICO:** That was a great basketball game. Washington is a team that has been kind of on fire lately. I think they won five in a row coming into this game. They shoot the ball exceptionally well. They play a chin offense, which makes you have to move and never relax on the defensive end.

So for our kids to come out and be successful and lock in and defend and hold them to 58 points, I thought we did an amazing, outstanding job.

Obviously we have Olivia Olson and Syla Swords here, two of the best freshmen in the country, really stepped up on this big stage in their first Big Ten Tournament, and they were both outstanding.

Obviously Liv was bucket after bucket when we needed them, and Syla was locking up on the defensive end on every possession and then scored some big buckets when we needed them as well. A great balanced attack by us, but these two are really special.

**Q. How much was taking away the three-point shot an emphasis tonight, and what do you think made you guys so effective in doing that?**

**KIM BARNES ARICO:** That was a big point of emphasis for us. Oh, they're first? I'm sorry.

**Q. You guys were a lot better offensively in that second half. What do you think changed for you guys? Was it something Kim told you at halftime, or did you feel you guys were just executing your stuff better?**

**OLIVIA OLSON:** I think we just try and let the game come to us and do whatever the team needs to win, so just taking the right shots, getting people open, playing defense. Just kind of letting the game come to us, I think, and doing whatever the team needs.

**SYLA SWORDS:** Coach kept saying the shots are going to come. We're getting good looks. They're going to drop. I know Liv and I try to find each other's eyes. Then if we're having a tough shooting night, instilling confidence in each other. That's something we've grown with a lot, even with having a young group, is having confidence even though we're not hitting great shots right off that bat and staying true to for a 40-minute game.

**Q. Olivia, you had 21 points tonight, 15 of which being in the second half. How are you feeling, and what do you think allowed you to catch fire in the second half of the game?**

**OLIVIA OLSON:** I think just seeing a couple go in helped, but it's a credit to my teammates, and playing with Syla, it's easy to be able to get people open, get shots. Anyone can go off on any given night. Yeah, it was just a whole team effort.

**Q. For both of you, this is your first Big Ten Tournament as freshmen with a young group. What**



**has the past few days been like for you guys coming into this environment?**

SYLA SWORDS: The practices have been very scout heavy but also focusing on locking in on what we struggled with throughout the year. Lots of film session, especially now that we're in the hotel with nowhere to go, so lots of hours of film. And just locking on what we are as a team and what Michigan basketball is.

**Q. It took you guys a little while to get going in the second quarter. What eventually broke you out of that and then helped the offense just function on high level the rest of the game?**

OLIVIA OLSON: I think our defensive intensity and having Brooke come in and be that spark. We say it every game, but she is a game changer for us. She helps us lift energy. So that translates to the offensive end.

SYLA SWORDS: Yulia also played really great minutes for us, plus 12 in, what, less than ten minutes of play. That's really huge for us. She's a big presence. The more she can be active off the ball, the more she can be active defensively, it really helps us.

**Q. After you guys were a little bit slow offensively in that first half, what did you tell your team at halftime to give them a spark in the second?**

KIM BARNES ARICO: I think the first time we played them as well, when we were able to get out in transition, when we were able to change the pace of the game, that opened things up for us a lot. We talked a lot about pace, advancing the ball, trying to get paint touches, and filling behind.

We missed a bunch of shots early. That second quarter felt like we didn't score for six minutes, because we didn't score for six minutes. But we finished that quarter strong, and I just thought we really pushed pace off of their misses in the third quarter, which caused us to get some easier buckets.

**Q. Coach, as your players talked about, Brooke coming off the bench, four of your players playing 34, 35 minutes apiece. Brooke, the spark she gave your team today?**

KIM BARNES ARICO: She's been unbelievable for us all season long. She's just an energy giver. She changes the defense. She changes the momentum. She just gives us fire.

She affects the game on the defensive, the toughness, the

rebounding.

That's what we pride our program on. So when she comes in the game, it's just an immediate lift, and she's been sensational. Tonight was another example of that.

**Q. On taking away the 3-point shooting, in the first half, you didn't just limit their makes, you really limited their looks. They only had six. What do you think was working so well, and how active were you guys, how much of that was an emphasis?**

KIM BARNES ARICO: I think what was really important in this game is they didn't force us into scrambles. What they try to do is they try to get you to help, and that's why 14 had such a big night. They force you to help on her, and they kick it out for extra pass, extra pass and unfortunately the scrambles.

We worked really hard on one-one-one defense to not be forced on scrambles and to let their post player play one-on-one so we took away the three.

It was a gamble, but that's what drives them. That's what gets them going offensively. So we really stuck to that game plan.

**Q. You mentioned Brooke just being a spark today, like she has all season. When you put her in the game in that second quarter, was there a specific player you were hoping she would shut down? What was kind of inside the spark?**

KIM BARNES ARICO: The first time we played, Sylva did a tremendous job on Ladine, and Sylva did a great job on her this time. The first time we played them Sellers had 27 or 30. So we were really concerned about her. Mila is another freshman that has that role and also the role of handling the pressure and being our point guard and all the other things that are on her plate.

I think sometimes, when we bring Brooke in and we can move Mila off that defensive assignment, it gives Mila a little bit of a rest and a little bit of a break and not have to defend the other team's best player as well as handle pressure and be our point guard.

So Brooke had that assignment on Sellers, and she was awesome.

**Q. What was it like, the change this year, playing in a league with so many elite teams, but yet also teams that were fighting just to be able to get in this tournament, so you knew that you were going to get somebody's best effort regardless of where they were**



**in the standings because they wanted so badly maybe to be able to get here?**

KIM BARNES ARICO: And to get to the NCAA Tournament. That's a great question, and I'm glad you asked about the league.

Prior to this year, I thought we were arguably the best league in the country. I know all the time with the media we hear about the SEC and the ACC and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. But we have some incredible, incredible teams in our league and incredible players in our league and incredible coaches.

Then you add the new teams, and obviously the level just took another step up. The middle of our pack this season was insane. So everyone that's here in the middle of the pack is fighting. They're fighting for an NCAA Tournament bid. They're fighting for what seed they're going to be because we kind of beat the heck out of each other all season long.

I think for us we did a tremendous job, our players did a tremendous job of winning a lot of those games in the middle of the pack and put ourselves in a great position to be where we are today. But there have been projections of possibly 13 teams in our league going to the NCAA Tournament. That's absolutely incredible.

So every given night, every single night, you are going to face a great team, and it's going to be a battle, and we've seen that all season long.

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