

Big Ten Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Saturday, March 8, 2025

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Gainbridge Fieldhouse

Michigan Wolverines

Kim Barnes Arico

Syla Swords

Jordan Hobbs

Postgame Press Conference



SYLA SWORDS: It's the same as any game. No one thinks we're supposed to be here. No one thinks we should have won the last game. We've shown that we can play with any team in the country for 30 minutes of the game.

But the game isn't a 30-minute game, it's a 40-minute game, and that's where we have to step up.

Yeah, I had a good game today, but not good enough. We all have areas that we need to improve on to really get that next step and start winning these top ranked games.

JORDAN HOBBS: I think having Syla gives us a lot of confidence. She's just someone who's super steady on the court and a very mature player for being a freshman especially. It was nice going into that game knowing that they hadn't faced her before and knowing that they didn't know what she could really bring to the table from an on-the-court perspective.

Definitely gave us more confidence, and she showed up today.

Q. It seems like later in the game USC mainly ran the offense to their post and sort of went away from JuJu. Is that something you guys took note of defensively, and how did you attempt to approach that?

JORDAN HOBBS: We definitely took note of it. I mean, Kiki was going off in the second, and she had 8 in the first, I think, first half, and they just kept going back to her. We were talking about it in our huddles. She was also making some good passes out, and they hit some clutch 3s as well.

Should have done a better job pushing her out early and potentially showing help earlier too.

Q. Obviously not the final result you guys wanted, but you guys were neck and neck with one of the top teams in the country for over 30 minutes. What are some positive takeaways from today's game?

SYLA SWORDS: It gives us a lot of confidence heading

USC - 82, Michigan - 70

THE MODERATOR: Here joining us from the University of Michigan is head coach Kim Barnes Arico, Syla Swords, and Jordan Hobbs.

Coach, if you'd go ahead and make an opening statement.

KIM BARNES ARICO: USC is a great team. Obviously they are led by a Player of the Year candidate as well as another All-American. I thought it was a great basketball game until maybe five minutes to go in the game. It was back and forth.

I thought our team was exceptional and really defended great. Then the game just kind of got away down the stretch.

Q. This is for either Jordan or Syla. What do you guys think changed down the stretch in the fourth quarter that allowed USC to go on their run?

SYLA SWORDS: They scored 50 points in the second half, and we scored a lot of points off of transition in the first. It was a lot easier for us to get into our offense. So that and the foul calls, it messes up the rhythm of the game. It's harder for us to get into a flow and what we want to get into.

So that was a really big difference maker for sure.

Q. Syla, you didn't get to play last time against USC. What was the motivation coming into the game? Jordan, how did having Syla on the floor today change it?



into the tournament. March is when it really matters. Like I said, we can play with anybody. It's the growth that we have to show and the maturity we have to show in putting four quarters together of offense and defense, not losing our minds off of turnovers or when they go on their runs.

But it gives us confidence. No one expected us to be here, and we're here. So we're going to surprise a lot more people next tournament.

Q. Jordan had a great tournament. I feel like her impact isn't talked about as much as Sylva and Olivia this season. Sylva, can you talk about the impact Jordan has had game in and game out of this tournament and kind of all season long?

SYLA SWORDS: Aside from the stuff that shows up in the box score, she's been asked to guard the top five in the country, the top bigs in the country, asked to rebound and asked to play the point guard on top of that.

Aside from all that, the stuff that didn't show up is her leadership and her passion from the game. She demands so much from us as freshmen and from everyone on the court, even Coach sometimes. She really just wants Michigan to win and is a true Michigan women's basketball player.

I think that's something that's been great for us, the five freshmen, to come in and see the culture that she's established, the culture she's learned from people coming ahead of her. So Jordan is just a great leader for our team.

Q. Coach Gottlieb really sang her praises for what you guys did today and for what you've done for your group as a whole this season. What impresses you the most about the progression of this group from day one in that close game from South Carolina until now?

KIM BARNES ARICO: I think coming into the year a lot of people counted us out. We didn't return a ton of players. Our freshmen were unknown.

So I think their growth -- we started three freshmen all season long, probably one of the youngest teams in the country, with our returner Jordan Hobbs the only player that played over 10 minutes a game last year.

So to be on this stage and in this game and to do what we did in this tournament and to be five minutes away from beating a top team in the country, I think, is impressive.

Coach Frese told me yesterday she hasn't played against a team that plays this hard all season. So I think there's a lot of really, really positive things. Sylva spoke about Jordan a

little bit and just we always say at Michigan those who stay will be champions.

Jordan didn't play as a freshman, as a sophomore, and maybe a little bit as a junior, and here she is leading us on this big stage and stayed through a time in college athletics when the landscape has changed so drastically and really has taken some of these young kids under her wing. I can't speak enough about Jordan and Greta.

We've kind of we've gone small this year. We played South Carolina. We played Oklahoma. We want to go down the line of strength of schedule and who we played -- UCLA -- and we're matching Greta Kampschroeder and Jordan Hobbs up with the best 5s in the country, and they're holding their own.

I don't want to say a lot of people didn't give us a lot of credit or don't really have us as a top team, and I bet, if you asked anybody in the Big Ten if they'd want to play Michigan, they would say heck no.

And the greatest thing about us is that tomorrow these kids won't even want a day off. They'll be like, Coach, when are we getting back in the gym? They want to get better for the NCAA Tournament. So when you have a group that's that driven and that passionate about it, it makes it pretty special.

Q. What do you think changed for you guys in that fourth quarter that allowed them to go on their run?

KIM BARNES ARICO: Can I ask you what do you think changed? Because I'm not allowed to say too many things.

(Laughter).

I got you red, though. This is the first time all year. You don't know what to say to that.

Q. Having Sylva on the court this time against USC, how did she change the game? What new look did she give your offense and your defense as a whole?

KIM BARNES ARICO: She's arguably one of the best players, and we're talking about freshmen, but I have two freshmen on our team that are arguably two of the best players in the country. I think, when you watch them play -- and whether that's WNBA coaches that are watching this tournament that are sitting courtside that are reaching out to me and saying, oh, my goodness, they're even better in person than I've seen on film.

When you have two players like that, that are the hardest



workers, that are driven, that are passionate, you have something special. Sylva, you hear her up here. She's like a coach like sitting with 30 years experience sitting up here like talking to you guys.

She's played at the highest level. She's an Olympian. She's matched up with grown women. She knows what it takes to be successful.

I thought tonight the number one thing about both her and Liv is they're winners. Sylva's high school team went to the National Championship. Olivia's high school team won numerous state championships in basketball and soccer. They know how to win at the highest level. That is a great skill, and that is what they both have, and it's a difference maker for us.

When she went into the game today, I was like this is your time to shine. This is what you do. This is the moment that you've prepared your whole life for. They just went out there and battled. They all did. She's just built different.

Q. What was the message to the team after the game? And where is their head at heading into the NCAA Tournament?

KIM BARNES ARICO: I think obviously in the moments after the game we're super disappointed because we felt like we were so close. Their mood, I'm going to give them tonight. They're going to need to spend some time with their families. They're going to need to regroup, and they're going to want to get back.

You heard them here. There are things -- and to get back to your original question, I think their defense bothered us a little bit. We never really got into the flow. We were kind of taken out of what we've been able to do.

I know we talk a lot about Sylva and Liv, but Mila is a pretty darn good point guard, and they really were up on her, pestering her. That was their game plan. They don't play like that against everybody. They had to play like that against us. They couldn't let us get into rhythm like we did yesterday.

So I think that's why Samuels came in, and she doesn't play that many minutes. She was super, super, super disruptive.

I also think there were a lot of things that took the wind out of our sails. The backcourt violation when we banged the 3. Just feeling like we were going super aggressive and maybe not having a foul.

Or Sylva -- Sylva and 50-50 balls, I mean, we played South

Carolina. She never gets called for a foul on that. It's a 50-50 tie-up. She's done that all season long. When that happens again and again and again, I think they're getting deflated.

Then we weren't scoring as quickly as we were able to score in the pass, and that's deflating.

But what I said to Mila at the end of the game, she's a young kid. She's never been in this environment before. The greatest teacher is experience, and she has to go through it to learn from it. So it sucks and they're disappointed, but we'll be back tomorrow.

Q. You mentioned Mila, the past few games just her passing has been on another level. The assist numbers game in and game out and her vision has been great for this team. Can you speak to what she's elevated in the last two games?

KIM BARNES ARICO: Yesterday she was super frustrated because she got in foul trouble. She had eight assists and she was in foul trouble the whole game. She played 20 minutes and had eight assists. She was probably on pace to set a record.

She's figuring it out. This is a big stage. She's our point guard and has been our point guard all season long against this schedule that we played on a big, big stage, and there's a lot on her shoulders, and she's doing a heck of a job. She's getting better every day. Her assist-to-turnovers the last four games have been ridiculous. The numbers are really, really high.

Now today wasn't as great, but she faced another level of defense. USC is really great because of the offensive production of JuJu and Kiki, but really, they're really good on the defensive end. Tonight we saw that.

Q. You've talked a lot about the intangibles that Jordan brings, but her production on the offensive end and just her defense have also seemed to take off recently. Just what have you seen from her producing recently?

KIM BARNES ARICO: She's a great basketball player. She's a really great basketball player. She pours every single thing that she has into helping Michigan be successful. She loves Michigan. She loves this university. She wants us to win, and she does -- she works extremely hard at it.

But she knows that the clock is ticking, and that's why some of these seniors, I'm just like it's not over. Take a deep breath. But they know that it's coming to an end, and

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

she's just pouring everything she has into it. She's doing a great job for us.

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