

# NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - Marquette vs Ole Miss

Saturday, March 23, 2024

South Bend, Indiana, USA

Purcell Pavilion

**Ole Miss Rebels**

**Coach Yolett**

**McPhee-McCuin**

**Madison Scott**

**Kennedy Todd-Williams**

Media Conference

Ole Miss - 67, Marquette - 55

THE MODERATOR: Coach, go right ahead.

YOLETT MCPHEE-MCCUIN: First of all, I have a tremendous amount of respect for Megan and Marquette. Every time we have to prepare for a game, one of the things I look for is who's the leader of the program we're getting ready to play, then scheme.

And Megan is elite. Just an elite human being. And I know she's a grad of Notre Dame, and she's a fierce competitor.

So for us to be able to get this win today in this fashion, I'm incredibly grateful. And our team, we have been off for two weeks. We needed a game like this so that we can be ready to try to win another one on Monday.

THE MODERATOR: We'll turn it over to questions for the student-athletes.

**Q. Coach, you preach that dictate and disrupt defense, disrupt Marquette's offensive flow.**

YOLETT MCPHEE-MCCUIN: We didn't think we did it early. We were pretty heated at halftime. We gave up 16 and 17 points, and it was almost like my team was let's just feel this out for first, and instead of just being who we are and being solid.

Like no one beats us in transition. We couldn't even match up in transition. But coming out in the second half, we just



made the decision to get back to who we are. And going into the fourth quarter, I said, y'all, we hadn't had a quarter when we kept them 12 or less yet. And as you can see, we held them to nine points. We just shifted into that next gear of being exactly who we are, and we started having a lot of fun out there because of it.

**Q. Madison, 20 points. Was it just a confidence thing? What led to your high-scoring night?**

MADISON SCOTT: Just doing whatever my team needs me to do, scoring, rebounding, just leading. Anything for us to be successful, I'm going to do that.

**Q. Kind of what you just talked about there, 26 and 4, just doing a little bit of everything. Why are you able to do that so seamlessly? Playing the point a little bit again, I mean, what about your game enables you to just kind of be that person who does everything for your team?**

MADISON SCOTT: As far as my game is concerned, I work really hard. I think it's just my teammates and my coaches, coaches and their game plan, my teammates trusting me and passing the ball to me and vice versa.

We trust each other out there. All of us have a role that we talked about, and tonight it was just an example of us doing our roles. We know that we needed everybody to win, so everybody put things in the bag. Everything just helped. Everybody helped get this W tonight. So I'm extremely proud of my teammates.

YOLETT MCPHEE-MCCUIN: And I think, too, Maddie has been playing, starting for me since she was a pup. Okay? There are no more bright lights for her. And my whole starting five has been in the Sweet 16. Even Kennedy has played in the Sweet 16.

So we're ready for -- they are ready for these moments.

**Q. For you, Kennedy, what's changed since like maybe mid January? I mean, it just seems like totally different, the production that you've been able to provide.**



KENNEDY TODD-WILLIAMS: Just a commitment to myself and commitment to the team and to my coaches that I'm going to be the best version for my team and just doing whatever it takes to win. It's just been a huge help for the team.

So I'm just trying to do whatever it takes.

**Q. Maddie, it seems like you put the team on your back tonight. Do you say anything to your teammates about intensifying, and if so, can you let us know about that?**

MADISON SCOTT: I mean, I just say if we lose, we go home. We're not ready to go home. Team 49 is not done. There's still more for us to write in our story.

That's what I said. And we've got a little juiced up after that. After that, that kind of gave us what we needed to keep going.

Even Toddy was saying some things throughout the game. She was telling us to wake up. So it was time for us to wake up. It wasn't just me. Everybody was using their voice and saying what needed to be said so that we can get the dub.

**Q. Maddie, to see that Tyia was able to do and Kharyssa in double figures, players that aren't always there, what does it say about them that they're able to do that in this kind of moment?**

MADISON SCOTT: Well, Team 49 has depth. Strength in numbers. I just think that we've always preached it takes everybody, 1 through 15. 1 through 15 is capable of coming and impacting the game.

So we've been really trying to be intentional about being ready when our number is called. That's what Tyia did tonight. That's what Kharyssa did tonight. That's what everybody on that bench is capable of doing.

We're here for a reason. Team 49 is here. And everybody is ready to do whatever it takes to win. So I'm extremely proud of them, and let's keep it going.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you. You may join your teammates. We'll open it up to questions for Coach.

**Q. It's 55-50. You guys go on that 12-2 run. Can you talk about what triggered that?**

YOLETT MCPHEE-MCCUIN: Initially we just seemed exhausted. But we weren't tired. It's like anxiety.

Everyone, when you're sitting around for two weeks and waiting to play a game, you just get exhausted just thinking about it.

Like I was going stir crazy this morning just waiting for a game. And would've played at 8 a.m. if we could have because we were just champing at the bit.

And I think the team just really started to settle in. And once we got the lead, they started communicating a lot in the huddles. Usually when that happens, they're getting ready to take control of what's going on.

And Maddie's leadership was just off the charts. She was very vocal in the timeouts, and so was a couple other people.

**Q. Coach, what led you to start Tyia today? I know she hasn't started for a little while.**

YOLETT MCPHEE-MCCUIN: Well, in the art of war, element of surprise always gets people. Slim has started. Slim was in the Sweet 16 with us. When Snudda missed two games, Z didn't start every time. Sometimes I started Slim. Slim started the conference, Tyia, started the conference with us when we held Alabama to 48 points.

She's a vet. So in these moments, you've got to go with vets, unless you have elite-level freshmen. And so I decided to go with my veterans, and that's what sparked it.

**Q. And then kind of similarly, we talked about what she was able to do, what Kharyssa was able to do. You've talked a lot about wanting a starting 10. Maybe not quite there, but what do you feel like that it says about your program that you're able to get that level of contributions from role players?**

YOLETT MCPHEE-MCCUIN: Well, one of the things that makes Maddie special is her belief in her teammates. So like she believes they can make those shots. And especially Tyia. Now, Rich is an offensive -- you saw what she did to Tennessee. Rich is a baller on the offensive end.

What we're trying to get Kharyssa to do is defend at a high level so that she can -- so we can stay true to our identity.

But Maddie believes in everybody. And she really is like LeBron where like she'd rather make the right play. And so we -- she has found this happy medium where she gets to her kill spots. She will look to score. But if two or three come after her, she's going to give it to them. And in practice, she is on them.

And so we saw the reads where they were really focused on our perimeter players. And so it really opened up for us to hit the goal. And Slim with the steal and the fast break, we'll laugh about that tonight. And then anything Kharyssa does offensively, we expect. That's why we brought her in.

**Q. Belief seems to be at the center of everything you do and so many of your players, Marquesha, Maddie. Can you teach belief to players, and if so, how do you teach that belief, whether it's self-belief or their belief in others, or is it just natural?**

YOLETT MCPHEE-MCCUIN: I don't think it's natural. I think human nature, we all struggle with believing at some point. I think what drives our team is our motto is to teach, develop, and inspire.

One of the things I'm not afraid to do, and I think it's because I'm a mom, is have vulnerability. When we have times together, we talk about what hurts. We talk about what we need from each other.

Oh, I got into Maddie's butt at halftime. And then on the way out, I stopped, I looked at her, I said, We're good? She said, We're good, Coach.

So we love each other. And we don't try to be perfect. And I think that starts with the head. I know when I make mistakes, I tell them when I'm wrong. And if I can do it, then everybody else feels comfortable.

And I think that's where the belief comes from because we share what our fears are, and then we speak life into each other so that we can perform and its highest level.

**Q. After Marquette closed to five late, two consecutive steals, and then you force them into three really tough shots. Can you talk about the presence of your defense late.**

YOLETT MCPHEE-MCCUIN: That is dictate and disrupt. That is what it should look like. That is where we're most comfortable, when we hunker down and we get an incredible competitive swagger about ourselves and we decide you're not scoring. When we're like that, we're pretty tough to beat.

And we have done that to a lot of teams. And so when I saw her stop allowing post entry, elbow passes, when I saw her jumping to the moon and contesting shots, I was like finally, okay. I mean, this is why I have gray hairs. But they showed up. They showed up. And they looked like Team 49. Once I saw them do that, I didn't have to do much after that. I just let them play.

**Q. Any initial thoughts on Notre Dame and what it's going to take to beat them?**

YOLETT MCPHEE-MCCUIN: Notre Dame is legit. They're a bunch of ballers. The head of the stake, Hidalgo, is a dawg. And I mean that respectfully.

They know how to win. They're going to have a great crowd. I walked out because I wanted to see what the crowd was like.

I want to say this too. Notre Dame has the nicest people. And I'm not saying that because we won. I was here when I was at Pitt, and they have the nicest people. And so they greet you -- now, they try to beat you. So they're going to love on us, but when the ball goes up, it's go time.

I know they're small in numbers, but I don't know that that matters because if the right people play, they've been doing it all year. So it's not like they're not used to it. We expect a fight to get to the Sweet 16. We expect them to bring their A game, and I expect Team 49 to bring their A game. We are really excited about the opportunity.

**Q. I think you mentioned it earlier, but it was really fast paced early in that first quarter, you took 20 shots, they took 16. How important was it to get the game back on your terms?**

YOLETT MCPHEE-MCCUIN: It was really important. But I'm an analytical person. So Marquette does not score a lot of points. We were dictating the pace early on. But they were fresh early on. As you can see, they had absolutely no legs in the third and fourth quarter.

So while it looked like they were controlling the pace, we wanted it to be that pace because we felt like we could go just a little bit deeper than they could.

And as you can see, in the fourth, we were able to get steals. They started shooting air balls. They started having mental lapses. And that's because of the pace we made them play for 40 minutes.

See, we can play a fast pace. And so if it seems like they have an advantage early, that's not how we're looking at it because we're a four-quarter team. And I know nobody thought Que with a four-point, two-rebound night, we should have scored 67 points. Nobody had that on their bingo card. That shows you the depth of Ole Miss women's basketball. Team 49.

**Q. You talk about Madison's leadership and you talk about a team that has been in the Sweet 16, that starting lineup. How have you seen that experience**

**translate to confidence and leadership on the floor?**

YOLETT MCPHEE-MCCUIN: I mean, like I said, I could have started Zakiya today, but I felt more comfortable going with my veterans. And because we've had so many changes, we've had to have a bunch of different lineups.

So while it seemed like a new lineup, I got about five different lineups in my back pocket that I can go to. This was just one of them today.

And they've been playing -- and I thought it would be unfair for Zakiya to start in this type of environment. Let me let her see what's going on, watch it, take it all in. That's the beauty of growth.

But Maddie has been playing from a freshman, and to Kharyssa, to get her the playing time we got her, and can we talk about Ayanna, plus 13? I know she didn't score a lot of points, but Ayanna took us to the Sweet 16 versus Stanford last year.

This is postseason Ayanna. She shows up in postseason. She knows what to do. She had some huge defensive stops. She's comfortable in these environments. And she played a lot as a freshman as well. So we're leaning on our experience for sure.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you very much, Coach.

YOLETT MCPHEE-MCCUIN: Thank you.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports