

# NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - Iowa State vs Michigan

Thursday, March 20, 2025

South Bend, Indiana, USA

Purcell Pavilion

## Iowa State Cyclones

## Bill Fennelly

## Emily Ryan

## Arianna Jackson

### Media Conference

THE MODERATOR: Welcome to Iowa State's press conference.

We can open up the floor to questions for the student-athletes.

**Q. Emily, you doing okay after Arianna took you out?**

EMILY RYAN: Yeah (smiling). Butt's a little sore, but other than that feeling good, yeah.

ARIANNA JACKSON: Yeah, we were just talking about it. We said it's the first thing they're going to bring up in media if we go. She got a kick out of that.

**Q. Were you able to peek ahead to Michigan at all in your prep?**

EMILY RYAN: Yeah, no, we were completely focused on Princeton. It's very much a one-game-at-a-time mentality for us. We were 100% focused on that and preparing for that game.

As soon as that game is over, you turn all focus to Michigan. That's kind of what we're doing. We're all in on Michigan and figuring out the best strategy and best preparation we can get. Figuring out from there.

**Q. Does this seem like possibly a good matchup for you with Audi in the post?**

ARIANNA JACKSON: I mean, yeah. They start five guards, so obviously we have to change a few things defensively. I would also say that goes both ways. They



have to plan regarding Audi. When we get the ball to Audi, that's a good matchup for us.

I would say it goes both ways on which end. So we like our matchup so far, yeah.

**Q. Anything else that kind of stands out on film about them?**

EMILY RYAN: Other than they're a really talented team, lots of scoring weapons all around. Defensively they're really solid and aggressive, as well. Really good team. That's what you are expecting when you come to the NCAA tournament and you're in March.

We're just excited for another opportunity to wear the jersey and represent Iowa State and try to get another win.

**Q. Emily, when you were out of the game yesterday, the offense stagnated a bit. What do you have to do? Did you find anything in that game yesterday that will help you on Friday?**

ARIANNA JACKSON: I mean, I would just say we have to keep moving the ball. I think that second quarter slowed down a little bit, then that second half we kind of found a lot of success with transition and pushing the ball.

Just staying and going back to what we know, our type of offense I think is going to be key. Especially how fast Michigan plays, like going back to what we worked on in the beginning of the season, I think is going to help us be successful in this game.

**Q. Emily?**

EMILY RYAN: Yeah, I think it's just a matter of staying true to our principles and just continuing to keep going at it. If a bad play happens, we just got to move forward and make the next right play, take it one play at a time, hoping in the end it works out.

**Q. Michigan also starts three underclassmen. How does your younger players' experience benefit you to an advantage?**



ARIANNA JACKSON: I mean, for the sophomore class, this is our second March Madness and NCAA tournament. I think having that year of experience under our belt definitely helps. Those freshmen have never played in an NCAA game, so... We've already played one yesterday.

Having that type of experience and knowing that coming in I think just gives us a little bit more of an edge.

**Q. Michigan is a fast-paced team. How are you going to try and control the tempo and avoid getting sped up?**

ARIANNA JACKSON: Again, I think just going back to what we know. Don't let them speed you up, just play our type of game. Finding the matchups that we want. I think that's going to help us be successful.

**Q. Emily, we didn't get a chance to ask you last night, but the all-time assist record for the Big 12, what does that mean to you?**

EMILY RYAN: Honestly, the reason I'm most proud of it is it means that I was able to be successful in the past few years, have good teammates, being in a good program that allows me to have those opportunities.

Individual stats like that, especially assists, that's not even an individual stat, that's definitely a team stat. It's a credit to my teammates and the coaching staff for putting me into position to be successful.

That's honestly the most important thing to me.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you for joining us Emily and Arianna.

EMILY RYAN: Thank you.

ARIANNA JACKSON: Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: Iowa State head coach Bill Fennelly.

Do you want to take things over to start?

BILL FENNELLY: Just really excited to still be here. Tremendous challenge tomorrow. I think our team's really excited. Very proud of how we played last night.

Having remembered my days at Notre Dame, I hope all the Notre Dame fans are rooting for us and not Michigan, so... We'll go with that tomorrow (smiling).

THE MODERATOR: We'll open it up to questions.

**Q. Can you take me through what the prep schedule looked like. You said when it came to the NCAA tournament, you mapped out several different opponents. When you already know who you're playing, do you prep already or have somebody prep?**

BILL FENNELLY: Yeah, we had two of our staff that were working on Michigan. That was the one thing. If you're lucky enough to win, you knew who you were going to play. It wasn't the winner of a certain game. We did have some information.

Like I told the team after the game, we get so consumed about what's next all the time. I told them to don't even think about it, enjoy what you just did. The staff will worry about it.

We didn't even mention Michigan till this morning to the team. We worked obviously late last night getting ready to go. Back at it this morning. Had a quick video session, then practiced today.

**Q. Can you say which two had the prep? What does that look like?**

BILL FENNELLY: Yeah, I mean, Coach Schaben and coach Hatfield and Coach Rob, those three kind of run it. Coach Steyer did a little bit of it.

It's mainly just a normal scouting report. You're trying to get ahead of it, trying to work on whatever's coming. The biggest thing is when we met last night, you have an initial... I get inspect front of a dry erase board and I say, Start talking. I start writing. Whatever comes out of your mouth, whatever you think, say. We as a staff start figuring it out. You try to find like opponents, if you can. You get as much information.

Our staff does a really good job of that. They kind of run it on their own. I don't really have to tell 'em a whole lot. They have a pretty good system to get stuff together.

**Q. What were some of the early things they discovered?**

BILL FENNELLY: I would say they play as hard as any team we've seen. They play considerably faster than what we saw last night. And the uniqueness. They play five guards a lot, which we have not seen. Usually you get to this point in the year, you've seen everything. We have not seen that style yet. That will be interesting for us. That was probably the initial part of it.

Olivia Olson, one of their freshmen, is a great player. We



recruited her out of high school. We kind of knew her game a little bit.

When you put on the video and you watch 'em beat Maryland really bad, you watch them play USC to the wire, they're very, very good in a lot of areas.

They're very skilled at a lot of different areas. That was probably the thing jumped off the page to us. It wasn't one kid doing one thing. There was a lot of very skilled players who play very hard.

**Q. Do you ever feel like you had a chance at landing her?**

BILL FENNELLY: I don't know. You always think you have a chance. Probably not a very good chance, but...

We tried. She's a great kid, great player, great family from Minnesota. She obviously made a great choice and has really impacted Michigan's program in a positive way.

**Q. Last year you said the Maryland matchup, it's a great opportunity for Audi. Obviously different opponent. Do you have that same sense?**

BILL FENNELLY: Yeah, I mean, I think she's got a chance. Obviously the difference is how are we going to guard them and how are they going to guard us kind of thing.

I think Audi has done such a good job all year of finding her niche, finding her spots. Our team has done a much better job, like we saw in the second half, of getting her the ball in the right spots.

I think she's gotten to a part in her career, hard to believe to say that as a sophomore, but I don't know that there's a matchup that's really terrible for her compared to one that's great for her either. I think she's seen a little bit of everything.

It will be different tomorrow. We're going to have to do a good job of making sure the angles and the timing of when we throw the ball to her is what it needs to allow her to be successful.

**Q. There's an advantage for Audi on the offensive end against Michigan's five-guard lineup. What adjustments do you have to make defensively to counter their speed, athleticism and three-point shooting?**

BILL FENNELLY: Yeah, thanks for reminding me. Speed, athleticism, three-point shooting (laughter). Anything else

you can share with me on that one?

No, it's going to be hard. It really is. That's one of the things we talked about with our staff and our team. Normally you're going to guard this one, you're going to guard this one, you're going to guard this one. You just don't have that.

We have to keep the ball in front of us. Transition defense is going to be critical. Last night the pace of the game was really slow. That will not be the case tomorrow.

Obviously for us, it's can we keep them out of the lane off the dribble. The other thing that they do that we haven't seen a lot is they'll rebound with all five guys. I mean, they'll send five. Their guards will go hard. That's a challenge for us, as well.

I think some of the video we watched, if they play as hard in person as they do on video, it's going to be a struggle 'cause they really get after you. I think that's the biggest thing for us.

**Q. You coached with Muffet McGraw. Niele coached and played. What are the takeaways from your experience with Coach McGraw? What do future coaches gain in terms of skills or insights?**

BILL FENNELLY: Yeah, I worked for Muffet one year, her first year here. I would say a couple things. Number one, she's extremely organized. Offensively very, very good at developing an offensive game plan. I think Niele would tell you, too, probably her main strength was she was phenomenal at developing point guards. I thought that was her thing.

The other thing, even though I had the honor of working for her for a year, she was so good at allowing her staff to work and coach and be engaged. She taught me how to delegate. It took me about 25 years to learn it like she did (smiling). She was like, Do your job. She wasn't looking over your shoulder. It was like, This is what you're supposed to do, go do it. I think she trusted her staff.

Like I said, the point guard thing was big. She always used to talk about Philly point guards all the time. That was her big deal.

I got a very nice text from her last night. She's not in South Bend. She's actually on TV somewhere. She wasn't here. But she was a big part of my life. There's no way I would have been a head coach had I not worked for her.

**Q. When you worked at Notre Dame, I'm assuming you lived here in town. Last night you mentioned...**

BILL FENNELLY: (Address given). Down the hill (smiling).

My wife and my two sons went and took a picture in front of the house yesterday. My son Steven was born in South Bend.

**Q. Is it sentimental being back here?**

BILL FENNELLY: Yeah, sure.

**Q. Are there people still around?**

BILL FENNELLY: I don't know that there's a lot of people still around. My wife worked in the library. They went to the library yesterday.

I mean, I was only here two years. I'm Irish Catholic. I grew up a phenomenal Notre Dame fan, watching Sunday morning Notre Dame football. After an exchange of punts, we move on to further action in the third quarter (smiling).

Yeah, I love this place. My parents, God rest their souls, they were not real happy with my chosen profession. But as soon as I got to Notre Dame, my parents were really proud.

Seriously, when I got my job here, you got a parking space based on kind of when you were hired and whatever. The two years I was here, my parking spot was next to Lou Holtz. My parents thought that was the coolest thing ever. They'd take pictures of Coach Holtz' car. I'm like, Mom, he gets a new car every month. The joke was we made \$1,015,000. I made 15 and he made a million (smiling).

My parents spent a lot of money at the bookstore. It was great. It's cool to be here. If you love collegiate sports and you love the collegiate model, these are the places you want to come to. It's just that kind of place. It's fun that we could do it.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

BILL FENNELLY: Deb worked at the library here at Notre Dame.

**Q. You and Emily Ryan are probably two of the people that are hardest to get to talk about themselves and milestones. What was it like for you yesterday, you win 800 in the same game that Emily becomes the Big 12 all-time assist leader? How impactful was it to have those happen at the same time?**

BILL FENNELLY: I'd say very impactful. Like I said last night, our league is really good. When you are the best at

anything or the most at something, in our league that says a lot.

Obviously (tearing up). Everyone knows how I feel about Emily Ryan. She's done so much for me and our school. But just an amazing kid. They just don't make 'em like that anymore.

I've said this many times. If it wasn't for Emily Ryan, I wouldn't be coaching. I'd be doing something else. In this profession, you need someone like that in your building, in your room. She's given everything and then some to our school literally and figuratively.

It's great to see her play in five NCAA tournaments. It was great to see her play so well last night. For her to have that milestone is truly something special.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

BILL FENNELLY: Thank you. Sorry about that.

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