

# NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: Second Round - Michigan vs Notre Dame

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South Bend, Indiana, USA

Purcell Pavilion

## Notre Dame Fighting Irish Coach Niele Ivey

Media Conference

THE MODERATOR: Statement before we get to questions?

NIELE IVEY: Sure. Excited, again, very pleased with our win yesterday, excited to get this matchup tomorrow versus Michigan and ready to start the preparation practice very soon.

THE MODERATOR: Okay. Questions in the front?

**Q. Can we get the update on Olivia, her status for tomorrow?**

NIELE IVEY: Right. She is with our trainer and she's going to let me know as soon as I get down on the court but did a lot of treatment last night. Olivia says she feels pretty good.

**Q. How do people's roles change if Olivia isn't on the court for you? Where do you get those rebounds, that three-point shooting, that transition, the assist?**

NIELE IVEY: Everybody has to step up and do a little bit more. We had shorter numbers early in the season. I have had to manage this a little bit in the last three years so it just requires everybody to do a little bit more. Everybody is focused on making sure that whatever is necessary for this team to help us to accomplish our goals, they're going to step up and do it.

**Q. What does it say about your team, your depth that you can plan to attack the way you usually do without such a prolific player?**

NIELE IVEY: Yeah, I have very versatile guards. I have guards that have that experience and Soni had to run the point two years ago so it would be point guard by committee if we need it to be. Our forwards do a great job



of handling pressure, so, again, everybody is just -- it's going to require everybody to do a little bit more.

**Q. Michigan, the five-guard lineup at times, is that something that brings a smile to your face? Because you guys want to be -- do you love that guard action?**

NIELE IVEY: Yeah, I think we're prepared. We've had multiple matchups this season with four-guard lineups. Cal played five-guard lineups that we're very prepared for if that's the case, that Michigan decides to have that rotation in. We just have to adjust. I have been working with our forwards or we have been working with our forwards all season with depending on the perimeter and things like that, so we'll be prepared.

**Q. Hi, your starting lineup is composed of a lot of veteran experience where Michigan starts three freshman. Do you think your experience gives you at all an edge?**

NIELE IVEY: I think Michigan's guards, no matter if they're freshman or not, they're playing great basketball. They have freshman of the year in Olivia Olson so I'm always leaning on my vets for experience and I think this game is going to allow everyone to emerge, no matter what class you're in.

**Q. Yeah, and then Michigan typically starts that five-guard lineup but if they were to throe in their center, Yulia Grabovskaia, how does your guys' approach shift if at all?**

NIELE IVEY: Yeah, we're going to adjust to whatever we see, whatever time of matchups we see, so in lineups, and I have versatile posts that can also defend on the perimeter or do a great job of trying to defend on the block so we're just going to adjust to whatever Michigan throws at us.

**Q. Coach, you guys like to push the pace, get out and run as well Michigan does. Are you looking to stick to that pace, stick to your bread and butter tomorrow or may slow things down to try to throw Michigan out of rhythm?**



NIELE IVEY: Yeah, our identity is pushing pace, so we're not going to change anything for the game. I always feel like the game dictate was we do, but we definitely like to get out and run and we're going to continue doing that.

**Q. I know you mentioned Olson and Swords. Great years for the two of them. How are you guys preparing for those matchups?**

NIELE IVEY: Yeah, I'm excited, we have gone against a lot of dynamic guards this season, especially in the ACC. You have to do a great job of being there on the catch. They both are three-level scorers and playing with a ton of confidence so we have to do a great job with individual pride and try to take them out of what they want to do.

**Q. Swords in particular, very good scorer, but also active on the defensive end at the glass. How are you preparing for her not just as a scorer, but a rebounder and defender?**

NIELE IVEY: Yeah, I think she's a big piece of their success. She does it all. She's a utility player, like you mentioned. She's leading them in offensive rebounds, leading them in rebounding so she does a lot of things that don't show up on the stat sheets. She plays so hard. She's got a lot of experience, even just with international experience and, again, she's a seasoned player that does a lot for them, so we have to match her intensity. We have to make sure we keep a body on her and try to contain her as much as we can.

**Q. Michigan has struggled against dynamic forwards of mobile bigs, I think of Maddy Westbeld and Liatu King as people who can cause problems for Michigan. How crucial do you see their roles being in tomorrow's game?**

NIELE IVEY: Yeah, I think everybody's role is going to be big tomorrow. We're going to rely on everybody and it depends on what type of team we have multiple scoring weapons and each game somebody else emerges. Each game somebody else steps up for us. Those two are two forwards that I really rely on. I'm expecting them to come in and make an immediate impact in the game defensively or offensively and I just want them to play with confidence.

**Q. Is that five position something you have noticed in the scout as being a place you guys can take advantage of or not really?**

NIELE IVEY: I feel like I'm always trying to dominate in the paint. I think I have, again, versatile scorers who can face-up. Liza Karlen can face-up. She can shoot the three, but she also goes down low, and Kate Koval, she

does a great job with her presence, so I want to be able to utilize our post play at all times.

**Q. The way the season ended, even if those are lessons the players maybe didn't want to absorb as they're going through them. What were the big benefits of it? What's the positive you were able to find as a staff to spin it forward?**

NIELE IVEY: Yeah, just trying to lock onto things we need to focus on as far as our weaknesses. We got a chance to really -- it kind of put a mirror to the things we needed to fix and I think sometimes winning coiffers things up, so we got an opportunity to really work on our defense, work on our offensive spacing, things like that. Got back to work after ACC Conference Tournament and got back to those details. I always feel like there's always lessons in losses and so as hard as it was, I feel like we came out on the other side as far as getting better and focusing on being sharper.

**Q. And as that process is unfolding, as a head coach, did you feel something like that coming on?**

NIELE IVEY: Absolutely not. You never know. We had a really tough stretch at the end. We were on the road at Miami, at NC State, Florida State. So we had a lot of tough games towards the end and I knew the end of the regular season was going to be very challenging. Mentally I was preparing for that but also, every game you get everybody's best game and that was something that we did receive but also I just don't feel like -- we didn't play to our standard the last couple of weeks and learned really tough lessons because of that.

**Q. I was interested in how you process that in the locker room immediately afterwards, take some time to get it, I don't know, process it, get us together, say what you have to say, how do you deal with that in the real-time moments postgames?**

NIELE IVEY: Yeah, I usually sit with our coaching staff and try to fine-tune things, have a lot of observations with the games, so we connect, talk about it. We take a little bit of time gathering my thoughts on things we need to discuss and then I bring that into the team, have our discussion, have our followup and then mostly have meetings with film and stuff afterwards. It takes time to process the areas that we need to discuss.

**Q. With a tournament like this when you have games very close to each other or especially the ACC Tournament, are there any traditions, superstitions, the girls were telling me about the nail polish. Is there anything you guys do as a coaching staff or a team to**

## **kind of come together?**

NIELE IVEY: We usually just have a really good routine is something we have established for a decade, really, since I have been an assistant coach and our trainer has been with us for two decades, so we kind of know that routine of what we need to do as far as recovery. We always have our set schedule and we try to follow with that, so that's really the only thing, besides the green nails, that's mostly just an NCAA Tournament tradition at Notre Dame. I'm really big on structure and routine and we try to make sure we follow through with that, to make sure we try to keep our team fresh and their schedule is set so they know exactly what to expect.

## **Q. Do you guys go together to get your nails done or do you just all know, this is the green color we're doing?**

NIELE IVEY: No, we do like a -- the team does something separate and I do something for my staff. Yes.

THE MODERATOR: Any other questions for Coach Ivey?

## **Q. What do you see in Natalie Achonwa that makes you think, wow, she's got it to be a head coach either at the college level or Team Canada?**

NIELE IVEY: Yeah, knowing Nat, she's very high IQ, very passionate, very detail-oriented and she's a great teacher, a great mentor and, again, she's in the beginning stages of her collegiate career, but even just as a leader, one of our captains, she was the most vocal on the court. She has that confidence. She's always had that as a player so I always felt like she was somebody that can really make an immediate impact in coaching and she has such great experience, international, Olympian, Notre Dame, WNBA. So she has all those experiences and, again, she has that passion and love for the game and I think she's going to be a great teacher. I'm excited for her because that's something she really wanted to do to get into after she retired and seeing her in the Olympics this summer and having the opportunity to work on the Michigan staff, I was really happy for her.

## **Q. More on Natalie, given the volume of games she's played in this building, her number hanging in the rafters, what do you think it's going to be like to see her on the other side tomorrow?**

NIELE IVEY: I saw her a little bit yesterday playing against Iowa state. It's just an adjustment for her coming back to your alma mater but I know it's probably bittersweet for her coming back here, having to compete against us, but she's the ultimate person and we all love her no matter what

jersey or uniform she has on, what school she represents, she will always be part of the Notre Dame family.

THE MODERATOR: Any other questions? Thank you, Coach Ivey.

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