

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

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South Bend, Indiana, USA

Purcell Pavilion

Michigan Wolverines Coach Kim Barnes Arico

Media Conference

THE MODERATOR: We'll get started with an opening statement before we get some questions for you.

KIM BARNES ARICO: It's great to be here. It's always nice. Towards the tail-end of that game I wasn't sure if we would be here so I thought our team really rallied and we were tremendous in the fourth quarter. I thought our young freshmen settled down and really made great plays down the stretch and Jordan kind of led the charge the entire game. It's nice to still be in South Bend. We know we have our hands full. We're playing one of the best teams in the country, a team that's been ranked number one throughout the course of this year, a team that has some incredible wins and a team that has lead by two All-American guards, but surrounded by some great, experienced players and her as well. I know this environment and what it will be like tomorrow. I have coached at this place before. Our kids, they don't know, which is kind of cool because I don't think it bothers them as much because they don't know, but just happy to still be playing and have this opportunity to compete against another great team tomorrow.

Q. Kind of talking a bit about how Notre Dame has a lot of veterans and experience coming into this while you traditionally are a very young team, talk about the contrast between that. Coup yeah, they have a lot of history. They have a lot of tradition. Natalie Achonwa who is now on our staff has her banner hung up in the arena for her, so Notre Dame is a program that has rich tradition and rich history and year in and year out, they are a top program and that is something that when I got to Michigan, we aspire to be. One of those type of programs, year in and year out and with that comes veteran experience. Whether that's Olivia Miles, whether that's Maddy Westbeld who I feel like has been here forever, Sonia Citron. King is new to their team but an experienced, experienced player. It makes



a difference. Hannah Hidalgo, one of the best freshman in the country last year and having a great sophomore season, so, yeah, they definitely have a ton of experience. Our experience is this season and I think it's been great for us. I think our freshman have been tested and battle-tested. We've played number one teams at a bunch of different times during the course of year and we talked a little bit about the Big Ten, but the conference has also prepared us to face some of the best programs in the country and they're doing well right now in the NCAA Tournament as well, the Big Ten as well. So they definitely have the experience over us, but that's something that most team have had over us all season long.

Q. I was wondering if you could talk about Syla Swords. She had a great game yesterday, but just talk about her as a competitor.

KIM BARNES ARICO: Yeah, you guys listened to her and sometimes I listen to her at these press conferences and I'm like is she a freshman student-athlete or she is an assistant coach who has been doing this for 20 years? Coach Nat always says she's an old soul. She's, like, mature beyond her years. That's how she probably grew up. She's a kid from a basketball family. Her mom and dad were both college players. Her dad was an Olympian as well and a college coach for a long period of time and is now in the NBA. She grew up in this environment and all she cares about is winning. And of you heard her say it earlier this year, the media, oh, you're in a slump. You got out of your slump and she said I'm not in a slump. I don't even look at the box score after the game. All I care about is the success of the team. I mean, who says that? Like, really? Okay. But she's just different. She's built different and she really genuinely means that. If that means I have to defend the other team's best player, Brown for them had five total shots yesterday and Syla and Olivia did a great -- those are two freshman doing a great job against one of the best players in the country. So she doesn't really base her success off of the box scores. She bases her success off the success of our team and that's what's really important to her and she competes. She's the ultimate competitor, competes at a how level to win at everything she does.



Q. So the players talked a little bit about how they make sure they celebrate that win and Jordan alluded to Beilein telling you to do that. I was just wondering more what was the story behind you making sure they celebrate the wins.

KIM BARNES ARICO: Yeah, Jordan said it -- and Jordan and I were just talking a little bit about it in the locker room, just as a program, the different phases that your program goes through and when you've always been the underdog you always have a chip on your shoulder. You are excited for every successful thing that happens. Then all of a sudden it turns and the expectations change and you're supposed to win. What does that mean? You're not supposed to win. You have to show up and actually win the game and you put that type of pressure on yourself. That's not what it's supposed to be about. You're supposed to enjoy these moments and celebrate those moments and she's right. In the locker room a couple years ago we hosted and I got this the locker room after our second round win and everybody was like this and I was like what are we doing? This is supposed to be a big deal. We got up and started dancing and singing and all of that and they want to have fun. At the end of the day, they're kids. They want to enjoy those moments. They want to celebrate these moments. They want to have fun in these moments. It's not supposed to be a chore. It's not supposed to be something they don't enjoy. The more fun that they're having, really the more success they're going to have. We just try to really make any success that we have a celebration. Sometimes that success is wins and losses and sometimes it's not. I think that's an important thing.

And Beilein did say that to me. He still does. He called me after our regular season. He called me after our Big Ten run just to check in and he always says my number one regret is that I didn't celebrate enough. I always turned the page and was trying to prepare for the next thing and the next game. I never got to enjoy these moments with the kids. I think that's why we all get into coaching and that's kind of why you all see me get emotional the last couple of days because these players. This is why we do it, to see what they're able to accomplish and to see the joy they have in these moments. We try to have fun. We try to enjoy it before we turn the page.

Q. I appreciate you talking on Sylva so much. I have a little more to ask about her. No matter what happens tomorrow, she's still going to be a player you get to build the program around, so what does she bring that is going to make that job easier for you?

KIM BARNES ARICO: Yeah, she's, like I said, she's just

built different. She's an old soul. She cares about the team and cares about winning and she has this leadership ability and this leadership quality. I used to say about Naz Hillmon, our first All-American who is now in the W. She'll be at our game tomorrow, but she used to have this crazy ability, Naz, to connect people. It was one of the greatest things I have ever seen. I would say like Naz for president. Naz for president. You don't find those type of kids all the time. Sylva is that type of kid. I just think she has this presence about her that calms everyone else down. Liv is such a competitor, too, and she's so incredible hard on herself. Mila is the same and they both beat themselves up for every mistake that they make and every shot that they miss. They're just so tough on themselves and I think Sylva comes in and couples everyone down and it's like, hey, it's okay. Next play. Let's move on.

She's really special. The thing that's most special about them, that group, and she comes and says it to me probably twice a week at least, Coach, this freshman class, like, they're the greatest people that I've ever been around.

This is the greatest class. We want to do something incredibly special at Michigan. We want to win a championship. We want to do something that's never been done. I thank you, coach, for bringing me my best friends. And that's Sylva's mentality as a freshman. Yeah. It's just different. She's different. But they're amazing. The group as a whole, for us to be sitting here and talking about... last year I'm sure Notre Dame talked about Hannah, Hannah, Hannah as one freshman. We have three. Three that went out yesterday and willed our team to victory at a high level, two of which have scored over 500 points in their freshman year already and then one who has to be the point guard on a pretty good team and is doing a tremendous job, so it's pretty incredible. The other two that aren't getting many minutes right now are really special as well and we think about that group every day.

Q. Notre Dame seems to play a very similar style, loves transition offense, loves shooting threes, loves to swing the ball, move the ball, push the ball. How do you anticipate that channel of playing a team similar to yourself?

KIM BARNES ARICO: Yeah, I think, once again, getting back to our conference and the different styles that we play every day and the different preparation that we're going to have to get ready for every day. So when we went to the Big Ten Tournament, we play against Washington in the first round. Holy cow. They have five, like kind of five guards. They play chin. They spread you out. They shoot the ball, blah, blah, blah. The next day, we got to prepare for Maryland, holy cow, they're going to try to do this, like, they might press us. The next day you got to prepare for USC, so I think our conference has allowed us the ability to



go against different matchups every single day and, yeah, yesterday's game was, okay, Iowa State, let's get Crooks the ball, let's get in our half-court offense, let's set something up and run something for her around. Tomorrow? It's going to be like this. They're one of the best transition teams in the country. They have the best guard play in the country. They're one of the best rebounding teams in the country. It's going to be a completely different style of game. That's why our legs are important. Our preparation and a quick turnaround is going to be tomorrow but we faced a lot of teams like this in our league and we're going to have to adjust to that pace quickly.

Q. I was just talking to Greta in the locker room. She mentioned that Michigan State she thought was a similar team and style of Notre Dame. You guys played them twice, had a chance to adjust to them the second time. What do you think was so key in that second matchup to lead you guys to win that?

KIM BARNES ARICO: I think the second time we handled their pressure a lot better than we did the first time. I think they really sped us up in the first game and we were able to handle that a lot better. That's the other thing about Notre Dame. They're going to try to speed you up. I don't know if anyone in the country has Hannah Hidalgo's quickness. Her hands are just everywhere. Her feet move faster probably than anyone I've seen. We're going to have to handle somebody being up in us in that type of pressure as well. Michigan State did give us that, but the second time, we were able to handle it a little bit better. We have to have people help Mila. We have to make sure different people are handling the ball so it's not just 40 minutes of her facing that type of pressure.

Q. Notre Dame has had this that he mean of peck your poison. How do you pick? Do you pick? Can you neutralize all five?

KIM BARNES ARICO: Yeah, I think kind of our philosophy all year has been we're five guards. We're going to have a problem at some position and for most of us, for most teams we faced this year it's been our post play. You saw that yesterday. We're trying to match up a 6-foot guard against Audi Crooks and it wasn't happening, but if we let them play one-on-one, can we stop those other guys? And they still made a bunch of threes but we were able to neutralize Brown. What makes a team a number one team in the country or a top five team in the country? They have multiple people that can do that. That's the what Notre Dame is. They have multiple people that can score, and it is, it is pick your poison.

We try to think and we're not at their level yet but we try to

flip it, okay, we have to play Crooks. How is their five going to match up with Greta Kampschroeder? How is their four going to match up with Jordan Hobbs? We try to do that. Now, I think from a Notre Dame perspective, like our matchups and their matchups are similar than probably yesterday's matchup for us, so it will be interesting to see how our similar-like positions do against them and are they -- even when we play USC, USC has two bigs, giant bigs that are going to go inside. Those guys, Westbeld's a decision maker. She's a face up four. She can shoot it. She's different than the USC post players so I think it's more like our four. It'll be interesting to see how from a defensive perspective can we match up with their talent? I think it will be a great test of us of we think we're pretty good, really where are we with a similar-type team?

THE MODERATOR: Got time for one more question.

Q. Can the home court have an influence? Is there a better way for the NCAA better to structure the tournament?

KIM BARNES ARICO: Yeah, I almost wore my special shirt today that everyone watches women's sports. I almost wore it but I think the more that that becomes the truth, we'll have a chance to make it change. I have been in this game for a long time now, so I've gone through a lot of different type of situations, and it's incredible hard to win on someone's home court. It definitely is an advantage. They're going to have a sell-out crowd, whatever, all the things. It will be interesting to see when it's all said and done this year how many teams are able to advance that host. I do like the host thing if you get to host. It's amazing. We got to host a number of years ago. I don't think there's anything greater than to be able to have your fan base there. If it did go neutral, would people travel? I don't know. I think we're close. We're getting better and better every year. Eyes are on the game more and more. I think it would definitely help the game and definitely provide more upsets if it were neutral, but I think also for our players, even though we're going to be playing at Notre Dame, for them to be in an environment with a sell-out crowd is really special, too. I can go either way. So we have to be a little extra tomorrow if we're going to try to beat them on their home court. A little extra.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thanks so much for taking the time.

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