

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Four - Arizona State vs Virginia

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Iowa City, Iowa, USA

Carver Hawkeye Arena

Arizona Sun Devils

Gabby Elliott

Marley Washenitz

Media Conference



But like Marley said, we faced a lot of different styles of play in the Big 12 and we're ready for whatever.

Q. Marley, the start that you guys had at the beginning of the year, how did you guys ride that through conference play and now into the NCAA Tournament?

MARLEY WASHENITZ: Yeah, I mean, we knew coming into this first year with Coach Molly that we wanted to compete at every level: Conference, non-conference, postseason. So far we have been able to say we've done that. I think our momentum we gained in the beginning really gave us that confidence, helped glue us together as a team, especially with how many newcomers we had.

And then into conference, we stayed undefeated for I think the first couple of games and then dropped a couple early on that we wish we had back. But overall just super excited -- super proud of this group and excited for what's to come too. I think the momentum and the history and all the records we've broken and everything else within the women's basketball program is just the start and we're kind of just scratching the surface.

Q. Kind of a two-part question: What have you been able to learn about your team and create as an identity over the course of the season until now. The second part starts with that 15-0 start. Was it something that taught you about yourself? Perhaps that you were going to be that kind of team? Did you know that at the beginning of the season or did you have to find that out?

MARLEY WASHENITZ: Yeah, I mean, I think we said a lot. A lot of people within our circle didn't believe in us the way we did and so I think we weren't necessarily proving others wrong but we were proving ourselves right. We believed in ourselves since day one and all the way back into summer.

I think with how many newcomers we have, like I said, it's not expected but, again, we're in a new era, especially with the portal, to where one year and one new season of a coach or players, you could have a whole turnaround. Obviously we've shown that and just super proud of this

THE MODERATOR: Okay, good afternoon. Welcome to this afternoon's press conference with Arizona State student-athletes and later Coach. From Arizona State, we have Gabby Elliott and Marley Washenitz.

Q. This is for either of the student-athletes. Both of you have played in the ACC. We know that rosters change a great deal. Is there any advantage in terms of preparing for Virginia because it's an opponent you both have seen in years past?

MARLEY WASHENITZ: Yeah, playing in the ACC the past three years and specifically last year, I'm familiar with a lot of the faces, specifically Kymora Johnson. I actually played travel ball with her too when I was in high school, so pretty familiar with her as a person and her game as well. She's a great player.

But I think just being able to have both played in that style is going to help us tremendous but I think also playing in the Big 12, we face so many different types of style of play every night, so we face teams like this where they're killers on O-boards or killers in transition and they also have some shooters or they have a head of a snake or whatever it is.

So within the Big 12, we place such versatile basketball every other night. I think we'll be prepared for this and I'm super excited.

GABBY ELLIOTT: Yeah, being around in a couple different conferences myself, I think I'm more so familiar with the head coach, Coach Mak. She's great, recruited me before. She's a great coach and she's going to bring a great team as well.



group.

I think the 15-0 start wasn't necessarily a goal of ours. We didn't start at the beginning of the season and set out, hey, let's go undefeated in non-conference. We were literally just taking it game by game and we were having fun and I think that's what led us to becoming undefeated coming out of non-conference. We were having fun, we were gelling together in the summer. We were hanging out.

It was just a good group of girls and I think when you build a culture that Molly's built here, it's going to naturally lead to winning. She recruited good people and good players and I think that's been a great example of that here.

GABBY ELLIOTT: We kind of knew coming in that defense was going to be our identity early and we bought into that. We never thought of ourselves as a team that was driven by offense. We know we go as our defensive goes and we have no problem with that. From the 15-0 start to even the games that we, you know, lost or dropped, we knew that defense was our calling and that's what it has been and what's going to carry us through this tournament, too. It's going to be our defense and us staying true to who we are and making sure that we bring energy in those aspects and let everything else, like offense, follow.

Q. Marley, what's the scouting report on Virginia? What do you guys have to do to be successful?

MARLEY WASHENITZ: Yeah, I think we just need to be ourselves and continue, like Gabby said, play to our strengths and keep our identity what it is. We have been a defensive team the whole season. We obviously know they have a great group of girls. Virginia's made some noise in the ACC preseason and postseason. They're a good group.

We have to make sure we contain their best players and keep them off the boards. They're the top in the nation in offensive rebounding and that's just a fact when you look at the stats and the numbers. So just make sure we box them out and that's controllable.

We can't -- like Molly says all the time, we can't change the shooting percentage night but rebounding and 50/50 balls and small stuff like that, those things are controllable. Just making sure winning every 50/50 ball. Every 50/50 ball is 100% ours and doing all the things, like I said, we can control: Play defense, box out, and just play hard.

I think our Iowa State game was a really good example of how great we can be when we just play 100% and give all effort and heart. We're going to continue to do that and hopefully that's what we bring tomorrow. I can't keep track

of my days anymore.

Q. Gabby, a little bit more on the defensive principles. I know Coach Miller is big on the defensive side. What does she instill in you guys defensively? What are the trademarks of your defense for people that maybe haven't seen you play as much that are going to see you on the big stage this week?

GABBY ELLIOTT: You're going to see a lot of ball pressure. We play a lot of team defense, so it's never just one person, whether that's us helping on the post player, shrinking a court or finding shooters. That's what you're going to see. You're going to see us get every 50/50 ball because every 50/50 ball is ours. You're going to see us play hard. That's pretty much to sum it up, in any way, shape, or form.

You're going to see Marley take a couple of charges. You're going to see a little bit of everything because that's what we plan on bringing as we have done the whole season.

THE MODERATOR: Any further questions?

Q. Yes, Marley, I just wonder, you mentioned Johnson. Can you talk a little bit more about what she -- about her game in particular?

MARLEY WASHENITZ: Yeah, I mean, Kymora is a very versatile player. She is score it. She can dish it. She can kind of do a little bit of everything. That's what she does for the team. The team goes as she goes. She's where they get their energy. She's where they get their spark. She takes a lot on her shoulders because she's a great player. She's just really versatile in her scoring and her assisting and everything in between. Just really want to make sure we have a focus on her.

Q. For Molly not to be with you guys, how much is -- is that impacting anything at all? Are you just keeping your fingers crossed that she's going to be there?

MARLEY WASHENITZ: Um, no, I don't -- obviously, yes, we want Molly to be at everything we can do, obviously, but at the same time, we have great assistant coaches and Molly always says that she has head coaches that assist not assistant coaches. So we've got a great tough. We've known this since day one, a big reason why I committed here.

Obviously we want Molly at everything that we do but at the same time, there's not a drop-off when she's not here. Our practices this week have been amazing and we've had, like I said, great coaches that have stepped up and

led the way for us.

And just because she's not physically here with us doesn't mean she's not doing things behind the scenes. She's been doing scout. She's been up late watching film and she's been communicating to us as well. So, yes, we miss her presence physically but she's always there with us doing things.

THE MODERATOR: All right, thank you student-athletes.

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