

# 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 Associate Head Coach Stephanie Norman

Media Conference

THE MODERATOR: I think everyone is aware that Coach Miller has been ill and hopes to join the team later today or tomorrow, and Coach can probably bring us up to speed on that and then we'll take questions.

STEPHANIE NORMAN: So thanks for having us, for having me. It's sort of a precarious situation because obviously our leader is not here and we're hoping for the best so she can recover and be with our team. That's kind of the status.

It's hour to hour. I'm hoping she's taking care of all of the things a that she can in her power. We miss her dearly but at the same time, we have a job to do so we're focused on that.

**Q. Stephanie, what did the break do for your team? Obviously beyond the rest, you got a chance to get back on the practice court. What'd you work on?**

STEPHANIE NORMAN: Well, quite frankly, we kept it short and sweet. At this stage of the season, this is not a time to add a bunch of new stuff. It's really to refine, to build confidence in your squad and, quite frankly, to have fun. This is the time of year these kids should enjoy all the fruits of their labor, so we really tried to emphasize the enjoyment of the space that they carved out for themselves and the realization of what we did as a program in 11 short months.

It was really sort of an affirmation. A few days of getting a lot of shots up and celebrating our joy and then putting a game plan in for our opponent. They weren't long. They were just short, sweet, intense and purposeful.

**Q. Both the student-athletes mentioned the intensity**



on the defensive side and hanging your hat on that. Where does that pride come from in the defensive side? How much of that is worked on in practice all the time? And I'm just curious if Coach Miller still uses the term "Mickey Mouse" at all in practice from some videos we've seen.

STEPHANIE NORMAN: She sure does. Honestly, when I arrived, I put on my board all of, I call them Milly-isms. Her nickname is Milly at times. I wrote -- there's probably 30 of them -- of things I have never heard before, and it's her own love language.

I come from a place that we had to score one more point than the opposition so oftentimes our premium was on offense and here obviously you have to be known for something if you're going to stand for anything. She really prides herself on the defensive side of the basketball and is married to that.

I had a lot to learn in terms of her terminology and the way she wanted to do things. It has been really fun for me, even after all these years, to learn new terminology, learn my techniques. Yeah, it all stems from her. From that waterfall she pours out to all of us and we all tow the line when it comes to our intensity and intention on the defensive side of the ball.

**Q. Coach, Virginia, they block a lot of shots and they have a lot of players that block shots. Does that change your offensive approach at all?**

STEPHANIE NORMAN: No, not really. There has to be kept awareness of what they do well and so if you can push the ball in transition and get in space where is they don't have time to set up their defense and those are advantageous to the offensive team, but their strengths are their strengths.

I don't think you can go into a game and worry about shot blockers. You might have to hit more pullup jumpers. You might have to do, in a post you might have to do a rear pivot or you might have to dribble and them and use the other side of the rim as a mechanism to get your shot off, but also don't be surprised if we got our shot blocked, guys,



it's what they do well. Let's not hang our head if someone blocks our shot. We get it back and we work on getting another stop.

I think if you, as a coach and a player, if you obsess too much over one thing, it just alters who you are and what you want to do. So are we aware of it? Absolutely. Are we conscious of it? Absolutely. But I think we have good post players that can counter that and I know they're well-equipped and prepared to execute.

**Q. You obviously have a pretty storied year in coaching and the success you've had at Louisville making it as far as you did with those teams and this collection of players has some NCAA Tournament experience. How do you combine all that collective NCAA Tournament experience for this group specifically this year?**

STEPHANIE NORMAN: I think with this situation and then with our group, we do have older kids on our team, which is great, but many of them have never participated in an NCAA Tournament and we have one that's won a national championship. So we have both ends of the spectrum. You sort of have to figure out how do you marry that together?

I think it's really important that these games are about the players. We're kind of, like, we can maneuver the chess pieces a little bit, but at the end of the day, it's on them. I think they've gained confidence throughout the whole year.

It's ten new kids that in three weeks we put together and it has just really been touching to me how tightly knit this group has been and they understood the assignment, no pun intended, but they did understand when we won 15 games in a row and tied that record for best start in program history. As an alum and having played here, I understand the significance of that and it was very emotional because of the fact that here was myself who poured in a lot and, quite frankly, we weren't very good back then, but we tried hard.

But this group, it elevated -- you should see the comments from all the alum text message chains and how proud they are. How proud they are to be associated with this group because they have handled their business and even when we lost, we bounced back I just think people are very excited about this group and about the future of our program. All that credit goes to those kids in the locker room that have stood their ground and believed in something before anybody else did and they were committed to this endeavor.

This doesn't happen unless Coach Miller pours into them

and changes the culture. Quite frankly, it happened over fight. She always says she never worries about that because that's what she's branded in and so these kids bought in. I think they have a love affair with her and how she goes about her business.

And so it's just a testimony to our administration who saw the greatness in her that they got this done and got her here. And then the willingness to let her go get some really prize assistant coaches, too. I think Christina, Marcus, Graham, all of those folks deserve a lot of credit for just going out and finding the best possible coach and human to run what I call an organization.

**Q. Yeah, Stephanie. I just want to ask you because of your ties to the ACC and Virginia, how does that help you in this game? And can you talk a little bit more about how the prep has gone with Molly being out?**

STEPHANIE NORMAN: Yeah, I mean, look, I had the Virginia scout. They're loaded with weapons at position. Coach Mak has done an amazing job with that group. Year after year, they have continued to improve and quite frankly I think -- obviously I paid attention to a lot of the Louisville games this year and they beat them and they arguably have the best guard in the conference in Kymora Johnson. I watched that kid in hall. Watched her, obviously, now quite a bit. Like our girls were saying earlier, she does things at a competitive level that you just don't see a lot of.

She's a winner, I like how she goes about her business. It's never sort of in your face or flashy. She's just a blue-collar worker and as a coach, I appreciate that work by her.

So, yeah, I've watched them for quite some time and know them pretty intimately, but, again, it's all about the players when you get out of this game. We can put our strategies together. We can put our minds together. We have a game plan, but at the end of the day, it's about execution and sticking to the game plan.

And then it's staying power. I don't care how ugly it is, how pretty it is, we just need to win by one point and that's sort of the mindset that we're taking into this game and not focusing on anything else.

**Q. Hi, Coach. I know that defense is a huge part of the identity and what you're about. When it's not just that, when you're leaning on the offensive side, maybe a half court set or whatever, what's the identity there?**

STEPHANIE NORMAN: Yeah, I think it's pretty balanced between three kids. You can look at the stat sheet

between Brackens and L, our two inside kids and then obviously Gabby on the perimeter in terms of scoring. Those three consistently have led us in most of our games and have been integral parts of our success.

It really hasn't been about one kid on our team. There's several teams that that's their identifier is that kid. For us, I just think I'm super proud of them sharing the basketball, don't mind giving each other credit, giving each other flowers and really getting excited for each other.

Marley has had some miraculous things and although she might not be a 20-point game scorer, that she does all the little things and she's scrappy as heck and takes charges and we always put her on the best offensive player.

So everyone really bought into their roles. The maturity of this team is something that I've loved about them. When we lost, it's -- they've never just, like, spiraled. They are calm and cool and collected. I think that is because our back court is senior laden and so, yeah. I just love them as a group and that's kind of how we've always talked about them more so than as individuals, as a group. And they have really embraced that.

THE MODERATOR: Any further questions? All right. Thanks, Coach.

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