

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

Thursday, March 19, 2026

Iowa City, Iowa, USA

Carver Hawkeye Arena

Arizona Sun Devils

Coach Molly Miller

Gabby Elliott

Marley Washenitz

Media Conference

Virginia 57, Arizona State 55

THE MODERATOR: At this time we're joined at the dais by Arizona State head coach Molly Miller, student-athletes Gabby Elliott and Marley Washenitz. We'll have a brief opening statement from Coach and then we'll entertain questions for the student-athletes. Coach?

MOLLY MILLER: Yeah, the game itself, I was really, really proud of the fight and the attitude that they had not to give up that second half. It was an amazing testament of giving it their all, faced some adversity. Did not play well during the first half, but they never gave up. They gave themselves a chance to went in a great ball game. So really, really proud of their effort.

No one can say that this team didn't try from our first game all the way to the last possession.

THE MODERATOR: Okay. At this time we'll entertain questions for the student-athletes.

Q. Just, it might be a little hard to think of it right now but when Molly talked about bringing you both in and how she wanted people who set the standard, how did you two think that you set that standard this season?

MARLEY WASHENITZ: Number one, the obviously is we won. We did a lot of the things that people didn't believe in us from the jump. But on top of that, she, like I said all the time, she recruited good people and good players and when you do that do that, it's easy to set culture. She recruited like-minded people who think like her, who believe in her and her staff. When you do that, it's easy to



create that culture.

I've been really fortunate to be part of that. And have that great group of girls and now sisters for life. But like I said, it's really easy when you recruit the right people and players.

GABBY ELLIOTT: Did you want me to answer too? It really goes off what Marley said, honestly. Because a lot of people asked me like what did we do to get to this point or get the team chemistry? We did nothing but be ourselves and embrace each and every individual for who they are. Like she said, Molly recruited a fantastic group of people from players to the staff, and to be able to set this standard and to show everybody including future recruits and alum what Arizona women's state basketball can be, that's what it was all about for me. I wanted to leave a place better than I found it and I truly believe that I did that and that's all I could ask for.

Q. Hi. So, this is a very physical game. Did you guys think it was going to be this physical? How did you guys adjust to that throughout the game?

MARLEY WASHENITZ: Yeah, we knew that it was going to be a physical team. Statistically they're one of the top offensive rebounding teams of the country, and that's just a fact. We knew that going into the game. I don't think we executed that specific part of the game plan the best. As the game went on, I think we ended up having that sense of urgency in that area but throughout the game, we knew it was physical.

Obviously, as a lot of people know, I'm a very physical player, so there was no surprise there with that because we kind of knew that going into the game. I think it was more so just getting adjusted to it and settling in to that physicality. You can try to replicate that in practice all you want but up until you play that team, you can't model exactly.

GABBY ELLIOTT: Ditto. (Laughter)

Q. Obviously congratulations for making it this far, you guys. A lot a to be proud of this season. How



hard was it to really get into the groove, the rhythm out there? It seemed like every time you guys found something, you just couldn't really continue on. It was a very defensive battle, but what did you guys think about the rhythm of the game?

GABBY ELLIOTT: Basketball is a game of runs. That's all it was tonight. They went on runs. We went on runs. They went on draughts. We went on draughts. Like you said, it was physical. That happens a lot in physical games where nobody is really getting nothing and it's hard to find a rhythm but our defense was the rhythm for us, honestly. We fed off the energy from that. So whether we missed a shot or something, we weren't really worried about that. I don't think that really -- at least for ASU women's basketball. It doesn't term our rhythm. It's all about defense and making sure that we're doing the little things in that aspect, but not necessarily scoring. Basketball is a game of runs. It's going to happen. You're going to score some. You're going to miss some. And so is the other team. You just got to keep playing.

Q. And then the fouls, 21-9. Just did you guys think there was a little discrepancy out there?

GABBY ELLIOTT: Of course we did. You just said the numbers but that's not nothing we can focus on and that's what our coaches are here for. They remind us of that all the time. It's one thing to say something to mention it, but our coaches never let us focus on things like that because it's out of our control. We're never worried about little things like that. Of course it sucks to here those type of numbers and of course, I know knowing my coaches, they're going to go look and talk to some people about some calls, so I was never worried about foul calls.

Q. Marley, when you hit that game-tying three in the quarter, what was going through your head right there and how many times have you practiced that shot?

MARLEY WASHENITZ: I just -- I wanted to do anything I could for this team to win and move on and that's literally what I was doing, whether that's I need to hit shots, get a stop. I tried to play defense as much as I can without fouling and staying in the game. Part of that is on me. When they went on their run, I was not in the game and that was from my self-discipline so I've got to be better. I've had that throughout the season, so that's on me.

Honestly, I just knew we were down three. I was feeling it this game, obviously. I wanted to get a shot up, I wanted to put us in the position to win. Luckily I did that and then as the game continued, like I said, I just wanted to do anything I could to win. Once we came out of that, they called a time-out. I think we all got hype. I think we got

just as hype when Gabby hit her threes too.

So just super fortunate to even be in that position. I think like Molly said, we fought back when we could have just hung our heads. That's just a representation of ASU women's basketball. We're just going to lay down for someone. We're going to continue to fight until that buzzer hits zero.

THE MODERATOR: Ladies, thank you so much. Congratulations on a great season.

Now we'll take questions for Coach.

Q. Molly, obviously you're back here with the team. Kind of tell us the last couple of days with you and feeling under the weather.

MOLLY MILLER: Oh, I'm fine. I'm really proud of this team. I didn't panic once because of our assistant coaches. I have an amazing staff around me. They rallied. Our group trusts them. They're very capable in these moments and so we talked often. We put a game plan together. They had some amazing practices.

I'm really focused and proud of the body of work of this group and that started -- I mean, I remember it. It's about 365 days almost that I had this vision for this program. Although I'm hurting now, I think I'll look back and say what a team. What an amazing first start. One loss doesn't define them, but this team defined a season that is going to be the trajectory of this program. That's what I'm so proud of and these seniors, they're going to be the reason we hang banners. They chose us, and they changed the narrative, and now we're going to make runs in this tournament moving forward. It's all because these seniors with one year left decided to take a chance on us and -- I was talking to Steph on the way out. She said these alums are texting me how proud they are and how excited they are and what an amazing fight and how they love that they get to be part of the Sun Devil family and how proud they are of that. That's going to be Gabby, Marley, Makayla, and Poa.

So I know I went around your question a little bit, but I just had to make sure that I recognize the seniors and I recognize what this season did for our program and how grateful I am to have had this group to start this thing off.

Q. What was that sort of talk at halftime after that first half. You said you weren't too pleased.

MOLLY MILLER: Yeah, we weren't the tougher team. We said we are running into screens instead of running through screens. We are not being strong with the ball and

they're poking it out instead of ripping it out of someone else's hands so that narrative needed to change. We need to be tougher on defense. We need to be tougher on rebounds. And this is a really good rebounding team. We knew we weren't going to get every one but for us to have 13 second-chance points to their 5, that means we got tougher in the second half.

So that toughness aspect that I knew my team had, and maybe we just 20 minutes of March Madness under our belt and tournament time under our belt and get that out of the way, but that second half was the display of toughness that we needed to whole game.

The first half kind of put us in this predicament but the second half, I was really pleased with the toughness we showed. That was really the main focus at halftime. Be tougher. Be the more passionate team. Be the aggressor in the second half.

Q. In the last ten seconds of the game, did you have a plan? Did you guys -- I know you guys huddled quite a bit. Was there a game plan or kind of whoever gets the ball, throw it up and see if it ends up in the basket type situation?

MOLLY MILLER: Yeah, we had a quick huddle for a two or three. We had a little toss back for a three for Marley if it needed to go. But if we only needed two, we could go coast to coast and Jyah was the one getting to the rim for us and she did a really good job, all game, of making an impact when she went there. And she made some good decisions too. That last buzzer beater where she got to the rim and kicked it to L, dropped it to L.

So it was either, hey, put it in Jyah's hands and let her make a decision and it didn't come down to that last possession. There's a few things I can think of throughout the game.

But to be in a game like this, that's a very talented team. Super long. Their length bothered us. Very athletic. But hit some clutch shots. They executed well. Jyah got in the paint, just couldn't hang onto it, but it was a good effort by our team. Got some defensive stops when we needed to, got some scores when we needed to.

And, yeah, that was good kind of end-of-game management. You don't have a time-out. You kind of have to do it on the fly. Ask the official to check the time so you can get an extra one real quick and they were good.

They were locked in. They were ready. I love to see their passion come out in those moments and it did. They were fired up. They fired me up. Super proud of their effort.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, again, thank you so much. Congratulations on a great season.

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