

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - Virginia vs Georgia

Friday, March 20, 2026

Iowa City, Iowa, USA

Carver-Hawkeye Arena

Virginia Cavaliers

Coach Amaka

Agugua-Hamilton

Kymora Johnson

Caitlin Weimar

Media Conference

Q. Kymora, you're from Charlottesville, grew up there, grew up a fan of Virginia. What's it like being on this team, especially with your 3-pointer last night leading to this game?

KYMORA JOHNSON: It means a lot. I grew up five minutes from grounds and so it's really home for me. Not all of y'all know that, they think I'm just from Virginia. Yeah, I could walk to the grounds from the time that I could remember.

No, it's really special, this team. Everyone's bought into bringing Virginia back to its glory days. We're just excited to be here, excited to keep playing, live to see the next day.

Q. You guys have had some impressive wins this season, like the win over Louisville. What does this team look like at its peak?

KYMORA JOHNSON: I think when we're all bought in for 40 minutes, we're playing for each other, the five that are on the floor but also the bench like giving energy. It's hard to put into words what we look like at our peak. I generally don't think we've reached it yet, but I do think that this is the stage that we should show it. We're excited.

CAITLIN WEIMAR: Yeah, I definitely agree. I feel like when we're at our peak, like we just enter this game where it's like second nature and we will do anything we can to win, just to fight for each other and just play for each other.



Q. For both of you, last night was a tough game till the end. How do you rest and get prepared for tomorrow's game?

KYMORA JOHNSON: Yeah, it was a gutsy game for sure. I think a lot of that game was our nerves and getting the jitters out. Obviously we haven't played in a while, so getting up and down was a little tough for a lot of us. But we got some sleep last night. This morning we got in the cold tubs, actually a little kiddie pool cold tub, which was fun. I'm sure we'll -- hydration tested today making sure we're getting the right fluids. Hit the boots later stretching. Have a good practice obviously. Then just be ready for tomorrow.

Q. Is there anything specific about Georgia that you're working on?

KYMORA JOHNSON: I think we're just taking it -- you know, they're a great team, they're very physical. We watched film today. We're excited to get out and practice, go through the game plan, execute that.

CAITLIN WEIMAR: Yeah, I agree. Definitely they're a physical team. You know, we're just going to have to bring that physicality mentally and physically and just push for 40 minutes.

Q. Question for Cait. That was a really hard fought defensive chaotic game at times, but you were able to keep your calm and poise not only at the free throw line knocking those two big ones down, but also in the paint, not being rattled. What's your secret to that poise under a lot of duress?

CAITLIN WEIMAR: I mean, I feel like in general I try to stay calm, very level headed on and off the court. I think just having the experience that I have. I know that the game has runs and I know I just have to take what comes to me and do everything and control the controllables. So I think as long as I know I'm doing that, it helps me just like stay focused on doing what I can for the team and doing what I can to help us get the wins.

MODERATOR: Ladies, thank you so much. Good luck

tomorrow.

Q. I asked your players, last night it was a hard fought game till the end, how do you relax? Not relax, but get prepared for tomorrow?

AMAKA AGUGUA-HAMILTON: Yeah, definitely not relax.

As coaches, we've been meeting basically since that game was over to prepare for Georgia. It was a late game and it was a battle out there. So they went back and ate something real quick and just went to bed.

But today is all about recovery. It's about getting the game plan in, it's about getting some shots up, just making sure we're confident going into Georgia.

Q. Is there anything specific about Georgia that you've been scouting or getting prepared for?

AMAKA AGUGUA-HAMILTON: Yeah. I mean, a lot of things. Every game plan is different. We're going to do some things tactically and schematically. Georgia's a great team. I think Coach A does a great job. She's a really good friend of mine, super happy for all her success that she's had in her whole career but even at just the University of Georgia. Her teams play hard. They're physical, they defend, they can really score it. She has them playing at a high level, transition and the halfcourt sets. Carnegie kind of leads the charge with that, but she's a phenomenal player that we know well from our league because she transferred from Georgia Tech. They're a very good team.

Q. Kymora Johnson, she does a little bit of everything for this team. How would you describe her style of play?

AMAKA AGUGUA-HAMILTON: Yeah, I mean, Mo -- we call her Mo -- she's kind of just one of a kind. She's a three-level scorer, she can really score the ball, but she also is a great passer, a willing passer.

She wants to make the right basketball play all the time. So if she draws 2 or draws 3 or people are in gaps, she wants to set her teammates up. She's actually, she enjoys that part of the game more than scoring, even though she's a phenomenal scorer. She helps our team in so many ways.

Yesterday she had double digit rebounds. She does whatever it takes to win. Just a really selfless individual. She works hard, she wants to master her craft, she wants to be a great teammate, she's in the community. She kind of does it all.

Q. You've had success in the tournament with

Missouri State. How do you bring that over to this level?

AMAKA AGUGUA-HAMILTON: Yeah, I mean, there's a lot of things that translate. Obviously at Missouri State we were in the tournament every year I was there. We played Power 5 teams, so it wasn't -- and we played them in a nonconference. We played a lot of them in a nonconference. Just everything we did kind of translated to this.

I spent most of my career in the Power 5 conference as an assistant coach, associate head coach. Two different teams that we were -- you know, as far as just I guess style of play and things like that. But my philosophy's the same. It's always been the same. Want to defend at a high level, want to rebound, challenge shots at the rim, and then offensively play with pace and run our stuff.

You tweak things based on your personnel every year, but my philosophy has been the same since the first day I was a head coach. It's all about being confident.

Right now, everybody's talented. You make the field, you're talented, right? Everybody's good. But what's the extra? Like what is the extra edge we're going to bring to the table?

Confidence is a big piece of that. Togetherness is a big piece of that. Synergy, camaraderie, all those things. So I want to make sure we're clicking on all those levels with the intangible stuff and then understand the game plan and go out there and execute it.

Q. Coach, Caitlin came over from Boston in the offseason. Kind of what's different about her game now?

AMAKA AGUGUA-HAMILTON: Yeah, Caitlin, Caitlin is somebody that doesn't really get rattled, right? She's going to play at her own pace and do her thing. She's seen every defensive coverage you could see because when she was at Boston University, she was double teamed and triple teamed and all that. It was a double-double, I think it was 19 and 11 or something like that. Two-time Player of the Year, Defensive Player of the Year, so she comes with a lot of experience that way.

I think what people don't know about Caitlin is she had what was supposed to be a career-ending injury, hip surgery. So her story is one of just resilience and perseverance. A lot of people wrote her off. She worked her way back.

When she first came to us, obviously she's like, you know,

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

Coach, I'm getting healthy, please take a chance, that kind of thing. She had a lot of looks, but there was a lot of schools that doctors were writing her off.

So we wanted to take a chance on her just because of who she is just character-wise. I believed in her, she believed in me and this program. She came and she had to really work to get to where she is right now. She wasn't moving well, she was still in rehab and things like that when she came in the summer. She worked her butt off to get to where she is.

I love that she's flourishing right now. She had to play through pain and setbacks and all kind of stuff. She's just resilient. So her game, she's being very efficient for us, but I know there are some things that she feels like mentally she can do that her body limits her. That's one thing that we just work through the whole year. Just stay present and just be happy and blessed that you can get out there and play again. Once she kind of like got that off her shoulders, like I don't have to be my old self, she actually became her old self.

Q. Coach, sorry about the Zoom. Blame it on the men's team and having to cover that. I just want to ask a little bit about Mo and her leadership. You mentioned the selflessness and what it meant for her to kind of defer to the seniors to slap that big Virginia up on the brackets after the win.

AMAKA AGUGUA-HAMILTON: Yeah. I mean, you know, Mo's the hometown hero. She stayed home and everybody always obviously wants to interview Mo and she gets a lot of notoriety. But Mo, if you talk to her, and I'm sure you guys obviously have, she's always talking about her teammates, right? She's always uplifting others around her.

So for her, I know it was never a thought in her mind for her to go and slap the Virginia on that. She wanted to give it to her teammate Caitlin who had a double-double and a really good game for us.

That's Mo. In her mind it's never about her. She wants to give everybody else the credit and allow others I guess to give her the credit. She is never really going to go out there and be about herself.

Q. And just to follow up, talking tactics and her minutes and her motor, which is just unbelievable. I think a lot of people don't realize when she's touching the paint how much energy that takes, but she just doesn't slow down. And banging that 3 at the end, having the stamina to do that, just speak on that stamina. Have you ever seen anything like this before?

AMAKA AGUGUA-HAMILTON: Yeah, Mo's motor is crazy.

That's how she is in practice, too. Wins every sprint, goes hard, it matters, every drill matters, shooting drill matters, super competitive. That's how she plays, and she's one that can do it for 40 minutes on both ends of the floor and with pace.

It's different, it's different. I haven't really seen kids out there like that. When it comes to the end of the game, she was all in. She was just locked in.

It's funny, I was actually trying to send a ball screen to her. Caitlin sent a ball screen to her and she kind of waived Caitlin off and just shot the 3 because that's what kind of kid she is. She knew we needed a big moment, we needed a big shot and she put the team on her back.

Q. And then finally, just looking ahead to Georgia, is there something to be said about having your feet wet on that court already and having to go through that type of game where you've been in the environment, you've been in the arena, you've already got W number one? Just speak on how that could benefit you coming up tomorrow.

AMAKA AGUGUA-HAMILTON: Yeah, I mean, I think it can. I think Georgia's going to come out hungry. I think they're a competitive team whether they played a game or not, which they haven't obviously. But I think they're going to be ready to go.

So I wouldn't say it's like a competitive advantage, but I do think for us, just pertaining to us, it was really good for us because Arizona State, they were very physical. Kind of took away some things we wanted to do offensively. We missed some bunnies that we should have easily scored. We missed some shots that we usually make.

So it was good to kind of get those jitters out and then be able to have another game; I mean have a game under our belt going into the Georgia game.

I think for us it's a benefit. I don't know if it's a competitive advantage or not because I know that Georgia's going to be ready.

Q. Virginia's record has consistently improved every year you've been there. What has been your philosophy and how have your players been buying into it?

AMAKA AGUGUA-HAMILTON: Yeah, progress is a process, I tell them that all the time. I wanted to build this program. I knew it was no small feat. I knew it was going to be a big task given the state of the program when I got here.

you so much. Good luck tomorrow.

AMAKA AGUGUA-HAMILTON: Thank you.

But I wanted to do it built on culture. I wanted to do it the right way. I wanted to get some young kids that could really leave their mark, leave a legacy here. Obviously we got kids out of the portal as well that have impacted our program tremendously. We've had a core that have been here for multiple years.

Culture's big for us. So every year we brought kids that kind of bought into that and wanted to be a part of our culture, wanted to be a part of what we were doing, being a part of something that's bigger than themselves, leave a legacy.

There's a lot of banners in our gym. There's a lot of players that have UVA wins basketball across their chest and have done it at an elite level, but it was a long time ago. So I knew where this program had been, especially being a Virginia native, and I knew where I wanted to help it get to.

So you just have to get the right kids in place and get the right belief, the right culture, and continue to focus on the work. We talk about grind now, shine later, right? It's about the work. It's about the little things that go into winning each day. And within the day, winning each practice, winning each drill all the way down to the little things that carry over into winning games and to continue to win in March.

Q. Kymora, she said this team hasn't peaked yet. What do you think is the potential of this team?

AMAKA AGUGUA-HAMILTON: Yeah, I would agree with that. I think we've had some really, really good moments this year. We've had some games where we did put together 40 minutes and we were pretty special, and then we've had some games where we didn't. We didn't fight for 40 minutes, we didn't punch back when somebody punched back, stop the bleeding, things like that that we talk about.

So I think obviously you want to be playing your best basketball right now. Tomorrow's not promised. I think every game now we have an opportunity to reach that. I think our kids are getting hungrier, Hungrier. They're understanding what it takes to win in March and they're understanding that we have what it takes. We have the talent. We're missing some of the intangibles of just staying together, making sure we fight for 40 minutes together, be urgent, things like that. So it's all coming together at the right time, but I agree with what she's saying because we do, we have a lot left in our tank. We just want to keep fighting for one more game.

MODERATOR: Anything else for Coach? Coach, thank

