

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: Second Round - Virginia vs Iowa

Sunday, March 22, 2026

Iowa City, Iowa, USA

Carver-Hawkeye Arena

Iowa Hawkeyes

Coach Jan Jensen

Ava Heiden

Chit-Chat Wright

Media Conference



Q. Have you watched Virginia much, and would you have an idea what to expect tomorrow?

CHIT-CHAT WRIGHT: Yeah a pretty good team, got a lot of good players on their team. Their point guard is pretty good with the ball. She likes to control the game. We've just got to be really attentive to our scout.

Q. Ava, how different are they going to be size-wise and dealing with you inside?

AVA HEIDEN: Yeah, I think it'll be a little bit more like what we're used to playing. With small ball teams like FDU the bigs are a little bit more of outside shooters, so that can be a little bit more difficult to guard.

I think coming up, this will be -- we'll be a little bit more used to it, and I think we have a pretty good game plan going into it.

Q. How did you guys recover from yesterday? What were some of the things you did, because everybody made such a big deal about it being hot in there. How did you guys recover and do you feel like you're ready to go now?

AVA HEIDEN: Yeah, I think that we have a lot of tools at our disposal, that we can use. I went in the hot and cold tub yesterday. I was gracious enough to give us massages, so we were able to get those this morning -- I don't know if yours was this morning.

CHIT-CHAT WRIGHT: Mine is this afternoon.

AVA HEIDEN: So yeah, they gave us all the tools we need to be ready for this game.

Q. Ava, you played in the tournament last year. This is a little different setting. You're at home. Did that help yesterday? Did it help you relax? This just felt like another home game?

AVA HEIDEN: Yeah, having the Hawk fans here, that was so fun. The energy that they bring is something that we are thankful to be used to, and so being able to play in

Q. First of all, 1:00 start tomorrow. Do either of you have class in the afternoon you're going to have to miss?

CHIT-CHAT WRIGHT: Yes. For sure.

Q. What did you learn from yesterday, and what can you take from yesterday into tomorrow's game?

AVA HEIDEN: I'd say that yesterday there were a lot of different factors that we went through. I think sticking together, though, as a team in this crazy month of March is going to be the biggest thing for us. The team that goes the farthest is not the one that's the most talented all the time. Normally it's the one that's the most together. So that's going to be our goal throughout this time is just keep our camaraderie high and play for each other.

CHIT-CHAT WRIGHT: I'll add on that. How we started yesterday was really great, so I guess just keeping that same momentum throughout the whole 40 minutes that we play is something that's going to be pretty important for the next couple games that we play.

Q. Jan talked yesterday about getting you going offensively. What do you have to do to get some shots early to get you going?

CHIT-CHAT WRIGHT: I would say stay in an aggressive mindset. I tend to shy away from shooting and love to get my teammates open and get my teammates the ball, so really being confident in those shots that I take knowing that I put a lot of hard work in to get those shots.



front of this environment, in front of these teams really give us the edge over these games.

Q. What did you think of the early tip time tomorrow?

AVA HEIDEN: I don't mind it. We've played at all different times throughout this year, so we'll be ready to roll.

Q. In breaking down the tape yesterday, what did you take away from it, and what are you really going to have to improve on tomorrow?

JAN JENSEN: Well, I think overall, what remains true is you're watching the tape, and I just saw so many things that were uncharacteristic of us -- for the majority of the year, truly, but the times when we hadn't been great early on or the times we really kind of struggled in the middle of the season was a tightness and an uncertainty, and the ball stuck. The ball just did not move.

I watched it over and over. It just reminded me of early fall, which is kind of a puzzling thing because it's March. But I think it was just the tightness.

We had a good scout meeting last night, and there's a lot of key people that are a little younger that now have different roles that I think typically have been handling a spotlight really well. Our sophomores are really rocking it and leading us.

But I just saw things that are pretty fixable, but it's here. It's not just, oh, we need to pass better, we need to penetrate and kick better. Yeah, we do all that, but that all looks a lot better if we just get our mindset right, and that's typically the hardest thing, I think, even in our lives.

If you're having a heck of a bad day or a bad stretch, everybody is like, you're good, you're good, you're fine, just go get a cup of coffee, you're good. But inside, you're like, oh, my gosh, that sun seems a little distant, right?

So that's really kind of what we talked about is tried to free them up.

Look, these kids are wonderful. They've worked so hard. They love playing here. They love this fan base. They are very sensitive.

When they feel like they're letting me down or their teammates down or the fan base down, that's when they kind of get in trouble, and it's a beautiful trait, but it's not great when you've just got to kick you-know-what.

We revisited some things. We talked about that. But we then adjusted, and it was easy to see what we need to do.

You saw some lightbulbs. I think you should see the ball move quicker, and I think -- I've just got to believe that odds are going to be in our favor that we're going to shoot the ball a little better.

Q. Virginia is going to present a different challenge from size and their experience and all that. How different is the game plan going to have to be for you offensively against a team like that?

JAN JENSEN: Yeah, you know, number one, congrats to Virginia. Coach Mox used to be in the Big as an assistant and then was the head coach at Missouri State; did a great job; and now is doing really well at Virginia.

They've come in and did it the hard way. So much respect for them. And the game plan, very different. They're very big. This is the first time in a while where they've had two inside kids that are tall, our height, if not taller, and they're, I think, leading or among the leaders in shot blocking in the country so they're going to make it really difficult on the inside and that's what carried us last night because they were undersized.

They also have an exceptional guard in Johnson. She's a three-putt shooter, can get to the rim, one of the best in the country, and then a gal, the small forward Levy, who's kind of an fun X-factor for them. She shoots the three really well and a lot of nice pieces around them.

They also play a lot more zone than anybody we've seen. They play player and they play zone defense. So we're going to have to manage that.

So they're just a really good team that's playing really, really well right now.

Q. You've coached in so many of these tournaments, and how does that previous experience help you for a situation like this?

JAN JENSEN: Yeah, you know, I think the tournament -- the tournaments I've been in before really helped me last night. I knew -- I have the utmost respect for Stephanie Gaitley. She has 550 some wins and she's coached really successful and been different places, and she's really good.

There's sometimes people are good because they've got really good talent, and sometimes they're good because they've been good a long time.

I just knew that -- I know her, and I knew she would be playing with a great game plan and I think mutual respect.



We've also been here, and I think I mentioned that, we've been in tight games before at home. The majority we've gotten; some we haven't; one we haven't.

But last night, I was able to really, I think, stay steady most when we needed it because there's a time you can also lose your mind as a coach. Maybe you don't show it and you fool with the ref or whatever, but inside you can kind of let it get away. But we've been in some crunch times.

I think I was grateful for what I'd learned in that and that we'd won that one.

So I think that was really helpful last night.

I think it helped my perspective today when maybe a lot of people are like, oh, gosh, what happened. It was March; that's what happened. It was March. Things can happen. Even on a person's home floor. But you know what, we found a way. Next.

Now when we're going into that is we've been there and we've squeaked out one, now we've got to approach another game with a team that's typical of what we've typically seen. I call what FDU plays small ball. They don't have true bigs, they shoot threes like crazy great. Now you've got people who can shoot threes crazy great, but they also have bigs and they're doing things a little bit more interior and exterior.

So that experience of having to turn it around, we've done it. So now I have to draw upon it.

I think our coaches have done a great job with game plans. The trick is now every coach you've got about this much information you want to put in, and you've got about this much time. So you've got to pick the right things to focus on, don't put too much new in, don't adjust too much, but you need to make a few adjustments because that's the only way you're going to survive and advance.

Q. You've got a terrific group of seniors that are playing their final game in Carver-Hawkeye. Can you speak to the impact they've had on this program?

JAN JENSEN: Yeah, you know, I'm just so grateful for them because with the transition of me having recruited them, was an assistant and then became the head coach, they all held and stayed and really have done a super job. They've really bridged the gap between generations and eras, and they've done a beautiful job.

I'm just hopeful that our fans -- I know it's tough on us with that 1:00 start time, but hey, it's still March, right? That just

happens. We don't have -- we have to control the controllables. There's a lot of great teams. There's a lot of different markets. There's a lot of different reasons. ESPN sets times and all the different things.

But if you can't come, I hope they give their tickets to people or sell them or do whatever because Hannah is a beautiful player, beautiful person, a native Iowan, 20 minutes away, and she's helped us do some incredible things, including the last couple years. And Kylie Feuerbach has been an amazing story, unsung hero, and really has helped us get to this situation this year with such great defense and leadership.

Taylor McCabe, man, what a year for her year to end, but she leads as much as she can from her role now, and Jada Gyamfi has been a great catalyst even though she hasn't been on the floor.

Hawk fans, if you can find a way to handle -- I know the parking isn't ideal, but I also think we take a moment. The parking isn't ideal because we have one of the most amazing hospitals, and we're just so closely aligned with them in everything athletics does, we try to support them, and certainly the hospitals support us. But that parking is tough, and we need to make sure that the hospital gets to do its job.

So for that one day we're going to have to park differently and get on a cam bus, all the different things. But I think this fan base has been remarkable. The people that are going to be there, whether it's going to be a sold out because it's a unique time, I know they'll be with us in spirit, and the ones who are going to be there, they're going to be rocking it.

But they'll do it for those seniors and they're going to do it like they've done it ever since I've been here since 2000.

Q. I'm sure you always get ticket requests and parking requests for tomorrow.

JAN JENSEN: Yeah, you know, I haven't looked at my texts. I'm a little bit behind. But I might have a few of those for sure.

Q. Virginia now is unusual in the sense of they've played now two games in this tournament. Do you think they've got a little bit of momentum right now, and how can that be a factor tomorrow?

JAN JENSEN: You know, I really do. I think every -- sports is all about angles. Oh, they play, they're going to be tired, oh, they played, they have momentum, oh, they play -- it's March. We've just got to all find the will from

within to win that 40 minutes.

So I think they are playing well, and I think when you get to keep playing and you get a taste of it and you're in a rhythm, I think that probably -- it's weird. When you go into a tournament, even the Big Ten Tournament, if you get a bye or a double bye, you're playing someone that's already played before. They're usually a little looser, but you still wouldn't give your double bye up.

So Georgia probably wouldn't have given up the fact that they were a higher seed and didn't have to do the play-in game, but Virginia felt pretty comfortable on that court, right?

So I think, again, you have to control the controllables. I just think it's just they're really good. They're playing really well right now, and I would like us to really bounce back and play like we're capable of playing, and I think it's going to be a really fun game for a shot at the Sweet 16.

Q. Kylie mentioned that at that time-out in the fourth quarter the other day that you guys need to remind yourselves that you're the 2 seed for a reason. How do you go about getting that swagger back, going in for the rest of the tournament here and that confidence?

JAN JENSEN: Yeah, you know, I think that's been my kind of -- with this group the whole year, we have a lot of wide-eyed new ones the whole year. Now we're not as new; it's March, come on.

But sometimes I think they don't always realize exactly what they've accomplished because they're overall really pretty humble kids. If you have one sometimes alpha who's a little bit on that edge that's like, we're freaking good or whatever, we're a little bit more -- we can be pretty good, but that's not maybe our overall makeup.

So when you're leaning into this, there's a lot of gratitude and a lot of appreciation, but when you get into the moment, I think it goes back to they don't want to let anybody down. They don't want to let themselves down, the coaches down, their teammates down. We can't worry about that. You've got to lean on everything you've done.

I though last night they forgot we had won 24 season games in '26. You're here because you are better.

We just need to use these five, six minutes to remember that.

I think they went out, and it was like there was a little bit of freedom that kind of clicked, and I was really happy to see that. That's what I've really focused on because it is

March, survive and advance is the theme, and you don't have time to get stuck in the comparisons and the why, why would this happen and whatever.

I'm just thrilled that when it had to be done, Kylie and Hannah led us where we needed to go. That's all that needs to be done in March. There's not a whole lot of style points. You've just got to win.

I think this team knows that they're pretty -- they do have the ability to be pretty doggone good, and I think that type of game situation, I'd like to think we'll see Monday, if they've kind of got the pressure off, we can play freer and then just lean into the moment.

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