

# NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - UC Irvine vs Gonzaga

Friday, March 22, 2024

Spokane, Washington, USA

McCarthy Athletic Center

**Gonzaga Bulldogs**

**Eliza Hollingsworth**

**Brynna Maxwell**

**Coach Lisa Fortier**

Media Conference



wake-up call in some aspects, but also I think it's going to help us in the tournament for sure.

BRYNNA MAXWELL: Yeah, Eliza said most of it, but to add to it, I think if we would have beaten Portland we wouldn't have dissected the film as well as we did and the coaches did and I don't think we would have dug into some issues that we needed to address and kind of just coasted here.

I really think it's helped us, like Eliza said, it was kind of a wake-up call, and we've got to change our expectations, flip our standards and remember who we are. But at the end of the day, it was just one game. If we play Gonzaga basketball, I think we'll be okay.

**Q. Eliza, how has preparation gone for tomorrow?**

ELIZA HOLLINGSWORTH: I think preparation has gone really well. I think everyone is in the right mentality going in. Everyone is fired up, focused on the little details. I think team morale is great right now, and it's really exciting.

BRYNNA MAXWELL: Yeah, I agree with her. I think everybody is pretty locked in and excited to play another basketball game.

**Q. It wasn't that long ago that the whole country watched you struggle against Portland. Maybe you would be the first to agree with that or maybe it was just one of those days. Help us understand the two-week period that you have had that helps you reset, that helps you get back to Gonzaga ways, mentally, physically, just how ready you are and erasing what happened in Vegas?**

ELIZA HOLLINGSWORTH: I can start. I think the important thing for us is to recognize that that team we were when we were playing Portland isn't the team we are now or have been. It definitely was an outlier for us, and I think the best way that we can move forward is to learn from it but also to let it go and move on.

I think the team and the coaches have done a really good job of being able to refocus the group and kind of hang on to it because going forward that's not going to help us in the tournament.

So we've been able to rally against it, and I think right now we're in a great spot, and yeah, I think it was a bit of a

**Q. What does it mean for you guys to host when you know you are as tough as you are at home, with the student section, with the community? What does it mean to host?**

BRYNNA MAXWELL: I think it's just really cool for our city. There's other stuff going on, but someone said they had to block off an extra five miles, 35 miles for space so they could fit everyone in, and I think that's just so cool for Spokane to have that. It's amazing for our program. I think it's the highest seed we've ever had as a program.

At the end of the day, seeds don't matter. You've got to win. Everyone has the same amount of time to do it, and we've got to make sure that we're on our game because UC Irvine is a pretty good team.

ELIZA HOLLINGSWORTH: I would just add it is super rewarding. We were on the court yesterday and were looking around with all the March Madness signs and it's our home court, but it just feels a bit more surreal. I was looking around being like, we did this, we earned this. This whole season got us to this stage. So that was a super rewarding feeling and I was really proud of our team and all the adversities we've gone through and how hard we've fought the whole season.

I think it's such an advantage for us to be home. Our crowd is phenomenal, one of the best in the nation. We



have such a good band, supporters, cheerleaders. It's such a tough environment for teams to come in and to compete here. Our home is such an advantage, and I'm really excited to play here again, and I would not want to play anywhere else, and I'm excited for the city, like Brynna said.

**Q. For both of you, being veterans on the team but not only veterans in this postseason, stage, is there a different way that either of you are maybe approaching this trying to get past the first and second rounds?**

BRYNNA MAXWELL: I think the key is not to treat it like a different game. I think we have to treat every team -- like everyone wants to win. At the end of the day, everyone is good enough to be here. If we kind of treat it differently, I feel like it wouldn't -- we'd kind of stray away from what Gonzaga basketball is about. It's a home game, it's a big one, but at the end of the day it's just a home game. If we are locked in and we have the scout down, yeah, I'm really excited to see what our team can do.

ELIZA HOLLINGSWORTH: I would just add that, yeah, it's pretty obvious we have some seniors that are contributing to minutes and scoring, and so it is our last year, and it does hold a little bit more weight because we have a timeline coming up and we don't know when that's going to be. But I think to Brynna's credit, we have to still stay true to ourselves and not let that be a factor in our minds or make us desperate because you play desperate, you get out of your style of basketball.

Just wanting it really bad but still staying within Gonzaga basketball, like Brynna said, and yeah, staying true to that.

**Q. UC Irvine has been on a bit of a hot streak right now. I'm sure you guys know that coming into this game. What do you guys need to do to put that fire out and make sure you guys advance into the next round?**

ELIZA HOLLINGSWORTH: I think we need to stay true to our principles for our team but also recognize that they are a high-pressure team. They rely on their franticness, if that's a word, getting in the jumping lanes, jumping in the lanes, just trying to get you to turn the ball over. So we need to make sure we take care of the ball coming into this game, can't have any wasted possessions.

But yeah, staying calm, taking care of the ball I think are the main keys that we need to focus on coming into this game.

**Q. You talked about getting back to Gonzaga basketball. What exactly does prime peak tournament Gonzaga basketball look like?**

BRYNNA MAXWELL: Just in the season, the best we've played is when we're playing together and we have that joy on the court together. There wasn't a lot of joy against Portland, and there wasn't a lot of -- yeah, everyone was kind of tense, and like Eliza said, we were kind of playing desperate, and when we play desperate, it doesn't really bode well for us. If we can stay relaxed, composed, and it's kind of cliché but have fun out there and share the ball like we do, I think that's really what Gonzaga basketball is about.

