

# NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - Oregon vs Vanderbilt

Thursday, March 20, 2025

Durham, North Carolina, USA

Cameron Indoor Stadium

## Oregon Ducks

## Deja Kelly

## Peyton Scott

### Media Conference



of used to it thanks to our conference. But it's like any other one for us, just making sure we're locking in on the details, locking in on scout and just being as prepared as we can going into tomorrow.

**Q. Deja, you've spent time in this area when you were with Carolina. There's three women's first round sites here. There's a men's regional -- or men's first round site. How great is this area for the women's basketball from your time here and coming back now?**

DEJA KELLY: It's extremely special. Basketball has been huge and great in this Triangle area for a while. When I was at Carolina, it was so much fun to play here because you're within a ten mile radius of each school. But just the fan base as well, for each kind of area, I think, is huge.

Again, this just brings more eyes and more fans and viewers to this area, too, that just speaks on how good the level of basketball is here. To have three teams and a men's regional being able to play here, it speaks about the state itself. It's a great state of basketball, for sure.

**Q. Deja, I know you wanted new experiences and to challenge yourself with this going to Oregon. How do you feel you've grown on and off the court this past year?**

DEJA KELLY: Oh, my gosh. In so many different ways. I think that was the biggest thing I wanted to do when I chose to go to Oregon was just grow in a bunch of different ways. More specifically, of course, on the basketball court but also as a person. I think they tie together. On the basketball court, I've grown as a better leader, better player, a better teammate. Like, I think overall it's just been such an eye-opening experience for me, and again that's all I could have asked for in my last year as well. It's kind of ironic to finish back where I started -- we're not saying we'll be done here -- but to have my last tournament back where I started, I think that's kind of a beautiful story for me personally but overall just the growth that I've had at Oregon and with my team and this team the growth of my teammates as well has been such a phenomenal thing to be a part.

**Q. How does it feel to be back in Cameron?**

DEJA KELLY: It feels great. This is, of course, a historic building, historic gym. I've played here quite a few times. So I'm excited to be back here with a different squad, but we're excited to be here.

**Q. Can you give us your thoughts on looking ahead to this match-up with Vanderbilt, what have you seen on film and what do you look forward to with that match-up?**

PEYTON SCOTT: We're excited about this match-up. I know we talked a lot about how we're the opposites of each other and how, like, they're scrappy, they like to get up, make it a fast-paced game, get up and down the court. We want to slow it down a little bit. Just making the game extended a little bit longer, but just two very different teams, one SEC, one Big Ten, two top conferences. We're excited for the match-up.

DEJA KELLY: They're a really good team. Have some really good players, good key players, and so do we. I think we match up in that way. It will definitely be a different paced game for both sides, but I'm excited. I think we have the depth to match with what they've got as well.

**Q. How are you all preparing coming in, you guys came all the way from the West Coast to the East Coast, what is that preparation like, getting ready to go in, like you said, two big conferences, two great teams, to get this first round going?**

PEYTON SCOTT: I think it's nothing new for us. We've been in the Big Ten now. We've made -- I think this is our fourth or fifth trip kind of across the country. So we're kind



**Q. I'm curious, the way the brackets were set up, knowing all three teams would host here, you probably thought it would be a possibility you could come back here. What was the reaction and the feelings when you saw it pop up on the screen?**

DEJA KELLY: With seeing three teams hosting here, it was like, okay, our chances are getting higher and higher every time for us to come back out here.

And once I saw our name on the screen, I was like, okay, it's go time. And I wasn't really -- I was surprised but wasn't surprised. I figured there would be some type of way to get some type of story to come back here, which is fun. It's always exciting for the game.

So, yeah, I'm excited for us to just, one, have the opportunity to continue to play more basketball and March Madness, this is a phenomenal opportunity for a lot of our girls who this is their first time. I'm excited we can do it here in such a historic gym to start off. But I'm excited to be back out here and play back out here in this area. Like I said before, it's a great area of women's basketball and we're excited to play in this crowd.

**Q. Peyton, the challenges of defending Mikayla Blakes, obviously somebody that brings a lot of talent, couple of 50-point games this year. That's a legit challenge. But your team has shown this year the ability to sort of focus on star players like that and be able to team defend them. I'm wondering, what some of those challenges are going to be present with her?**

PEYTON SCOTT: As you said, she's obviously a phenomenal player and has put up some really big numbers, had really big games this year. So we're really taking to heart just making sure we're putting together a scout and a game plan to limit that, as you said as we've done in the past.

Really just keying not only in on her but they have two big players that account for a lot of their production. So just making sure that we're prepared and detail-oriented on our game plan for them.

**Q. Peyton, what has been the consistency of the success of the Oregon Ducks women's basketball through this season, regular season, and going into the postseason?**

PEYTON SCOTT: Yeah, I think there's two things that we've really hung our hat on this year. One has been defense, like you said, holding big-time scorers under their averages.

And another has been our depth, just how deep we're able to go in our bench, wear teams down and grind games out. I think that's going to show in the tournament, just being able to rely on our bench and rely on our defense when we might not be able to score the ball as well.

**Q. Obviously WNBA is expanding, but roster spots are really limited. I wanted to ask you as you're looking ahead to the draft, is there anything that you guys are trying to maybe prove, show off to scouts in these final games in the tournament?**

DEJA KELLY: I think for me personally it's playing my game, not trying to do too much, not trying to do too little, not trying to change anything, really. I think that for me, as long as I play like myself, I think that's kind of that's enough.

And I think that's something that I've just been focused a lot on this whole year, really. I found myself sometimes trying to change my game, trying to do specific things to try to appeal to scouts or whatever it was. And I just had to remember that they like me for how I've played for the past four years. So there was no need to change, just continue to add.

So I think that was the big thing and a big focus for me, just going out there and worried about being focused, present in the moment, just being here with the team, focus on us winning games getting as far as we can in the tournament and I think the rest will take care of itself, I think that's the biggest thing for sure.

**Q. What's your first March Madness memory, watching, not playing?**

PEYTON SCOTT: As watching? I remember I was actually in middle school. I was in a library in middle school. And I remember it was like the end of the day and the last bell had rang and everyone was leaving to go on the buses. I actually missed the bus because I was trying to watch the end of a March Madness game that was just on the TV in a library.

Just watched it all growing up. Excited that this is my first one just to be a part of it, not just be a spectator this year.

DEJA KELLY: I have a few. I've watched March Madness a while. But I think the most just being locked in -- I was older at this time, but Notre Dame and the Final Four, just their whole tournament run. I think that one speaks for itself just how kind of excellent that was.

But that's like my biggest March Madness memory, I think, because that just speaks to what March Madness is. It's

very unpredictable. It's fast paced. It's ups and downs. Brackets are busted. I think that was kind of the epitome of what March Madness means. And Rickea with her game-winning shots. I think that overall speaks to the excitement of surrounding March.

PEYTON SCOTT: Watched them in person. In Columbus. It was crazy.

**Q. Peyton, getting out there, wonder about your emotions today getting to the hotel, seeing the signage, getting to the venue there, seeing the signage. For you personally, what has today been like that way?**

PEYTON SCOTT: It's felt like a different butterfly building in my stomach. Just growing up, idolizing March Madness, it's super special. And I left film today just super grateful, super blessed to be here, knowing not every team gets to make it.

And I've been a part of those teams that are watching from the outside. So I'm just extremely grateful to be here with my team, with this team and just to finish on a high note, honestly.

**Q. With the size advantage Philli has inside, how much of a factor and, I guess, a part of the game plan is it to get her involved early?**

DEJA KELLY: I think that's something, for us, we try to take advantage of every game. We know we have a size advantage with her and a few of our bigs, honestly. We have a lot of depth in that spot.

I think just playing at our pace early and getting the looks that we can, some easy looks for everybody really. I think that's really the main goal.

And I think when Philli has great positioning, we try to get her the ball there and go from there.

**Q. Obviously Coach Graves has made many firsts in this tournament. What's his message heading into this first game?**

PEYTON SCOTT: It's pretty simple. It's 0-0. It doesn't matter what your seed is, doesn't matter who you're playing, where you're playing.

Anything can happen in March and we've seen it every single year. We've seen it already. So just really staying present. And pretty much the most prepared team's going to win locking in on the scout and details and making sure we're showing up with a belief and a mindset that we're

going to win every game we play.

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