

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - College of Charleston vs Duke

Thursday, March 19, 2026

Durham, North Carolina, USA

Cameron Indoor Stadium

College of Charleston Cougars

Coach Robin Harmony

Taylor Barbot

Taryn Barbot

Grace Ezebilo

Media Conference

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by the College of Charleston Cougars. We have with us student-athletes Taylor Barbot, Taryn Barbot, and Grace Ezebilo.

We'll take questions.

Q. For either one of you all, this is the first time Charleston has been in the NCAA Tournament. What's it like to be part of this historic group?

TARYN BARBOT: It feels good to be part of this group. This is one of my accomplishments I wanted this year as a team and personally. So it's been one of my accomplishments since I got here freshman year. So yeah.

TAYLOR BARBOT: I think it means a lot just to be part of that history here in Charleston. Yeah, we're excited to play.

GRACE EZEBILO: I'm excited. It went from just watching it on TV to actually being a part of it. So, yeah, I'm excited.

Q. For each of you, the thought when you walked into Cameron Indoor. Was it smaller than you thought it might be? Did any of the history hit you when you walked in?

GRACE EZEBILO: I don't really know much about the history of it, though I do know, like, it's a historic place. But it was, like, the feeling of what I'm here for more than I felt.



TARYN BARBOT: It felt surreal because you see the place on TV. You see when the boys play, the girls play, it's always packed out. They have great fans. It felt surreal to be in a place like this.

TAYLOR BARBOT: It was smaller than what I thought, to be honest, but it's nice and it's a lot of history here for sure.

THE MODERATOR: It's not a big place. You're right on that.

Q. Taylor and Taryn, we talked a little bit about this the other day, but how do you kind of get over the yeah, I'm happy to be here, but we've got to win this game. How do you get over that mentality?

TARYN BARBOT: You've got to focus in practice, work on what we've got to work on to try to beat the other team. That's really it.

TAYLOR BARBOT: We're excited to be here, but we want to show we belong here. So we definitely want to compete and do what we do.

Q. Grace, you talked the other day just about how much it means and how much you've come in a year. Have you had time to reflect on it now? Have you talked to anybody back in Nigeria about if they'll be able to watch, if they've found the TV station or anything like that?

GRACE EZEBILO: My friends were texting me -- I mean my family was texting me. When I say family, my brother and my sister because my mom doesn't really care about basketball. But they were texting me and were oh, my God, you're playing Duke. I know it's big. They texted me about it.

They're happy to watch me play. Some people even got subscriptions for ESPN too because they want to watch somebody they know, a family is playing. So it's big. It's kind of like dawning on me now.

Q. Taylor and Taryn, can you share what the week has been like since leaving D.C. to going back to campus?



I know you watched the selection show at Buffalo Wild Wings, went back to campus and then left yesterday to come to Duke. How would you describe the last few days and the week? What's been the best part about it?

TARYN BARBOT: We soaked it all in, soaked the win in for winning the championship, then got right to it, started doing scout and film and everything on them that we need to do practicing on them.

TAYLOR BARBOT: I'd agree. We took a day off and then broke down the film and then our regular practice and stuff in preparation for them.

Q. For each of you, we talked to you two days ago, but have you learned more about Duke since then? Is there something you see that, hey, we've got a chance in this thing? Or is it a long shot, 14-seed, to win it?

TAYLOR BARBOT: We're trying to win. We watched the film after we talked to you guys. So we just know we've got to do what our coaches tell us.

TARYN BARBOT: I agree with her.

GRACE EZEBILO: I did talk to my JUCO coach. When the Duke women's basketball coach went with the United States, the team, my coach was also there as an assistant coach, and she told me some stuff about her and the team also. So yeah.

Q. Without giving away your game plan, what do you all like about the match-up against Duke? What are some of the things, when you first got paired up with Duke, what is maybe the first thought? Was it just like, oh, wow, we know we're as quick or as tall or whatever the case may be? What are some of the things you like about this match-up?

GRACE EZEBILO: I love the fact that they have post players that can move. They're all around. They can do a lot of stuff. I love that No. 35, Toby, right, I love her game. The big girl, No. 12, I love her game also. I like the match-up. I like to see what kind of challenge it brings for me guarding them and also on the offensive side of the game.

TARYN BARBOT: I think the match-up's going to be good. I think we match up with them well. Maybe not height-wise, but I think we can still get it for sure.

TAYLOR BARBOT: I agree. We're definitely smaller so we can probably be quicker than them and stuff like that. So yeah.

THE MODERATOR: Seeing no more questions, thank you all. Good luck tomorrow.

TARYN BARBOT: Thank you.

TAYLOR BARBOT: Thank you.

GRACE EZEBILO: Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: We're now joined by the head coach of the College of Charleston Cougars, Robin Harmony. She'll have an opening statement followed by questions.

Coach, the floor is yours.

ROBIN HARMONY: I think this is a good experience for our kids to finally get here after 40 years. I don't know if they know what they're in for tomorrow, but they'll figure it out real quick at 11:30.

We're hoping we show up, we give our best effort. We know we're playing kind of David and Goliath, but our kids are going to have to communicate. They don't like to talk unless it's in the locker room, and they're going to have to be fundamental. They're going to have to box off. They're going to have to push the ball. They're going to have to hit some 3s. We'll see what happens. That's why you play the game.

If our kids are fired up and they give effort, that's what we're looking for, and that's what we'll be happy with.

Q. I was just kind of wondering, when you recruited the Barbot twins, did you think that they were kind of two players that could maybe take your program to these sort of heights?

ROBIN HARMONY: Absolutely. We recruited them, and we went to every single game that they played in in the summer, to the point of it was just two of us in the gym, myself and my associate head coach. We didn't want to miss one because we knew what a difference it would be for our program.

If you saw them play in AAUs, you'd be surprised that Taylor was the better player because Taylor was the worker. She was the kid that would dial in the floor, play defense. Taryn was the scorer, but Taryn was so nonchalant about everything that some people wanted to recruit them separately.

But we knew that both of them would be able to play, come in, be difference makers. They're strong. They have that body. Really, it's their basketball IQ. They love the game.

We learned early in the recruitment that they wanted to play together, and they do complement each other, so anybody would be crazy to separate them.

Q. Robin, the day and age when kids are changing schools like they're shoes, how important was it for them to come back, the Barbot sisters?

ROBIN HARMONY: I'm not telling you we didn't hold our breath a little bit. We have a good relationship with their family, their father. We talk to them every couple weeks. The family is very loyal. They never went in the transfer portal. They still had people calling the family. I think it could have been something like 80 different coaches called them, offered them to try to steal them, and they said no.

One wants to go to MUSC Medical School, one wants to go in the Banners. So they turned down those types of offers, and, we got to keep them. I think that nationally, our conference, everybody thought that they would probably jump because that's what happens in this day and age. They chase the green. They chase the money. If somebody offers them a big amount, it probably would be hard to turn down, but they did.

Q. Robin, you're at Lamar. Matt calls you. This all works out. I think you said the other day I promised him we'd get him to the tournament. Did you think it would be this fast, and did it hit you when you got up here, like we did it. We pulled it off. We're in the NCAA Tournament.

ROBIN HARMONY: I think in the regular season, we're two and a half months playing really good basketball, then it was starting to hit me. I'd sit there by myself, like oh, my God, how am I going to get through the press conference? It will be so emotional.

I begged Matt to give me the job. He'll tell you, I'm the only person that asked, hey, what have I got to do get this job? He looked at me like, if you're dumb enough to ask for it, I'm dumb enough to good it to you. He's been a great boss. He lets me be myself. He doesn't shadow over me. If I need him, I know where his office is.

I told him that kind of when we were looking at the job that I don't want to be micromanaged. I'm not good with that. I just need you to give me what I need, let me get it done. Just by working and every time -- I didn't go in very often to ask for something. Every time I went and said hey, Matt, I need this, I would get it.

It made it easy to be successful. We kept working and plugging and plugging. Sometimes the basketball Gods weren't very good to us. I'd call him and say, hey,

someone blew their ACL, best player on the team. We kept on moving and moving.

We were fortunate this year we didn't have that many injuries other than one. We kept it rolling. It was a job that if you ever come to Charleston and see how beautiful it is, you're going to want to come here. I looked in the airplane as it was coming in, and I said, oh, I'm getting this job. They don't know it yet, but they're giving me this job.

I knew I wanted to get back to the east coast from being in Miami all those years, and living in Texas is a little bit different. I like to be in a city, and I was at least able to go to Houston when I was in Texas.

But Matt called me, and he knew about Lamar and Beaumont, Texas, and it was kind of a joke that we had back and forth that if you can recruit in Beaumont, you can recruit anywhere. That's kind of what I told him. Buddy, give me this job because I can get it done. I can recruit those same types of players here and make it a lot easier.

Even players that we talk to, when they come to visit, they know it's nice, but they don't know it's that nice until they get to campus.

Q. Robin, how do you walk the fine line of being let them enjoy the experience, but also kind of it's a business trip and getting over the, hey, we're not just happy to be here. We want to win this game.

ROBIN HARMONY: I think you have to do both all season. You have to work hard and have fun. That's the message we've always done with our team. They are hard workers. We still let them clown around. I'm probably the one that likes to have the most fun of all because I want to be a stand-up comedian one day.

You just have to let them have their personality, and they have to know when it's time to get serious. They know. And if they don't, they forget, they're running. So that's kind of the thing that we do. We're a disciplined team. I am an old-school coach, but I've loosened up the reins and let them clown around. But when it's game time and time to get serious, I have a really hard time if you're not working and doing your best.

Whatever happens then, we're fine with. But I know if our kids do their best, they can hang in there with anybody.

Q. When the bracket is unveiled, I know Duke seems like a pretty daunting opponent. Was it nice kind of seeing, oh, we can take a bus to Duke. That's pretty close for our fans. Was that a thought?

ROBIN HARMONY: Well, yeah, it is nice that we can get fans to come. We figured it would be regional anyway so it wasn't a surprise. I did coach at Miami as an assistant, an associate head coach so I've been here. I know Duke. I've followed them. I just think it's a good experience for our kids that they can always remember who they played because you forget after a while. If you ask me who we played 22 years ago in the NCAA Tournament, I'd have to think a little bit. I believe it was Maryland, but these kids will remember. They'll know they had the banner in the gym, and that will be forever and ever.

Q. Robin, was there ever an untalked-about pressure, like, hey, the men's team has made the tournament this many times. Let's get the women on the board. Let's get to the tournament. Was that pressure ever put on by yourself or thought about even?

ROBIN HARMONY: Probably for myself. Wherever I've coached, the men's team has been pretty good. I don't want them to be good without us being good. That's always been a challenge to me, hey, let's get good like they are. It was just what I inherited, where 40 years we hadn't won.

But it is good for our players. They go to all the men's games. They watch them. They see them winning. They see the notoriety they're getting and then want that too. So it's really up to them to do the work.

As a coach, you want to do the best you can do and be in the NCAA Tournament, but it's tough. Even to win the regular season and then you go to the conference championships, a lot of 1 seeds get knocked off. It happened again this year. That's the pressure one for me, when we were in the conference tournament to be a 1 seed. All year, they've been a target on a back, but I don't care about that.

When you come here, when you're playing in the three games, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, then somebody -- and, you know, there were some close games and a little restless sleep for all of us and the coaches, but it didn't bother our kids.

If the Barbots didn't play well, two other kids stepped up. That was the beauty of our team, that we weren't just one-dimensional of one kid or two players. Now they can have off nights, and we can still win. They know it, and they'll bounce back the next day. It's who we are and what we've been doing.

Q. Coach, two quick questions. My first question, when we talked earlier this year about you building your program to be in the position that it's in, when

you think about that, what were maybe one or two challenges early in building the program to where it is now?

ROBIN HARMONY: I think a lot of it has to do with injuries, where you think you're going to be a really good team and then you lose two starters. It was just us continuing to recruit, get good players, and then make sure that they perform.

Even when you go in the transfer portal, you never know what type of player you're going to get, whether they have injuries that they're not telling you about or they ended up being starters or they're coming off the bench. You never know what you're getting.

We stayed steady. We kept on growing the program. We've been good. We should have won last year. We lost three games, home games. We had a kid that went down with an injury, and then ended up being back to back games, three of them, and it would have been a co-championship for us.

But to get the first championship, no matter what school you're at, is always the hardest thing to break through because you're lecturing your kids saying we want to win. We want to win the tournament. We want to get rings. They don't know what that means.

Now the players that are on the team can tell the young ones, this is our standard, this is our goals, and that's why. But it's like talking to them and goes in one ear, out the other when you talk about that kind of stuff until you get the tradition. And then they start seeing that, and that's what they want to do every single year. Give them one taste of it, and they want it back.

You eat a piece of cake. You know how good that cake is. You want another piece tomorrow. That's kind of what we have our kids thinking and feeling. Then I think it will just make this team go every year, we can be competing and getting ready to get back here again. Now that's the next goal. We've been here. Now I want to do it again, and I want to do better than we did last year.

Q. My second question, speaking of getting a taste of the cake, y'all played Florida State this year. Florida State and Duke are worlds apart from personnel and things like that. But the fact that you played an ACC school this year, does that matter now because they're two different teams in the same conference? How do you approach that? Is there anything you can glean from playing a program like Florida State that you had success against to take into tomorrow?



ROBIN HARMONY: We look at it as a Power 4 team in their own gym on the road, and it's the same thing we're doing here. It's a Power 4 team in their home court, and it's just the experiences that we've been putting together that have prepared the kids to win a championship and be here at the NCAA Tournament.

Q. Robin, is your mom making it down? Is she going to experience this? Are you going to take a moment with her?

ROBIN HARMONY: 100. They'll going to get here in a couple hours. Hershey, Pennsylvania, is almost the opposite direction we came in. So 350 miles. They're locked and loaded and driving this way.

THE MODERATOR: Awesome. Thanks, coach. We appreciate your time. Good luck tomorrow.

ROBIN HARMONY: Thanks.

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