

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - Vermont vs Louisville

Friday, March 20, 2026

Louisville, Kentucky, USA

KFC YUM! Center

Vermont Catamounts

Alisa Kresge

Keira Hansen

Nikola Preide

Jadyn Weltz

Media Conference

THE MODERATOR: We'll take questions for the student-athletes.

Q. Obviously this team has been to the tournament before, but this year has been such a success for you guys. Overall, what has this season been like for you, how enjoyable has it been and getting to be here?

JADYN WELTZ: Yeah, it's been a great year for our team and our program. It's just been really fun getting to know as a newcomer getting to know this team, getting to know these players and these coaches. It's just been really fun and I can't wait to keep going with this group.

NIKOLA PREIDE: Completely agree. It's obviously really nice to have her here on this team, especially this year. But without her we could not be able to do this. So it's super fun, obviously. Doing this two years in a row I feel like it shows to our teammates that it is possible and again it was super fun to be here and just to get here.

KEIRA HANSEN: I think this is such a special group and we've had a lot of moments this year that helped us grow so I'm excited to see what else we can do.

Q. Louisville's obviously a really, really tough team. What have you kind of learned about them in your preparation, and what do you feel like you guys have to do to compete with them tomorrow.

KEIRA HANSEN: Definitely very athletic notoriously good team. Pulling from past experiences, staying together,



being disciplined, knowing our roles and just leaving it all out there is really what we're going to do.

NIKOLA PREIDE: I agree with leaving everything out there. As a senior obviously this could be my last game, so just trying my hardest being locked in 24/7 just really like pushing myself and doing everything that I can to win.

JADYN WELTZ: Yeah, alongside of that, I think just putting pressure in the preparation and just being ready all week is going to help us on Saturday. Just staying disciplined I think has helped our team this whole year. Just getting back to what we know, playing team basketball, and just trusting in each other and our abilities.

Q. Has there been any team this season that plays like Louisville or that you've been able to pull from in terms of preparation or experiences you've had?

JADYN WELTZ: Yeah, I think we're really lucky. We had a great non-conference and then we had a great conference schedule as well. I think we're taking a little bit of everything from each of those matchups. We played some length, we played some athletic ability and we've played some physicality. So I think just taking what worked well against those teams and just bringing it forward with us.

NIKOLA PREIDE: If I would have to say a team I would say UMBC in our conference. They're super athletic, super quick, they will run in transition, they're also aggressive. So I feel like if you have to compare those two I would say those are the most similar to me personally.

KEIRA HANSEN: Yeah, basically what they said. UMBC very good at the mid-range, very athletic, very good. Really knowing our strengths and playing into the strengths and just controlling what we can control.

Q. Going off of that, if you all had to describe your strengths either individually or as a team, what would you say those are.

KEIRA HANSEN: As a team I think everyone's so capable of doing any type of role. No one really has a boxed in



role. If one game you're not hitting your shots the scout's more focused on you there's always that trust that someone sells ready to step up. I think that's a great thing we've been doing all season.

NIKOLA PREIDE: Yeah, we play as a team. As she said previously, if one of us doesn't have the best game, everyone else will pick the person up. We always have team defense, team offense, we share the ball. On defense we help each other. So I feel like playing as a team has really been our strength.

JADYN WELTZ: Yeah, I completely agree. Definitely we play team basketball. It can be anyone's night at any point. I think that we have a great coaching staff that prepares us to step up and have these moments.

Q. Not related to tomorrow's game, but is there any favorite March Madness memory from growing up you remember watching that makes you really excited to be playing in it tomorrow?

JADYN WELTZ: I think just seeing the game of all, especially from the women's side has been really exciting to follow for the entirety of my career. I think being a part of it now when it's getting to its peak is really exciting and it's a big honor, for sure. So no specific memory for me, but just seeing the way it's been changing in the past few years.

NIKOLA PREIDE: To me personally because I'm not around here I'm from Latvia, March Madness wasn't really a big thing, especially not in my family. So I didn't know anything when I came here. But I remember my freshman year when we had to play UConn I was like, wow, I've seen so many videos about them and especially Paige Bueckers, obviously, and just seeing her in real life was crazy to me.

KEIRA HANSEN: Yeah, playing UConn freshman year definitely was magical. Also I loved to see all the Cinderella stories like St. Peter's a few years ago it's just inspirational and you always want a chance to make that same thing happen so I think that definitely makes this whole experience more special.

Q. Along those same lines, a big talking point in women's basketball this year has been the growing parity and how much more even through conferences and Nationwide. Curious, even throughout the time of your careers if you've noticed a growing parity in this sport?

KEIRA HANSEN: Sorry, what does parity mean in this case?

Q. (No Microphone.)

KEIRA HANSEN: Definitely. Actually, in our conference I noticed throughout the years I think the competition has just been growing and I see across all types of conferences. I think definitely the skill level, it doesn't really matter high major, Mid Major, even DIII, you see all these upsets. So it's kind of exciting and definitely inspires all of us.

NIKOLA PREIDE: Yeah, it's super exciting, obviously throughout the years it's becoming more and more obvious that the Cinderella stories are actually like true and you can do it. Our men's soccer team won last year the whole thing, so that was amazing to see. Obviously also it's just exciting, because we can also do it.

JADYN WELTZ: Yeah, I think to each of their points, the investment in women's sports right now is through the roof and I think just putting that effort to put women on the biggest stages of the world, it's growing that talent across the board and everyone wants to do it now. So it's been exciting to see how anyone can compete with anyone.

Q. You ladies were talking about the experience at UConn. Obviously here in Louisville maybe not quite the UConn level, but it's one of the most attended programs in the country. How much does that experience that y'all had as freshmen or as younger players, at UConn, how much will that help you get ready for what you're expecting tomorrow?

JADYN WELTZ: Personally I wasn't on that team that year, but it goes back to leaning into my teammates who have that experience. I'm really grateful to be able to lean on them in these times.

NIKOLA PREIDE: Playing against UConn and NC State last year it was an amazing experience, all the crowd, like the fans and everyone just being so loud. I feel like the past experiences is just you know what's about to come, especially for tomorrow's game. So just being ready and just being excited.

KEIRA HANSEN: Yeah, like they said, seeing it on TV is much different than actually feeling it. Playing at NC State last year was also super valuable experience. I knew I thought I was going to throw up before the game, but then obviously you know the nerves settle, it's all the same game, so definitely I'm going to pull from those experiences.

Q. Now that you guys have had a chance to come down here and check out the arena, obviously this is



one of the largest basketball arenas in the country, regardless of the level. So what are your thoughts kind of just on the size of the place, how loud this place can get and having the ability to try to calm down any nerves that might be coming up just with all the eyeballs that will be on you guys.

KEIRA HANSEN: Yeah, we're excited. I think this whole season we've been preparing for high pressure moments and all different times of gyms. Obviously this will be a huge challenge but I think it's a good opportunity to really show all the hard work we've put in to prepare.

NIKOLA PREIDE: It's going to be an amazing experience. Obviously I'm really emotional player in that kind of way, especially seeing all the Vermont fans that will come to this game. I'm just super excited especially with all the crowd and just hearing everyone -- and being here with my teammates, with both of them, my last year, just super excited.

JADYN WELTZ: Same here, I couldn't be more grateful to be in this position. It's definitely a privilege to be able to play at the biggest stage for college athletics. So just going to take in this moment and embrace it.

THE MODERATOR: All right, thank you. We'll be back with coach in a moment.

(Pause.)

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with an opening statement from coach.

ALISA KRESGE: Thank you so much for having us. Louisville has been a great host so far. Obviously this is a goal to be here every year and we're really proud of our group to be here. They're working hard and we know we have a tough task ahead of us, but again, I think where our program's at is this is the stage we want to be on every year and we're excited to be here and show everybody what Vermont's made of.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you. Let's open it up to questions.

Q. You mentioned the standard is to be here every year. The last few years have obviously been really successful for you guys. What's enabled you to have that level of success at Vermont?

ALISA KRESGE: Yeah, I think a big key is the people. It starts from our administration and obviously the biggest piece is our players. Players that are bought in, want to do it the right way, pick an institution that the academics that

means something. And then stays. The consistency that we've been able to have. There's definitely been conversations and things said to players and they realize that Vermont's a special place and they want to finish what they started with a group that they love and the people that really have I think helped them grow. I think that's been the biggest key for us.

Q. Without giving away your game plan what are some keys for the game, in your eyes, for tomorrow?

ALISA KRESGE: Yeah, we got to take care of the basketball and then we got to slow down their offense they are really, really good at scoring the ball, scoring at a high level, a lot of weapons on the floor. So we obviously want to try to slow them down a little. That's going to be a tough task. Then we have to get opportunities. So we got to take care of the basketball.

Q. Your players talked about those previous experiences you guys have had with whether it's UConn or NC State and how those have kind of helped them leading up to this. What have you personally learned from those experiences with your teams playing kind of at a similar level to what they're going to face tomorrow against Louisville?

ALISA KRESGE: Honestly, it's to be us. Not to change anything. We prepped for this game like we prepped for every single game all year. Just to have that same mentality. The last thing we want to do is rock the boat going into any game, especially at this level. So just staying consistent to who we are, staying focused on the task at hand has been a big thing about our players. But really that, being us is really important.

Q. Along those same lines, what is your scout on Louisville and what do you feel you and your team need to do in order to post an upset tomorrow?

ALISA KRESGE: Yeah, like I said, we're going to definitely have to try to slow down their offense, because they can score a lot of points. Slow them down, obviously rebounds are going to be a big key. They're great, they have size, they have length. I think they're really good at attacking the boards. We got to get opportunities. We got to handle the pressure, whether their full court pressing, their hassling the ball, we're going to have to get ourselves opportunities. Obviously see the ball go down is going to be a key as well.

Q. I asked your players this as well, but a big talking point over this year and the last few years has been the growing parity of the sport. I'm curious firsthand kind of what you've experienced in that regard, if

you've seen it growing even just in your league or nationally as well.

ALISA KRESGE: Yeah, I think starting with our league, and I've been in the league now 10 years and I thought this year our league, top to bottom, was the most dangerous I've ever seen. We had three teams go win a post-season game yesterday, which is awesome for our league. But I really just felt like every night was a grind in our league. I think you're seeing that in a lot of leagues. I think women's basketball, what an exciting time. The sport is just so impressive, the women are so amazing. They're doing it at an elite level and everyone's rallying behind them. It's a really fun time. Everyone keeps getting better. There's things that our players are doing that I couldn't even have dreamed of doing when I was a player. So just a really impressive time for women's basketball and our league. It was really fun to be in the league this year, just because I thought there was so much parity, on any night you thought it was anybody's chance to win.

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