

# NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - Rhode Island vs Alabama

Saturday, March 21, 2026

Louisville, Kentucky, USA

KFC YUM! Center

## Alabama Crimson Tide

**Kristy Curry**

**Essence Cody**

**Jessica Timmons**

Media Conference

Alabama - 68, Rhode Island - 55

KRISTY CURRY: First of all, I just want to congratulate Rhode Island on an amazing season, 28 WINS and a phenomenal group of young women who play the game the right way. Tammi and her staff do a great job. Incredible respect.

We knew coming in it was going to be incredibly difficult. I know today is hard for them. It's not fun. There's always going to be one of us that feels a little better. I just have a lot of respect for their program. Their fan base was phenomenal today. Just want to congratulate them on an amazing season.

I think today our kids just showed a lot of resilience. We were able to weather some runs. We were intentional when those happened. We did it with a lot of toughness and grit that we pride ourselves on. Just really proud of the way -- I think they were trying to really defend the 3. So we found other ways to dominate the paint and get to the free-throw line.

It's what we're prepared for. We're built for this, having been in our league, and we see this a lot. I thought our kids did a nice job of countering with their decision-making offensively down the stretch.

**Q. Jessica, Essence picked up her third foul there within like 70 seconds of the start of the second half. Rhode Island gets it within four a couple of times, but then you guys were able to put on a run to really put the game away. What did you all do on the court without Essence to really help put the clamps on**



**Rhode Island and put the game away?**

JESSICA TIMMONS: First of all, I want to give credit to Essence. She started the game phenomenal, hitting three 3s, getting to the basket. Sometimes in games you're going to have three fouls, but she kept playing. But we always tell ourselves teams are going to go on runs.

It's the mindset we have to keep playing. We know, if we play together, play within our system and listen to our coaches, we're going to end up on top. We just kept playing. She got back in the game, continued to play the way she's supposed to play. So we just kept playing.

**Q. Jess, you mentioned before this tournament that you were excited to be playing and having the opportunity. How special was today and just being able to leave it out there on the floor with your team?**

JESSICA TIMMONS: It's very special. It just gives me a sense of gratitude. We live by grit, love, and gratitude, and the program at Alabama has put a lot of confidence in me. They have a lot of trust in me. The coaching staff, all the people that came out to help us, it means a lot.

Just to go out there and play for the state of Alabama, rep the city of Tuscaloosa and have another opportunity to put on a jersey with my sisters is something that I'll always imagine. But just to go out here each day and compete with these girls, it just means the world to me.

So we're going to keep pushing because no one wants the season to end.

**Q. Essence, you guys as a whole were really efficient tonight. You especially didn't miss a shot until the fourth quarter started. What allowed you to really find your spots tonight and have success and be that efficient?**

ESSENCE CODY: Just continue to work. I've been working on 3s my whole life, and I just keep developing my shot. Just allowing the game just to come to me and helping my teammates and them helping me, just encouraging each other.



**Q. Jess, y'all only took ten 3s today. Can you just speak on the aggressiveness and your mindset going downhill in this game?**

JESSICA TIMMONS: Coach Kelly, he emphasized that we needed to get to the basket, Coach Kristy as well. We're a 3-point shooting team. A lot of teams' game plan is going to be to run us off the line, and if they do, we're going to score in the paint.

That's something our coaches really emphasize in huddles, getting to the free-throw line. Coach Kristy always tells us we want to have more free throws than they make. That was our goal. I believe I had a couple and ones, Essence got in there and had a couple of layups.

It's just a team effort. Diana started it with the way she attacked downhill, and she had a tremendous game. Essence had a tremendous game. Just the emphasis, our coaches tell us before the game, and then our preparation.

**Q. This is for either of them. Just with Essence being able to step back and hit a 3, how much does that maybe spread the floor and open things up for the guards? Essence, how much does that open up even you getting down low?**

ESSENCE CODY: It opens up a lot. Paint touches with me just shooting the 3, it opens up a lot in the paint. And just me being on the bucket opens a lot on the 3 and just allowing everybody to be open and just looking for each other.

**Q. Karly talked about it yesterday, the team wants to make sure that they do more little things -- or you all wanted to make sure you did more little things correctly than Rhode Island did. What were some of those little things that you think made the difference today?**

JESSICA TIMMONS: I think just continuing to play hard. I don't think we rebounded the ball as well as we're supposed to. So we're just going to move that forward to next game.

I believe a lot of our girls played through fouls. We hustled. We attacked the rim. With the basketball, you're not going to check everything down the list, but just our coaches emphasizing to keep playing. I feel like we had the mentality to go downhill, and I feel like that was really the separator, make sure we defend.

What we can always control is our defense, and I think they hit a couple 3s. They're a really good team, really

good coached team, but we just outran them, out hustled them, and that kind of led to the win today.

**Q. Coach, midway through that first half, your team held Rhode Island, I think it was 1 of 19 shooting, and that also included a couple of shot clock violations. Was that as good of a defensive run as you've seen from your team this year? What kind of propelled that? What caused that?**

KRISTY CURRY: I think it was a really good run. We've had some of those, and I just think our league has prepared us. It's really, really hard to defend. They're very difficult because they're so well coached. We were playing blocks and elbows and making sure we're a heavy gap presence and wanted to keep them in front of us. They do a phenomenal job of getting to the free-throw line, and they shoot the free throw really well.

We were playing percentages. Analytically they make close to five 3s a game, and we were just wanting to keep them in front and contest every shot. So I thought our kids did a really nice job of staying consistent with the game plan.

I thought that gave us a lot of energy when we started to see success with the tendencies and how we wanted to play. Without going zone, I think you have to keep them out of sync. I thought we were able to execute.

Our shot might not have been the prettiest and we may not have rebounded, but I think when you can defend like that, you give yourself a chance to get your transition game going.

**Q. Coach, can you just talk about how -- what it was today, whether matchup or tendencies or whatever that let your guards get downhill so effectively?**

KRISTY CURRY: You just take what the defense gives you. We feel like we do a really good job of teaching, especially our position coaches, of countering the tendencies. If they take the 3 away, we've seen it all year. Everybody understands we want to make a one-second decision and shoot the first open shot. If we don't do that, let's move the ball. Let's get the ball to the paint, play off two feet, make good choices, and if they don't stop you, put it on the rim.

I just thought we did a nice job of countering however they were guarding us, and it was beneficial to us today. We always want to make more free throws than they shoot. I think they shot 14, and we made 14. So that was important to get to the bonus early and often.

**Q. Can you just talk about the growth of those players who decided to return this season. Last tournament they were here and now to this year. Just talk about what you've seen from them in a year.**

KRISTY CURRY: Thank you for coming up, by the way, and thank you for covering us all year. We really appreciate you.

It's an unbelievable story in that locker room of really believing in the front of their chest in a transactional time that we're in. We talk a lot about Alabama being relationship oriented and talk about grit, love, and gratitude. They can be the hardest worker in the room and play for the front of their chest more than the back.

It's Karly and Jess with Sarah Ashlee, and Aaliyah, and Zaay. Now it's Essence and Diana right after these two. So really an amazing group of people. I always say it's the person that makes the player special and it's more important to be a good person than it is to be a good player. Just the commitment they've made to the program to help us continue -- the standard is now we're getting to the tournament, and we want to advance.

So just really proud of the culture in our locker room. The best locker rooms are player led. We try to set the tone, but again, association brings on assimilation, and those kids deserve all the credit for the culture.

**Q. One, just with everything Essence has been through this year, how happy were you to watch her have a game like this on this stage? Also, just how much does that help the offense kind of spread out?**

KRISTY CURRY: It really does. She missed seven games with the ankle and then had the concussion in the SEC, didn't play against Texas. Naomi's had a few bumps and bruises.

The versatility you saw from Essence, honestly the play going in was to play her some at the 4 and Naomi at the 5. For some reason we weren't able to do that. Y'all, for real, Essence had the best week and a half of practice than I've seen because she's been healthier than she's been.

I'm just really proud of her stepping up in big moments. She understands this stage, and she just wants to help her team win. I'm really proud of her because she has looked amazing the last week and a half. I just kept going don't let anything happen. Don't let her get hurt. Don't let anybody step on her or anything.

I'm so grateful that we're at this point this week, and she had an amazing day, but I've seen it every day in practice

now since we got back from the SEC Tournament.

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