

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - Holy Cross vs Michigan

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Crisler Center

Michigan Wolverines Coach Kim Barnes Arico Mila Holloway Brooke Quarles Daniels

Media Conference

Michigan 83, Holy Cross 48

KIM BARNES ARICO: I was really happy with the way that our team came out of the gates. It's been a minute since we had our last game, and we've been prepping for like 10 practices, so I thought we came out with great defense, great intensity, and really making shots on the offensive end. Holy Cross is a really solid team, and they were coming off a championship. It's nice to survive and advance, be one of 32 teams left playing and moving on.

It was an unbelievable crowd. It was a great environment. It was awesome to be at home and just proud of the way our players competed.

Q. Mila, you talked a little bit at the beginning of the season about how you want to take on more of a scoring role. Now it's March, and you put up the most points tonight and you're really maneuvering this entire offense in that fourth quarter. Can you speak a little bit to that growth?

MILA HOLLOWAY: Yeah, with us having such great players on our team, they draw a lot of attention, so it opens up a lot of scoring opportunities for me, and I'm just glad I could deliver tonight. They found me in the right spots. I think we did a great job of just moving the basketball today, so for sure.

Q. Mila, with your scoring today, you made five three-pointers. Can you talk about how that boosts your confidence and how you're feeling about your shot today?



MILA HOLLOWAY: Yeah, I've definitely been struggling with my shot in the past few games, but our confidence and belief in one another never wavers. It's constant positive touches, constant -- yeah, just our constant belief in one another just kind of boosted me to hit those shots today, I guess.

Q. For both of you, what was different about playing an NCAA Tournament game at home compared to last year?

BROOKE QUARLES DANIELS: Yeah, I think last year we really felt like the atmosphere, the environment and the crowd that was there at Notre Dame. Losing like that left a bad taste in our mouth, and we said at the end of the season just for Jordan and Greta, we wanted to come back and host this year, so we kind of took that personal. We knew what it felt like to have that environment on your side.

Q. How much do you think your defensive pressure early threw Holy Cross off their game?

BROOKE QUARLES DANIELS: I think that's one of the things Coach Arico and our coaching staff has been challenging us on is our defensive pressure. We're forcing a lot of turnovers, and it generates a lot of our offense, and we kind of lost a little bit of our identity the last couple of games, and that was something that we've been challenged in during practice to really keep it up, and I think we saw that today, and we're back to playing how we usually play.

Q. Could you talk a little bit about the atmosphere and how that kind of affected you and helped your game?

BROOKE QUARLES DANIELS: Yeah, I think we all -- me, Syla, Liv and Te, we had a meeting with Maize Rage to see how we can get more people out there, and with them showing up and having that atmosphere, our community, our alumni, it's just nothing like no other with the Michigan atmosphere and the environment and the community. It's a big win for us.

Q. You guys dominated tonight, especially in the first quarter. Can you talk us through what you were



seeing from Holy Cross on the defensive end that allowed us to do so?

MILA HOLLOWAY: Yeah, Coach has been talking a lot about playing simple basketball and kind of slowing down and making reads, so I'd say we put emphasis on that tonight, sending cutters through, trying to draw two and hit the open person. We've been trying to get them into chase actions, just do a better job of playing in the flow of the offense, so I think we did a good job of that tonight.

Q. I was curious, you guys were 40-point favorites coming into this game. What do you take from a game like this?

BROOKE QUARLES DANIELS: We're just playing Michigan basketball. We're not really focused on any type of favorites or any outside noise. We know what we came here to do, and we know what we're capable of, so I think just taking it one day at a time and pouring into each other and believing in our focus and our mission.

Q. You guys were able to play a lot of the bench players late in the game, got some good experience. How much does that help in a tournament run to be able to get that kind of playing time?

BROOKE QUARLES DANIELS: It means a lot. We're all very close to each other with 14 kids on the team. We're all pouring into each other. We hang out every day, and we kind of said before, let's put them in a position where they can play in some of their first NCAA Tournaments, so it just means a lot to have them out there and get those touches because it's their dream, too.

Q. Mila, Holy Cross matched your point total in that second quarter, 16-16. I was curious what you think they did well in that quarter and some things that maybe you guys hope to improve on going forward?

MILA HOLLOWAY: Yeah, we had a lot of miscommunications that quarter just in the screening actions, allowing slips, and just not playing hard enough. Coach has been harping on us doing the 1 percent more, diving on the loose balls, doing the extra for the 50/50, boxing out, and we weren't doing that in the second quarter. Yeah, that's something we've got to work out moving forward.

Q. You guys have been talking a lot about playing Michigan basketball and even before the game how you wanted to return to that Michigan basketball, that identity. How do you guys think you did that today?

BROOKE QUARLES DANIELS: I think we did it by

listening to our coaches, listening to the scout, pouring into one another. I think one of the biggest things that shapes Michigan basketball right now is our versatility and our depth, and I think when we're able to sub two and three people at a time and there's no dropoff, I think that's what helps us, allowing our core sophomore group to be able to get a blow sometimes.

We had five people in double digits, so that really helps our team, and multiple people with two or three steals, multiple assists. I just think Michigan basketball is our versatility and our consistency and our depth.

Q. Coach, my colleague over there already mentioned that Holy Cross was able to stick with your team for the second and third quarters. Walk us through what you guys need to improve on going forward in the tournament?

KIM BARNES ARICO: Yeah, I think Holy Cross is a really experienced team. I think they play together all the time, and at times we had lapses on the defensive end because of their reads and because of their cuts. When you have a senior-laden team like they do and you have the experience like they do -- one of their players started 130 games. I mean, that's impressive.

So I think we have a little defensive lapse in defensive communications, and it could be fatigue, it could be in the course of the game. So those type of things happen which gave Holy Cross an opportunity to score some buckets.

I think our pressure obviously was something that they're not accustomed to, and we were able to really jump on them in the beginning, and sometimes young players have a tendency to play the score or relax and take their foot off the gas a little bit, and I don't want to say that we necessarily did that because I think Holy Cross is a really good team, and they made us do that because of their execution.

I think it was a combination of those things.

Q. You guys scored 27 points in the first quarter, 26 in the fourth quarter. Just talk about what you saw from your offensive stats and how you were able to execute that game plan offensively?

KIM BARNES ARICO: Yeah, I just think we were able to jump on them. I think the pace at which we play, the physicality at which we play and the defense which we play really was able to jump on them right away, and that's why we were able to get out in transition and out and score.

I think they settled, to your point, and played a little bit



calmer in the second quarter, but our offense and our pace is really incredible, and we forced 20 turnovers and had about 20 points off of our turnovers.

I think we sped them up and really started the game with great pace. We have incredible, incredible scorers in Olivia Olson, who was named an All-American this week. Obviously she's one of the best scorers in the country, and so was Sylva Swords. But when you have the balanced attack of Mila Holloway having a night like day and Brooke adding contributions and then Te'Yala coming in and being another double-figure scorer, I think, like Brooke alluded to, our versatility, it's hard to defend. Who are you putting your best defender on? Who are you putting your second best defender on? Who are you putting your third best defender on?

I think when we have an offense that's clicking like that, it makes it really hard to stop.

Q. Besides winning the game, what were your goals you were hoping to accomplish tonight, and how close do you think you came to accomplishing those?

KIM BARNES ARICO: Yeah, I'm just trying to look at this for the first time. I know we wanted to force 20 turnovers. That's always something. And for us the positive assist-to-turnover, 17 assists to only nine turnovers, single-digit turnovers for us is really good. Then we wanted to be plus 16 on the boards. I think we were plus 15. So pretty close.

We also wanted to hold them to 14 points a quarter, and we did that in all but one quarter. I think we were really close in achieving all of those team goals we had for tonight.

Q. Looking forward to the next game, what stands out about NC State and Tennessee?

KIM BARNES ARICO: Yeah, when you think about NC State -- I think I said this the other day. When you think about NC State, you think about Kay Yow and their tradition and when you think about Tennessee you think about Pat Summitt and her legacy and their tradition, and they are two of the most basketball-rich programs ever, and they're here hanging out in Ann Arbor. It's pretty cool. I'm excited to watch them both play. They're unbelievable programs, NCAA championship programs, NCAA Final Four programs, and we get to host them. That's really cool.

Just excited to watch the game tonight, but two great teams that are here.

Q. I wanted to ask about the first quarter, the defensive pressure and speeding them up. What did you see on film that made you think that was going to work?

KIM BARNES ARICO: Well, I mean, watching them on film, they don't really turn the basketball over a lot. I think they average maybe 10 turnovers a game, so I didn't see them turn it over that much.

But I just think it's who we are. It's our identity, and it's something that we've been able to do all year.

I also thought our length would be really disruptive. They are smaller than we are. Their size is a little bit different. I thought that that would -- our speed and our length and our athleticism would speed them up, even though they're not accustomed to turning it over.

That's just how we play, and I think we were able to jump on them right away.

Q. Kim, Mila seems to play, at least tonight, unhurried. There's a calm about her. She can change pace and so forth. I'm thinking about that end of the quarter shot, the speed dribble, the lull and wait for the screen and rise up. What does that do for the team with that kind of energy, with that kind of control on a night like tonight?

KIM BARNES ARICO: Yeah, Mila never changes demeanor, and I think as a point guard, she's so even keel. That's pretty special.

I think the other thing about her is we are so fortunate. I tell her every day, the things that she does, and you guys saw that tonight, are not easy and not a lot of people around the country can do that. I feel fortunate that she is our point guard.

Her ability to get open against any pressure, her ability to handle any pressure, her change of speed is phenomenal, her handle is phenomenal.

She doesn't get sped up. When you have someone on your team that can handle that type of pressure and not get sped up, it really makes a difference, and she has been that for us for the last two years.

I mean, she's harder on herself than anyone. She's a great three-point shooter. She probably doesn't take enough, and I'm glad tonight that she did. The one that she banked in, I was really teasing her about. But I guess when it's falling for you, it's falling for you.

But she's just a special player, and you put her alongside those other really special players, and we got a chance to create something special, and that's obviously why we're here today and hosting.

Q. This past off-season you were able to pick up Ashley Sofilkanch, the 2025 Patriot League Player of the Year. She's been able to find a lot of success in the Big Ten and she's been a key piece for your team this season. What do you think that says about the competition of the Patriot League?

KIM BARNES ARICO: I mean, my husband played football at Lehigh. I know the Patriot League. The Patriot League is a great basketball league. It's a great league overall, high academic league, and really talented players.

They have great teams top to bottom. I think Ashley was one of those players last year. We needed a post. She averaged like 16 points a game last year, eight rebounds a game. When she was named the Player of the Year and her team didn't win the league, that's always an incredible honor, as well. Usually that goes to the team that wins the league. So I knew that she would be able to help us.

I think there's probably a lot of players in that league that can help us. I think it has to be a right fit, and Ashley was a position that we needed, and the fit was there. She has been an incredible addition to our team. She gives us that inside presence. She gives us that rebounding presence, and she gives us that Jersey toughness.

Q. Mila, again, had a great night, and just looking at her season, it's been a lot of progression from her. What do you as a coach feel like has really spurred this progression, especially in that point scoring role?

KIM BARNES ARICO: Yeah, I mean, I think one of the things that our sophomore class last year said at the end of the season is they were staying. They weren't going anywhere. They believed in the vision. They believed in Michigan, and they wanted to commit to improving.

Freshman year is really hard, whether you're a great player, whether you're a talented player, whether you're an average player, whether you're not even a player. Freshman year in college is really, really hard.

So I think it was an adjustment for all of our freshmen last year. So they have a year of experience under their belt. Mila Holloway was our starting point guard; we opened her freshman year playing South Carolina.

I think the competition that we've played -- we've played UConn, we've played Vanderbilt, we've played UCLA,

we've played all these top teams. We play in the Big Ten conference, the best conference in college basketball. We have prepared her for these moments, and she's put in the work.

She loves the game of basketball. She's driven. She's passionate. She played Canada basketball in the summer, her and Sylva played on the U-19 team. She's a student of the game. She meets with me pretty much almost every day, where can I get better, what plays should I know, how can I get these guys in situations to be successful and where can I find my spots.

She was always a great scorer. I always tell the story I would go watch her AAU games, and she would defer, defer, defer because she had really great players around her, and then there was this one tournament where she didn't defer. She had some family there, and she just balled out, and I said, Mila, I didn't realize you have all of that.

So now I know she can score. I knew since she was in high school that she can score. I challenge her to find that balance every day. I think that's an incredibly difficult things for point guards to figure out, and for her to be a sophomore and to find her spots and still have seven assists and still find her teammates, I think, is really special, and like I said, she's a special player, and she's a great fit for us.

Q. Sylva you mentioned, she started off 5 for 5 from the field. Your sets for her off the ball were amazing, those double screen actions, getting her open. She's so talented with the ball in her hands. How is someone like that so important for a deep run in this tournament?

KIM BARNES ARICO: Yeah, I just think Sylva Swords is the most unselfish player probably in the country. We have a bunch of them on our team. But she is always deferring to everyone else, and I always have to remind her another player, what a coach's problem, remind them, no, you have to shoot. Before every game, I'm like, okay, Sylva, we have to get like 15 shots today, okay, Sylva, we have to get this many shots today, because she just really truly cares only about winning the game. She doesn't care about her statistics. She just wants to play her butt off and for Michigan to be successful.

But for us to make a deep run, the ball needs to touch her hands. I mean, Olivia Olson, as well, Mila Holloway, as well. You saw them tonight. The consistency that Olivia Olson has shown all season long has been absolutely incredible. But you get her and Sylva clicking together, that's a really dynamic duo and really hard to stop.

Then Mila has a night like tonight, you can add that to the mix, and Te'Yala Delfosse, another sophomore came in and gave us tremendous minutes off the bench.

But I think that's the great thing is you can go deep down our roster and say that about multiple people. But Sylva is just different. She was an Olympian as a high school kid for a reason. Her international experience, her basketball IQ, her quick release and her ability to shoot the ball is amazing. She has incredible, incredible touch, so we need to make sure we get her more shots, always more shots.

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