

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

Friday, March 20, 2026

Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA

Crisler Center

Holy Cross Crusaders

Coach Candice Green

Meg Cahalan

Kaitlyn Flanagan

Simone Foreman

Mary-Elizabeth Donnelly

Media Conference

Michigan 83, Holy Cross 48

CANDICE GREEN: Really impressed with our team and how we competed today. Obviously Michigan is a fantastic team, a well-deserved 2 seed. They play with a lot of pace, super aggressive, but I thought our senior leadership once we settled into things was really, really good. I'm happy our seniors go out here with a bang.

Q. Kaitlyn and Meg, what does it mean for you to have this number of people in the room here for you? I see two of your teammates, I see the president of the school, I see the athletic director. Can you talk a bit about the support you guys have had this week?

KAITLYN FLANAGAN: Yeah, Mary Donnelly, Simone Foreman sitting over there. Obviously love having our teammates to support. But having people travel this far to have our team's back, it means so much. Across from our bench, all of our family, our friends sitting there, it really does help you in a situation like this. You're in a huge arena, a lot of fans, obviously, for the home team, which much deserved, but having that little sea of purple across from that bench and being able to look up and see them and hear them during the game they made themselves heard, it means a lot to us for sure.

MEG CAHALAN: Yeah, I would also shout out the band and the cheer team. They flew all this way. They missed three days of school. Obviously at our school that's hard to



do. I just want to shout them out as well. They gave great energy throughout the three days.

Q. Kaitlyn, Meg, you guys, four years on this team. Just the camaraderie as Coach mentioned that you guys have built, looking back at your Holy Cross careers, what's a moment or a memory that you'll remember?

MEG CAHALAN: I mean, I think I'll always look back at winning this year against Lehigh, doing it on our home court, doing it as the four seniors. Every senior had a great game that game. I could not have written a better ending for my Patriot League career. So definitely that moment. It was definitely the proudest I have ever been of myself and my teammates in a game.

Probably when I look back at my four years, I'll always just remember that one as a little bit extra special.

KAITLYN FLANAGAN: Yeah, I think I'd second that. It's hard to capture a whole year and pick one moment. I think I would pick like 10 moments from this year. The four of us talked a lot about big games that we wanted to win that maybe we had lost in the past. We had never swept Colgate in our league. We hadn't beaten BC. We hadn't beaten Vermont. Those were all things we were so determined to do, and I think those were the things that fueled us. Those were big steps forward that built that confidence and brought us even closer together which I didn't think was possible, but it did.

So I can't even pick one, sorry. I'm cheating.

Q. Obviously a tough task going up against No. 2 seed Michigan. How do they compare against some of the other top teams you've faced in your career?

KAITLYN FLANAGAN: I mean, they're definitely up there. I think their pace is something that we haven't played against. Even against some of those big names like we played Iowa, UConn, Duke this year, this is probably the best pace that we've faced. They are just so good. Make or miss, they are pushing the ball down the court, and they play so well as a unit with that and they have so many



weapons that they can push the ball with. Everybody can bring the ball up, and I think that's something we don't see a lot. I would definitely say that sets them apart for sure from some of the other big teams that we have played.

Q. Meg, I got to sort of observe the moment at the start of the game at center with you and Ashley. You talked yesterday about how special it was going to be to see her. What did you say? What was that moment like at the start of the game, just the two of you at center court waiting for this thing to get started?

MEG CAHALAN: I actually said to her, I feel like we've done this before. I tried to crack a little joke there.

But yeah, we were just talking the whole game, obviously. We've known each other for so long, and with her and I, we're really great friends, but it's always a competition when we're on the court. I've been battling her since I was, I think, 12 years old. I think we have a good competition going between us, so it's always fun. It's always competitive, and yeah, but we know whenever that buzzer goes off, we're back to being great friends.

Q. For that second and third quarter, you were giving a top-10 team in the country a real run for their money. How did you do it?

KAITLYN FLANAGAN: I think that there was definitely a shock in the first quarter, and we kind of came back in the huddle and we said, 0-0. Everybody buys into that. I think that a lot of times we say things and our team is one this year that buys into those things we say, so we came in the huddle, we said 0-0, and we treated it just like that.

Same thing at halftime; we said 0-0, let's try and win this quarter. I think we tied the second, let's try and win the third. Let's chip away.

I think just having that next-play mentality, that's definitely something we draw from Mary and her leadership. I think that is what we drew on to have a little bit more success in the second and third.

Q. This question kind of pertains to all the seniors in the room, but Kaitlyn, for yourself personally, you started every game of your college career, and you kind of book ended the same way that you started it, competing on the highest level in the NCAA Tournament. Talk about what that means to have that kind of an ending and completion of your career in that way.

KAITLYN FLANAGAN: Yeah, it means so much. Going into your senior year, everybody is like, I want to go out on

this high note. Everybody that plays basketball thinks that. Not everybody gets to do it.

I think that as a group, we were just so, so excited to get to come to Michigan, be a 15 seed, play a 2 seed, and like you said, have that super positive ending to what was a really positive four years. You don't always get to end it the way that it was the whole time, but we got to, and I think we're all super grateful for that. We're grateful for each other, and we're grateful that we got to do it with this team and these coaches for sure.

Q. I saw Kendall Eddy went down a little bit there in the first half, took a little while to get back up but continued to fight, persevere and battle the rest of the game. What have both of you kind of seen out of her the last couple of seasons and specifically just her toughness, especially tonight?

MEG CAHALAN: Yeah, we wouldn't have been able to win the Patriot League championship without Kendall. I know she's been battling lower leg injury, shoulder injuries, just constantly being thrown around on the court, and the thing about her, she's always going to get right back up. Her defensive energy, picking up full court, anything that Coach Candice asks her to do, she'll do.

I think she really allows the four seniors to shine in the starting five. So yeah, she's been absolutely irreplaceable for us, and I'm really excited to see what she does next year.

KAITLYN FLANAGAN: Yeah, 100 percent. Her defensive intensity, she gives us those sparks that we need because our team really relies on our defense to get us going, and she's really one of the few people that can do that, that can pick up full court. Us four, we're not really doing that anymore. But she brings that. She brings that energy, she brings that intensity. She holds us accountable. She expects more of us, especially on the defensive end. So we need that, and we appreciate her for that.

Q. There was a sequence near the end of the fourth quarter where Coach brought all four of you seniors in at the same point, and then after that it seemed like you were playing with maybe a more relaxed mindset. Can you just walk me through that looseness you were playing with to end out what was really an insurmountable lead?

MEG CAHALAN: Yeah, obviously the first three quarters we're trying to compete as much as possible. At that point we accepted our fate, and we were just trying to go out there and enjoy our last moments together.

I think this is a group that we play our best when we have fun, when we play loose, so obviously we just wanted to end on a high note, going out, us four of us. That's at least what I was thinking. But yeah.

KAITLYN FLANAGAN: Yeah, second that.

Q. Simone and Mary, to you too, four-year seniors here at Holy Cross. Do you have a moment or a time that you want to reminisce upon, maybe between the four of you, that drew you closer in these four years?

MARY-ELIZABETH DONNELLY: I mean, I think the same thing with the Patriot League championship. The four of us always have a little huddle before every game where we all say, this is our senior moment, and I think after the championship game, the four of us all came together and did that same exact hug and said the same exact thing. It was like, this is the best senior moment ever.

I think it's something that we've worked toward the entire year, and I think our team had -- we've had our ups and downs, but at the end of the day, we all came together during that, and I think that's another turning point of the season was we kind of all came together, like look, we just want to have fun. I don't exactly know the exact practice that happened or anything, but I feel like ever since then, it was a really fun year, and the championship was what we wanted, so I'd say that was the best one.

SIMONE FOREMAN: Yeah, I definitely agree. I would say the championship this year. I feel like from the beginning of summer we've been talking about our goals and what we want to do.

Another highlight is I would say from our freshman year, I feel like right there that really set the standard for us, and every time when we were in the championship our sophomore year or even junior year when we were battling with different things, I think we always, like, went back to that championship, and we were like, we did it this year, like, we can keep doing it again and again and again.

I think the championship this year against Lehigh, it was just very full circle for us, and we just did everything that we always talked about, and I feel like it was so balanced between the seniors. It was just a great win, and it was a great full-circle moment.

Q. Candice, one of your players was talking about the shock during the first quarter. What was it Michigan did that kind of got you guys off balance?

CANDICE GREEN: Yeah, we talked about this even before the game of hey, they're going to shock us. They're

going to punch us three times. Just because obviously our scout does an amazing job, but Michigan is Michigan, and we can't replicate that in practice.

So just that shock of pace, shock of pressure, I think definitely got us on our heels a little bit.

But I thought we were able to recover probably about two minutes left. It was tough, though.

Q. Kaitlyn mentioned this earlier, you guys played UConn last year, Duke this year. How does Michigan compare to some of those teams that you've faced in the past couple years?

CANDICE GREEN: Yeah, I mean, I think it's kind of similar for all of them. It's the talent, it's the skill, it's the physicality, the athleticism, right. Their two guard is six foot, their three guard is 6'1" and a legit 6'1". So just dealing with that kind of physicality is not something we deal with every day. It takes an adjustment.

Q. We'll have plenty of time as student media to talk to you about this game. I want to talk more big picture. What are you most proud of in terms of your four seniors specifically? I want to give you a platform, just anything you got on the four seniors.

CANDICE GREEN: No, it's a great question because so many things come to mind. I think the first thing is just family. Like those guys genuinely love each other. Accountability, that's how you know they're a real family. They can say the hard truths. Then just their ability to fight adversity. Each of them has their own story, and it hasn't been easy for any of them, and I'm just really proud that they have kept this team together, and obviously their legacy is going to be up there. Three championships? That's a pretty good college career. I know I'm jealous.

Q. Obviously Michigan got off to a pretty hot start there, especially sort of in that first quarter. But I was curious what sort of stood out to you and how you felt with the way your team battled, specifically the second and third quarters, only being out-scored by two across those two?

CANDICE GREEN: Yeah, I think Flanny said it, we had come back to the huddle and we were like 0-0. It's not even -- to be honest, guys, it wasn't, let's try to chip away. When you go down 20 in 10 minutes, it's how do we play even. That was a big thing for us is let's play even. We're playing scared, we're playing nervous, and we're not focused.

Again, the environment, the moment, the pressure, right,



being a senior, there's a lot of things that go into why maybe they started that way. But I was proud of them. They were able to collect, refocus and kind of just go step by step, play by play, and just play together.

Q. A little bit after the first quarter, in the second quarter you guys were getting some better looks. What kind of sets were you guys running and how were you able to get better shot selection going down the stretch?

CANDICE GREEN: Yeah, I think at first we were able to get some stops, so we're not going against the press and having to get the ball over half court so that kind of helps. Then for us we settled in and it was, okay, let's run some back door options, let's move the ball, let's take quick shots if they're wide open, otherwise let's try to run multiple actions just because playing at their pace is so difficult.

But yeah, to me it was more just settling in, cutting to the hoop, finding the extra man, and then telling Flanny, hey, we need you to be aggressive.

Q. It's not normal to limit Olivia Olson to 12 points, so what was the game plan you guys came in with to limit her as well as the rest of those sophomore guards, and how do you think your team delivered?

CANDICE GREEN: Yeah, I mean, Olivia Olson is one of the best players I've seen live. I'd like to think our defense was the reason why she struggled today, but she's also an incredible talent.

For us, we put a lot of focus on her. We knew she liked to go right. We knew she liked to pull up. For us, it was how do we get her into a double situation as much as possible and just make her a passer.

I thought Mary did a pretty good job, Janie did a pretty good job using their length, running her off the line, finding her in transition. But yeah, gapping off of everybody except 12.

But yeah, she's an incredible talent, and I thought our girls did a pretty solid job on her. We talked so much about these amazing seniors, but on the other end of the spectrum, Asia gave you a wonderful game today. How does that excite you moving forward with her as just a freshman, and kind of the culture that you've built here moving forward?

CANDICE GREEN: Yeah, I mean, I think it's the Holy Cross way, right, to recycle. Two years ago we won with a great senior class, Bronagh, those guys, and a lot of people were like, uh-oh, who's Holy Cross now without

them, and our seniors rose to that occasion.

For me, Asia is somebody that probably could have went somewhere, played right away, but she understood that she could play behind an all-league amazing leader point guard and learn a lot from her, and I think credit Flanny for taking her under her wing.

Yeah, she's still got some growing to do, but she's got a lot of talent, and she's got a great personality, and she works really hard, so we're very much excited for the future.

Q. In your first full season as a head coach, with the team and second in general and obviously being an assistant in 23-24, coming to the helm, taking all that and getting the buy-in from this senior class and really kind of buying into your leadership and all that stuff, I guess if you could reflect on how unique, how special that is just to have that.

CANDICE GREEN: Yeah, I mean, those kids are kids that love to have relationships. We've built a lot of trust. We've spent a lot of time together outside of the court, and I think for me, I think that's a reason why, again, we can have hard conversations. We can talk about the things we need to get better at. We can go through adversity together.

We were talking pregame, and I was like, remember Marist? Remember that? That was terrible. But this is a group that can fight through adversity and come out the other end because they believe in each other. They believe in me. Yeah, they're a great group. I'm super proud of them.

We always believed it as coaches, but kids are kids, right? Just to get them to believe was really special for our group.

Q. I've never seen a happier losing team in my life. How? Why?

CANDICE GREEN: I think for us, we did not want to come in here and fold. We talked about having a chance, but at the end of the day, when you get punched like that in the first quarter, it's hard to come back, and for us it was, new goal, all right, let's compete for the rest of the time we're here and let's leave it all out on the court.

For us, we're so happy with what we've accomplished over this past year. We've gone through a lot together. We're not going to sit here and sulk about losing to a great Michigan team. We're going to move on.

Listen, these girls got jobs, they got lives, they've got to get back to school. They'll be fine.

