

# NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - Tennessee vs NC State

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Crisler Center

## NC State Wolfpack Coach Wes Moore Khamil Pierre Zamareya Jones

Media Conference

NC State 76, Tennessee 61

THE MODERATOR: We'll begin with an opening statement from Coach. We'll take questions for the student-athletes and then return to questions for Coach. Coach, whenever you're ready, we can begin.

WES MOORE: Yeah, I'm just real proud of this team. Especially when Zoe goes out, we're a little shorthanded. Zam played about the whole game here and Khamil out there on a busted foot and she's playing tough.

We got the match-ups on the bracket, Tennessee pops up. We had already played them once this year so we knew it was going to be a heck of a battle. So, again, proud of our group for finding a way to get it done. I thought we handled the press decently. We still turned it over some, but I thought we handled it pretty well. That's the biggest thing when you play them.

Didn't quite keep them off the boards. That's another challenge when you're playing them. Other than that, I thought our players stepped up, showed some toughness and we knew that's what it would take.

**Q. Coach, can you tell us a little bit more about Brooks' injury? Was it a knee? Is it a serious situation?**

WES MOORE: No, it's a foot situation and don't really know any more than that. But obviously she was in some pain or I'm sure she would have been out there. Hopefully we can get her back, but at this point, all I know it was a foot, which is better than a knee.



**Q. For both players, can you address the start? Seemed like you had more of a sense of urgency, punched first and kept punching.**

ZAMAREYA JONES: You would just say coming out with energy. We didn't want them positioning out first, so we had to deal with them first. Just coming out with energy, not being scared of anybody. Just playing our game and doing what we know we can do.

**Q. Double-double in March Madness, 30 points in March Madness. To have these types of performances in this tournament on this stage, what does that feel like and why was it so important for you guys to step up today for your team?**

KHAMIL PIERRE: I feel like 30 points is really big in March. For me, a double-double is still what's expected so I don't think I had a great game, but to be on a team where everybody can score and you have players like Z who can step up and really take over the game, it helps a lot. I think that's what really matters in March.

ZAMAREYA JONES: We're not going to discredit her double-double. I hate when she does that. She did a great job rebounding, keeping us together. I feel like today we actually played as a team. We played for each other. We emphasized that before the game. Don't just play for yourself, play for the team. I feel like today we all, after every mistake, we come together, tell each other we good, we're all here together. I feel like we did a great job of just being together as a team today.

**Q. I'm curious, we have one day of down time and then second round. How are you guys feeling and what's the messaging going forward?**

ZAMAREYA JONES: I feel good. Of course it's going to be back-to-back games, so you're kind of tired, fatigued, but we're going to get right back to work. Tomorrow we have practice, we're going to recover, practice for Michigan. Get ready for Michigan and we're going to be ready to play.

**Q. When Zoe went down, that could have been a turning point, but your team was able to battle through and had a lot of resilience. What do you think that demonstrated about your team's character?**

KHAMIL PIERRE: Just like Zam said earlier, just playing for each other. Zoe would have loved to be out there on the court, so just trying to get the win for her and understanding that it's bigger than ourselves and that we have a team full of ten girls and a whole staff, so we got to do it for each other more than we do it for ourselves.

**Q. This is for both of you: You guys talk about playing for each other. How big was it to have that mindset when Zoe went out and you were able to extend your lead. Not just keep the lead but extend it in the third quarter and keep it going in the fourth?**

ZAMAREYA JONES: I say just not getting down. We know Zoe is a big part of our team. So just knowing how to play, how she stepped up big. We have people on the bench that really played a great game. So just playing as a team, not really dwelling on her. Of course we want her on the court, but there's nothing we can do about it so we have to keep playing.

**Q. Zam, you actually mentioned, I think, in the half-time TV interview about something on Instagram that y'all saw that kind of added some motivation. Can you talk about that a little bit and just how significant that was and fuelling y'all's fire?**

ZAMAREYA JONES: You know when the Sunday Show, when they popped up on the screen, they had a lot to say about running it back. So that just fueled me. I'm the type of person that feeds into that stuff. Coach Moore isn't big with that, but that's just the type of person I am. I fuel off that. So just seeing them say run it back like they were going to beat us, we knew we beat them the first time, we can beat them again, so I just came this with the mindset of winning and advancing.

**Q. Zam and Khamil, how big was Ky' She down the stretch for you guys in there? Finished with four free throws in the fourth quarter to help you guys and two assists as well?**

ZAMAREYA JONES: I'ma go off the press. I was tired. I'm not going to lie. So she definitely helped me bring the ball up the court getting off the ball a little bit and she made a couple of mistakes but she's a freshman so I took responsibility, like Ky, we're here with you. Forget the mistakes, keep going. She's a great kid. She's definitely a bucket. She definitely stepped up big in this game.

KHAMIL PIERRE: Yeah, and just adding onto that, I think it's huge to be able to come into a big game like this and as a freshman and not only to not be nervous but to understand your role on your team. I felt like she didn't try to overdo it. She did exactly what was asked and I feel like that might not be talked about as much, but that's huge.

**Q. Your team was able to get to the free-throw line 25 times. How important was it to draw that contact and be aggressive driving downhill tonight?**

ZAMAREYA JONES: We know Tennessee is a pressure time. They like to press. Coach Moore would say the best way to get around pressure is just to beat it. So just going around them and just drawing the foul, it's like not being scared to go in. We came into the game we're not settling for jump shots. We would rather get a point touch or get it to the bigs so not settling for jump shots and getting downhill.

**Q. Khamil, this is your fourth time beating Tennessee in two years, one year at Vandy, twice here. How are you feeling right now?**

KHAMIL PIERRE: I feel great, 4-0, but I'm more excited because I've never made it this far in a tournament. I lost in (inaudible) and then I lost in the first round. So this is like my Natty right now. (Laughter)

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, both, for your time. Much appreciated. We'll be ready to take questions for Coach Moore now.

**Q. You switched to a zone defense and it longed like the Lady Vols had never seen that before. My words, not yours, obviously. I'm so curious from your vantage point, what did you see your girls do really, really well in that moment?**

WES MOORE: Yeah, we've been playing more zone, probably, than I ever have in my year this year and then in watching -- we watched, obviously, a lot of games and there were several teams down the stretch that played zone against them. We felt like we needed to have that, especially Cooper. We had no answer for her. She just killed us. I think at halftime she had 14 of their 29 points.

But I thought we did a pretty good job of getting to the shooters that were out there. That's a big thing right there. We tried to stress -- a lot of times they had two or three people out there that were pretty good three-point shooters and I thought we did a good job of getting to them.

The tough part in a zone is rebounding and we gave up way too many offensive boards. We were fortunate that

that didn't end up costing us, but, yeah, again. I'm pleased with the way we handled it and I thought it was good to us.

**Q. Coach, obviously a super efficient night for your girls tonight on offense. What did you see that allowed them to shoot at that clip?**

WES MOORE: Yeah, of course, Zam obviously was hot and did a great job getting downhill, getting to the rim. And then Khamil, again, on the boards and being able to get a few buckets, posting up off the roll.

Again, a lot of it, too, probably came off the press. I would have to see the film but it seemed like we scored a lot on the back of the press. I'm a big advocate of people are going to press, you've got to make them pay. You can't just get it across half-court and tuck it under your arm. You got to make them pay. I thought we did a good job of that and that's where our guards made good decisions and knew when to give it up. I think that was probably a big thing.

Like I said, we had 16 turnovers. That's a lot, but when you're facing full-court press the entire game, that's probably not the worst stat in the world.

**Q. Janiah Barker not playing, did that change anything about what you wanted to do or how you were planning to attack Tennessee in any way?**

WES MOORE: It definitely made a difference. I'll be honest, I didn't find out until probably 30 minutes before tip. I probably should have found out before then, but she was someone that we definitely wanted, Cooper and her were two people we wanted to give attention and help in the gaps and that sort of thing. She's, you know, a great offensive rebounder. She knocks down threes. So, yeah, there's no doubt it made a difference.

At the same time, next man up. They got a lot of talent over there so they've got people that can step in and do a nice job. But really, it didn't change our game plan much. It probably did when we were out there defending and we're not having to cheat to her and we can maybe concentrate on Cooper a little bit more and give her 24 points, but, yeah, definitely made a difference in how you defend.

**Q. You mentioned Zoe's injury. What did you like about the response from your team when she went out? It didn't seem like they panicked or anything. They were calm, collected, able to extend the lead. What did you like in that response from them?**

WES MOORE: Yeah, again, everybody else stepped up

and it's already been mentioned. I thought Ky' She did a great job. She's the one who had to step in and take over that role. When you're a freshman and you're seeing the press. I mean, she did solid. Two assists, two turnovers. Not too bad when you're bringing up against the press and as was mentioned, she was able to knock down some big free throws for us, four for four. Had three steals. Did a great job.

Now, again, Zoe is a special player so that's a big blow to have her go out of the game, but I was proud of the way our players handled that and had other people step up.

**Q. I know it's super fresh and y'all haven't been able to do, like, a ton of evaluation, but have you been able to see Zoe since y'all came off the court and kind of how she's feeling?**

WES MOORE: Not really. Again, they took her in when she got hurt. When I went out on the court, of course she was trying to be tough and saying I'm okay, but then I didn't see her the rest of the game, so that's not good. But I've been told, again, it's a foot and they're trying to treat it as well as they can and we'll see. I have no idea how severe it is. But obviously she's an important part of what we do.

Hopefully my Johnson Bible College education and my direct prayer line will come in handy tonight.

**Q. I wanted to ask you as well about Qadence Samuels and her performance today. 12 points, four of five shooting in this game but also two steals and really good lockdown defense several times when you guys absolutely needed it. How big was her performance today?**

WES MOORE: Yeah, when you brought it up, I just looked at the stat line here. She had a heck of a night, didn't she? So, again, probably should have bragged on her in the locker room a little bit. But, yeah, again, we had her guarding Cooper, which, again, Cooper still got her points but that's a big responsibility to chase her around all night.

And then, like I said, be able to get five boards. That was a big help. Obviously five defensive boards was second most on our team, so those were all really important. So, yeah, and four out of five, pretty nice.

So, again, when she plays well, it makes a big difference for us. And with Zoe being out, for her to step up and give us that extra boost at the guard on the perimeter was a big plus.

**Q. Looking back at the game today, what are some things that you'd evaluate your team did well and what**

**do you hope you can clean up a little more come  
Sunday?**

WES MOORE: Yeah, obviously I haven't seen the film yet and usually when I speak before seeing it, I end up having some regrets. Yeah, again, you start with the defensive rebounding.

I'm sure Michigan's going to look at this and say, hey, we got to get to the boards. Michigan shoots the ball unbelievably well. My assistants have worked on them. I haven't really seen a lot of film. I did see on TV their game with Connecticut earlier in the year when they had a chance to win that game, so I know how capable they are.

Also, I know they press some as well so we've got to be able to handle that. But, you know, again, right now I'm proud of our team. We've had our ups and downs this year. It's been bumpy at times. But when you play in a great conference like the ACC -- it kills me when the committee starts talking about your last ten games. If everybody is playing the same last ten opponents, that's great. Let's use that. But when you got to go on the road to Notre Dame, Duke, whoever, it's tough. I feel like we've been tested and we'll look forward to the opportunity. I'm excited about the opportunity for sure.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you so much for your time, coach. Congratulations.

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