

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: Second Round - NC State vs Michigan

Sunday, March 22, 2026

Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA

Crisler Center

Michigan Wolverines

Kim Barnes Arico

Syla Swords

Olivia Olson

Media Conference

Michigan - 92, NC State - 63

KIM BARNES ARICO: I thought our team just was amazing today. I thought we played our butts off on the defensive end and established ourselves from a defensive perspective really early.

We missed some shots early that we typically make, but it could have been the game, the atmosphere. I just think we needed to settle. Then you saw a glimpse of what we're capable of doing in the fourth quarter of the game.

It was just an unbelievable performance by us. These two guys to my left are two of the best people and players in the country, and we're fortunate to have them on our team.

Q. For both players, could you just speak to the moment, making your own Sweet 16, doing this at home, and winning in front of your home crowd?

OLIVIA OLSON: We committed to Michigan to do this, and we committed to Coach Arico to do it for her and for each other. You could see how much fun we were having, and that's what it's about, and that's how close our team is.

It's just so fun to kind of soak it in, especially on our home court. Like we're accomplishing the goals we set out to, and we're not done yet. So we're going to keep having fun with it and keep preparing.

SYLA SWORDS: I think it really set in when we got subbed in at the end. We got to sit and watch how loud the crowd were, how excited our teammates were, and just soak all in, what we've built but also what Coach Arico has



been building throughout the years.

I kind of took her at the end and just said -- she doesn't like to take a lot of the credit, but we committed to her at the end of the day. We committed to Michigan, and she's a huge part of that. So we're just really excited to be able to continue what Coach has already created as a legacy here.

Q. Olivia, to go from zero points in the first half with some foul trouble to 27 by the end of the game, what clicked for you in the second half?

OLIVIA OLSON: I think just having confidence in myself as well as my teammates having confidence in me and still getting the ball to me. But I think it was a collective effort of just people carrying the load in the first half, and that just shows how much depth we have on our team.

I'm proud of Syla, she hit her 1,000th point. Just like everything that our team did, I think it just -- I'm happy to make shots in the second half, but yeah.

Q. Olivia, you actually just teed me up perfectly because I was going to ask Syla, how does it feel to reach 1,000 points in two seasons?

SYLA SWORDS: It's exciting, but it's nothing compared to that feeling of just walking into Chrysler and seeing the student section already full, seeing the crowds cheering when Liv was making those big shots or when Brooke was making big steals, that was the feeling that I was more excited about and just being able to celebrate with the team at the end knowing that we're back in the Sweet 16, it's something really special.

That's kind of what I'm going to walk away feeling the most proud of in this day.

Q. For each of you, can you reflect on how much your pressure bothered them and how much of a difference that was in the game?

SYLA SWORDS: We bother a lot of teams with our pressure, and that starts with Brooke Daniels. She was all



defensive team for Big Ten. She's guarding the best player, whether it's the point guard, whether it's the shooting guard, no matter how tall they are, she's constantly picking them up full court for however many minutes, 20, 40 minutes she's playing. She knows that's her role, and she's great at it.

Then it comes from Liv too, being able to run into the trap of Te'Yala Delfosse. But it was definitely like Liv said, a group effort, and everyone just trusting each other to scramble to come back, and we were really disruptive with that.

Q. To see Alyssa Crockett hit that 3-pointer, can you reflect on what she provides to the team and your reaction to that shot?

OLIVIA OLSON: We talked about it in the locker room after, but she was part of the quad squad who stayed a couple years ago and believed in Michigan and believed in Coach and this program. She's been such a good leader for us.

Coming in last year, she just leads us in whatever minutes the game gives to her. She's always on the sidelines, always in practice hyping us up and doing -- she's just such a good leader for us. So to see her be able to play her last home game in Chrysler and to have that, it sealed the deal at the end.

Q. Mila again did her thing. What can you say that you haven't about how good she is and maybe how underappreciated she is?

SYLA SWORDS: Mila Holloway is playing really high level basketball right now. Even on a lot of the lists that went out for top point guard of the year, Mila needs to be on all of those lists. You see she's playing with great scorers, but we're great scorers because she puts us in a situation to score, in a position to score.

She's guarding 94 feet just like everybody else, and she's grown a lot into that role from a leadership standpoint as well. She's not the most vocal when she first came here, but now she's calling the plays and bringing us all into huddles. That just brings a lot of calm to us on the floor, and you don't see that from a sophomore point guard Power 4.

Q. Playing without Macy today obviously is hard emotionally, but also she's been such a reliable plug-in from off the bench. Can you touch on how it was kind of filling in that position?

OLIVIA OLSON: Obviously it was hard for all of us just

how good of a teammate she is and how good of minutes she's been playing. We did it for her, and that's what we talked about at the beginning of the game of everyone rallying around each other. We wanted to give her a good game today.

SYLA SWORDS: Macy is the type of person, when you feel her presence, whenever you're in the room, you know that Macy is there, and that's because of the positive energy she exudes. That's something we're going to miss on the court, but 100 percent sure she's going to continue to be that great Macy Brown person she is on the bench for us.

Q. Sylva, what were they doing to you to hold you to two points in the first quarter?

SYLA SWORDS: They were face guarding me really well at the beginning, but I wasn't mad about it because my other teammates got great shots off of it. It opens a lot if I can be a great screener, which I've been working on, to open up stuff for them. Mila got great shots. Brooke Daniels had a great first quarter. It just makes stuff for the rest of the team easier.

Again, whatever we can do at that point. Liv, a player that doesn't go away. She's going to have a quieter first half, but yeah, she's going to score 30 in the second half, and that's not something to be surprised about by any means.

Q. I'm curious with Zoe Brooks out for NC State, how did your team have to pivot with her absence?

KIM BARNES ARICO: She's a great player, and you're not sure. Like we didn't know until a little bit before the game that she wasn't going to be playing. So we obviously prepped for her, and she makes a difference on their team.

She's, like I said, a tremendous player. They're a tremendous team. But one less player, and the same thing happened with us, Macy Brown didn't play for us, it just affects your depth for sure. Then they got in a little bit of foul trouble, which really affected their depth, which played to our benefit.

I just think when you lose a key player, a key player like her with a ton of experience, other people need to step up and have a really great game. I thought we were able to affect them defensively. Our defense really was able to affect them. Without her and 16 points, that really hurt them a little bit.

Q. You guys forced 22 turnovers. You attempted 27 more shots than NC State did tonight. Were you surprised in any way by how effective the pressing and

the trapping was?

KIM BARNES ARICO: No, that's our goal every day to try to force 20 turnovers. I thought in the first half we sat back, we were nervous to do it. Then Liv got in foul trouble and just going on everyone else's questions, what happened to Sylva, why didn't she score? Well Liv was out of the game, and they were face guarding and they were in a box and one against Sylva.

That affects -- you have to make adjustments when people are in foul trouble. Their player was in foul trouble. One of our top players was in foul trouble as well. So that kind of affected that.

Once we decided to press, which really was the second quarter, we said we're going to get up regardless of what the situation is, I think the tide started to turn a little bit. They made a run at the end of the second quarter, but we got up ten in the middle of the second quarter because of our defensive pressure.

Obviously, we talk about Brooke a lot, but Te'Yala is really buying into that. Liv is a huge piece with that. Kendall does a great job with that. Sylva as well. So you can go down the whole line, but that is our goal, and that's the strength of our team if we can force turnovers.

The flip side tonight is we had 22 assists and only 6 turnovers. That is incredible. When you force 20 turnovers and only have 6 turnovers, that puts you in a pretty good position to win the game.

Q. Coach, you mention Brooke and her value obviously in the press, but can you just speak to what else she brings. You'll watch the team gather in a dead ball situation in the huddle, she's the one generally talking, the offensive rebounding at 5'7", just her knack for all that.

KIM BARNES ARICO: She is the senior on our team. She is the most experienced in terms of minutes of anyone else on our team. She's played more minutes than anyone else, I'm sure. She has a grit and a toughness and a fire, and every team needs so. So she is that for us.

She's relentless. She's an amazing offensive rebounder. She led our team again in offensive rebounds tonight. She finished with six total, but she had four offensive rebounds. She also had five assists tonight, which was really important as well.

So I think she does a lot of different things for our team, but her personality and her drive and her toughness and her grit, like that sets the tone for the rest of the crew, and I

think that comes to her being a senior and her being the most experienced person out there.

Q. You've talked at length about building this program and standing on the shoulders of the players -- Naz was here -- and all that. With that in mind, does it feel different to make the Sweet 16 this time given you're a 2 seed and hosting and all that?

KIM BARNES ARICO: Yeah, it always feels amazing. I think, if you go through the history of college basketball -- men's, women's, anyone -- this isn't something that's easy to do. There are a lot of tremendous coaches. There are a lot of great coaches that I followed throughout my entire career that don't make Sweet 16s. So there's never a time where I don't really appreciate that and value that.

The first time we did it was the bubble. That's an experience I will never forget. But this group is different, and this group has attracted -- I mean, Naz was back in the building, Leigha Brown was back in the building. Our alums and our fans and our former players, they are all connected to this group. They talk about it every single opportunity I have a chance to speak with them about how proud they are and how hard they play and how they're so unselfish.

We have so many talented kids, and they share the basketball, and they play for each other. I think, when people watch us, they can really see that. We get to hang another banner. I always talk about coming to Michigan and there weren't any banners. Coach Mel, who started with me back in the day, used to always say we came here, there's a big hole right there. We are going to hang banners in that spot.

And this will be another banner. So there's not -- every team has a special place, and every team helped lay the foundation to where we are today. That sophomore core group of kids came because of what Naz Hillmon did. Naz Hillmon came because of what Katelynn Flaherty did and Hallie Thome did. They wanted their own legacy, but they wanted to be a part of what the Michigan faithful, the Michigan players did before as well.

Q. With Olivia, it seemed like they were roughing her up a bit early and led to her foul trouble as well. Can you reflect on how she bounced back and how confident you were that she was going to have a second half like that?

KIM BARNES ARICO: For anyone watching, is she an All-American or what? Is she arguably not one of the best players in the country? She is phenomenal.

Tonight was a tough matchup for her because they played two bigs. So Liv is a guard for us. She usually matches up with a guard. Today she's watching up with Khamil Pierre, who's a double double machine. The girl has 20 double-doubles. So they went right at Liv, and that was their game plan from the start is to try to get Liv in foul trouble and try to attack her, and she picked up her second foul.

For a coach, when Liv does that really early, I'm like ugh, because it messes with her confidence a little bit and it hurts our team without her being out there. But our team was holding strong, so we kind of made the decision to not put her in for an extended period of time after that.

But for her to come back in the second half and do what she did was phenomenal, absolutely incredible. For her to have that confidence, for her teammates to find her early, for them to give her touches, and for her to make plays and put on the performance that she did, I thought was pretty ridiculous. It's got to be one of the best halves of basketball of any player this season.

Q. Obviously a lot of success going on in Michigan across multiple sports right now. How would you describe the buzz at the university right now? Does that fuel you guys personally at all with the men's team and the hockey team also raising banners?

KIM BARNES ARICO: Yes, it certainly -- that's why you come to Michigan. I say it 14 years in, but I left everything I ever knew -- my family, my mother yelling at me because I was taking her three kids -- on the East Coast for an opportunity to be surrounded by excellence every day. That was Carol Hutchins, that was Bev Plocki, that was Ronni Bernstein. That was every one of these women Hall of Fame coaches that are at this tremendous university.

They've had a couple good men's coaches as well, but for me to have that opportunity was absolutely incredible. So when you get to work in this building -- and I started with Coach Beilein, and I get to watch his practices and pick his brain, and I get to be surrounded by excellence. Then what our men are doing and what Dusty is doing every single day, I mean, I looked up, and I saw Yaxel in the front row with our whole men's team and men's staff at our game.

We share a building. We spend a lot of time together. Dusty used to kid me at the beginning of the year that he wished his best players played as hard as Olivia and Syla. He used to say, man, if I could just get my two best players to play as hard as your two best players are, we have a chance to be really good.

I think they're doing okay. I think he's gotten them to play that hard.

But it's really special for me too. My boy, my son is a graduate assistant for them. So he's a part of that, which has been special. My daughter is on -- did the Lacrosse team win? Does anybody know? She plays Michigan women's Lacrosse here. They played at Penn State today, which has absolutely been -- I mean, for a mom, what greater -- yes! They won 11-6. Of course the game times couldn't work out.

But I just think Michigan is a really special place. It's a place that prides itself on excellence. Getting to work with the group of people that I do every day and the support from the group of coaches. During COVID we formed a women's group because we couldn't stay inside, so all the women's coaches would meet outside and hang out, and we'd chit-chat. That's kind of stayed with us throughout the last few years.

I'm grateful every day to be at this amazing university.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports