

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - Colorado State vs Michigan State

Friday, March 20, 2026

Norman, Oklahoma, USA

Lloyd Noble Center

**Michigan State Spartans
Coach Robyn Fralick**

Grace VanSlooten

Jalyn Brown

Media Conference

Michigan State 65, Colorado State 62

ROBYN FRALICK: A heck of a game. Definitely all the elements of March Madness. A lot of credit to Colorado State. We knew coming in they were going to be a stingy team, a team that hasn't won or lost games by much of a margin, and we knew it was going to have to be a bit of a grind out. Proud of our team. I think the game really changed when we dug in, much better defensively, did a much better job guarding the ball. That is to me where a lot of momentum came.

Proud of our team for finding a way. There's obviously some things to learn in every game, but being one of 32 teams left playing, just really proud of this group for so many people finding a way to help us win tonight.

Q. Grace, it looked like your length inside, you guys just had so much in there, and that really bothered them. Your offensive rebounding might have been the difference tonight?

GRACE VanSLOOTEN: Yeah, I think that was kind of just an advantage I think I had coming into this game. I kind of knew they weren't the biggest inside, and I just like to really make a point of that and understand that I have a mismatch and do whatever I can to take advantage of that.

Q. Jalyn, that three that you had, the go-ahead three, before that you guys had been uncharacteristically cold from behind the arc. What were they doing to frustrate you defensively with those long-range shots?



JALYN BROWN: Honestly, I think our team just finds a way. Every shot is not going to go in, and we understand that college basketball is a game of ups and downs, but I feel like if we stay prone to what we know how to do, which is focusing on shots, my teammates are going to find me and I'm going to knock it down. That's my job, and we just help each other. In any way, whoever is hitting, we're looking for them. We're finding them.

Q. What exactly was it about Colorado State that kind of surprised you in the sense that led it to be down to the wire?

GRACE VanSLOOTEN: Yeah, I think they were just a really scrappy team. I think they came out and pumped us first and it took us a while to get back on our team. But they just obviously really wanted it. I think like Coach said, once we decided to guard and decided we wanted it more than them, that's kind of when the game turned.

Q. What was the message that you guys were telling each other in between the third and the fourth quarter there when you guys really did clamp down defensively there in the fourth quarter?

JALYN BROWN: We do this thing in practice that's called perfect possession, so we were going out there like, guys, we've got to have a perfect possession, we've got to play defense together, be on a string, communicate and make sure that we're aware of everything that's going on on the court, and once we start communicating and vocalizing what's going on, it makes everything easier, everything clearer, and we were able to execute.

Q. Jalyn, for you, just getting a taste of March Madness and being able to feel that intensity, obviously just for you individually being able to get through this experience, how was the first one?

JALYN BROWN: It's amazing. It's so cool. I'm blessed, highly favored. I think my journey has brought me to an amazing place, and I know that me being here has only helped me grow, so to be able to experience this with this lovely group of women, we pour into each other and we make sure that we're well supported so that when we're

ready for big moments like this, the momentum is not too big. We slide right in and we do what we're supposed to as Spartans. It's great.

Q. Grace, you're now one of only seven players in Division I to have their first three NCAA Tournaments and have double-doubles in all three. What does that mean to you to have an accomplishment like that?

GRACE VanSLOOTEN: Yeah, it means a lot. I think I'm just going out there and doing my job, just rebounding on both sides of the court, trying not to really pay attention to the numbers and just do what's best for the team.

Q. Coach, it really looked like your length inside bothered them, particularly down the stretch. You got a couple of key offensive rebounds there and put-backs that moved it from three to five. Just talk a little bit about that, please.

ROBYN FRALICK: Yeah, when we came in, one of the emphases was to offensive rebound, not that they've given up a lot, but that's been something that when we've played well, we've done. So we made a big point about that, especially because they don't really push a lot in transition. We came up with some timely ones, I thought.

But credit to Colorado State. They've got a really good team. They play really smart. Carlson is a tough matchup. She kind of kept finding her way to the basket. But that's what we shared with our team. That's what it's about this time of the year. Everybody left playing is good. Everybody left playing is playing good basketball, and it was a heck of a game. I'm proud of our group because we really didn't get any momentum. Like we did not shoot the ball well. We didn't shoot free throws well, which we've been a good free-throw shooting team, and we didn't get discouraged. I'm proud of our group for when the game was unrhythmic for grinding out a tough win.

Q. Kennedy had some big blocks, some big points. What kind of a lift in energy does she give this team when she's playing like that on both ends of the floor?

ROBYN FRALICK: Well, she's a great competitor. I've really challenged them in a time-out because I was tired of us losing one-on-one matchups. I had seen enough. Kennedy was one of them. I just really challenged them, like, you have to guard. You have to get down and guard and do it without fouling and get a stop.

I thought she did a much better job of imposing her will, and she got some blocks. You can play defense passively, or you can play it assertively. I thought when we flipped to playing assertively, especially Kennedy, I think there was a

clear change in the way she was guarding, that really helped our team.

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