

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

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Raleigh, North Carolina, USA

Reynolds Coliseum

## NC State Wolfpack Coach Wes Moore Madison Hayes Saniya Rivers

Media Conference

**Q. Madison, this is obviously a special game for you. Your mom said a bunch of people are coming, a bunch of people in the city are kind of conflicted. Obviously hometown school but also a local kid. What does it mean to know that so many people are excited for you and for this journey that you're on?**

MADISON HAYES: I think it's really exciting playing against my hometown. I usually always used to go to the UTC games, men or women. So it's always cool to see that they're good enough to come here and play in the NCAA this year.

I know a couple of the people on the team. I played them in high school. Jada Guinn, I played her in high school. It's really exciting to see, playing against my local college.

**Q. We're seeing so many people this season and last season falling in love with women's basketball. How does it feel to have this record viewership and more eyes on you?**

SANIYA RIVERS: It feels really good. Honestly, I feel like it's well deserved. Women's basketball is so fun and so entertaining to watch. Just to see we're getting more and the same views as the men this year feels really good especially going into the tournament. We're excited and hopefully the views just keep coming in.

**Q. Two weeks since that ACC championship game. What has been the biggest focus for you ladies as you've prepared for the tournament?**

MADISON HAYES: The main focus is just really focusing



on us the first couple of weeks. Just really making sure that we're doing what we're supposed to do, fixing the mistakes that we need to fix. Just getting ready one game at a time. We're a really good team. I feel we'll bounce back and we'll be ready.

**Q. What's the team's mindset going into this tournament as opposed to last year?**

SANIYA RIVERS: That's a good question. I feel like it's like last year, just making sure we come in locked in. It's one-and-done; you either win or you go home. We put a lot of time and preparation into this. Hopefully it all falls in line.

We're excited. Everybody's excited, really the freshmen. They've never been dancing in the NCAA Tournament before so we're all excited and locked in.

MADISON HAYES: I agree with what she said. Also, just being focused. I think that's the main thing. Just like I said before, one game at a time. That's all it takes. That will take us a really long way. We have a really good team. Our chemistry is great. We're really excited for sure.

**Q. Madison, you mentioned playing against Jada in high school. Just from what you noticed on the scouting report, what do they do well? How will they challenge you tomorrow?**

MADISON HAYES: They're a very good 3-point-shooting team. One of them shoots something like 60-something percent from the 3, which is really, really good. So we've just got to make sure we get out to all the shooters, just making sure we know our scout, know individually -- everybody's going to be guarding everybody in this game.

We've just got to make sure we know our scouting report, know the game plan, which is we've got bigs. So we've got to make sure we get into the bigs a lot, revolve around them, inside/out game.

**Q. Madison, were you anticipating a potential match-up with Chattanooga? Were you kind of forecasting it could happen? Was Coach Moore as**



**excited about it as you were about it?**

MADISON HAYES: I didn't know that we were going to play Chattanooga, honestly. When I saw it I was, like, oh, my gosh. It was really exciting. I looked back at Coach Moore and said, we're playing Chattanooga. This is your old school.

I think it's exciting for both of us to play someone that we've been in the city. And especially for me living there all my life, playing against some of the teams that are really good.

**Q. Madison, you're one of the most decorated players to come out of the area. Do you have a message to any of the girls back home in East Hamilton or in the area that will be watching you at home?**

MADISON HAYES: I think just not even just me, but Ryan Howard (phonetic), which is my cousin. Obviously I played her a lot in district championships. And learning from her, too, I think was the biggest thing for me.

I think just working hard. I started out late in basketball. Didn't think I would be as good as I am now. Going from eighth grade to now, just seeing myself now, I feel like just working hard and putting the effort in, just being a good role player at the time. But now I'm really impactful to my team, at least I can say.

**Q. You've been on a team that won this tournament, and you are one of the top players in the country. How does it feel trying to get back with another team to where you were before? Is that a motivation for you?**

SANIYA RIVERS: Absolutely it feels good. It felt good sliding that ring on my finger. Of course, I'm trying to get a twin ring on my finger, especially with a team I love, coaches that I appreciate very much, fans are there for us -- day in and day out they support us.

It would be crazy. It would be amazing. Yes, let's lock in. Let's get us another ring. Let's get another ring, for sure.

**Q. Madison, I was told that you, maybe eighth grade when you told your parents that, you were in their bedroom one night, you said, I want to be the best player in the state of Tennessee. And you were, like, just kidding, I want to be the best player in the United States. Do you remember that moment, and if so, what do you remember about it?**

MADISON HAYES: Absolutely. My first sport was softball. I was really good being looked at -- one of the examples was Tennessee -- I was getting looked at for being a

catcher. Obviously I was growing and my knees started getting a little --

But I just realized that basketball was just so much up tempo and I really loved it. They didn't force me into it. I wanted to do it. That was something that I loved about the game.

And just went in there and just said I wanted to be the best player in the state at first. And then I obviously said I think I'm really good enough to be one of the best in the country. And here I am.

WES MOORE: Proud to be here. Excited to be here. Proud of our team for performing well enough all year to be in a host position. I think, in women's basketball, I think that's a big goal for everyone to be one of those top 16 seeds. Great accomplishment there.

But on the other hand, that doesn't guarantee you anything. Obviously you have to come out and play well. I knew in my mind about a week ago, at least, that they would probably send Chattanooga and Tennessee over here because they love a storyline.

Again, tough, I spent 15 years at Chattanooga. Love the university. Love the town. Love the people. And then Tennessee, Kellie and Jon Harper are two of my dearest friends. So not excited about playing them. We've tried to avoid each other in the past, other than scrimmages. So it's tough from that standpoint.

And then Green Bay, Coach Borseth has done an unbelievable job with that program for a long time.

It's a tough bracket. Tough draw. I know we'll have to play really well this weekend.

**Q. Is it just an uncomfortable thing playing with teams and people you're familiar with? You said you tried to avoid it.**

WES MOORE: Not to mention that they're good, you know? All these teams are really good and well-coached teams. But, yeah, I mean, Kellie and Jon were on my staff at Chattanooga for, I think, four years maybe, something to that effect.

And obviously Chattanooga, I still know a lot of people in the administration and all there. They gave me an opportunity to be a head coach at the Division I level. But, again, like I said, I know all three of them were talented, well-coached.

But from a personal standpoint, if we're fortunate enough to

get to that second game -- and, again, we're going to have our work cut out for us from that -- but if we are, you hate to play really close friends.

**Q. Coach Poppie mentioned the other day the impact you've had on the Mocs program. To see them back here in the tournament, to see that legacy that you left is continuing, what does that mean?**

WES MOORE: He's done an awesome job. Obviously watched a lot of film on them the last few days. Offensively I think they're 21st in the country, offensive efficiency.

They've got some, for us, tough match-ups. And then they shoot the heck out of it. When you look at some of the numbers, they're mindboggling. The two freshmen that don't start are, in conference play, are shooting 42 and 65 percent from 3. That's daunting. That's scary.

But, yes, I love seeing Chattanooga in this position and I cheer for them. We did go over there and play a few years ago. It was a great opportunity. Again, 15 years, a lot of former players and all still -- I've got one of them flying in this weekend staying at the house.

That, too, makes it a little tougher. But yeah, again, proud of where they are.

**Q. What is your main concern going into the tournament? Your team, what is the vibe of the players and the staff going into this?**

WES MOORE: You tell me. You had the players in here before. So you probably got a better feel for that than I do.

I don't know. Again, it's been a while since we played. And, of course, some people don't like that. I kind of like having that extra week.

And we've been fortunate. I think every year but last year it's fallen during our spring break so we're able to give the players a few days to get away from it and recover a little bit.

But, yeah, it seems like forever now. And you're sitting here watching everybody else play. You're watching our men and their big run, and then women's games. You're thinking, man, let's go. You're champing at the bit.

But, again, hopefully we have that energy, that sense of urgency this time of year, especially veterans realize this may be their last go-around. So you've got to lace them up tight and get ready to go.

**Q. Obviously didn't get to host last year. Now being**

**back with potentially two games at Reynolds. Just how nice is that? How much does it help to be back here?**

WES MOORE: No doubt, it's a big plus. Like I said, it doesn't guarantee you anything. You've still got to go out and play. We lost one game here this year. We won three games in overtime this year.

You're playing great teams that have had really successful years. But our fans make a big difference, and they can give us a real home-court advantage. And we're excited about that.

Last year was disappointing. We had some tough losses. And, like I said, probably the most pressure I feel in this job is trying to make sure we get in that top 16.

And it's not easy. There's a whole lot of really good teams that are playing on the road this weekend. That's why I said I'm really proud of our players for being able to put us in this position.

**Q. When it comes to your first-round opponent, you guys already had the distractions of being here at home, and having the fans, the Reynolds Coliseum, being expected to win. Mimi told me you've been hard about film as far as keeping them focused on their first-round opponent so they don't look past. Could you speak about that, what's been your key behind that success?**

WES MOORE: We're playing a team that's lost one game since December. They beat an SEC team earlier in the year that's a pretty good team. You can't take it -- again, they've got some match-up problems because they're going to go with a small post inside. So that's challenging for us to match up with defensively some.

And I'm sure on the other end they're going to do things to take that advantage away, such as doubling the post or fronting the post, things like that. You still have to be able to go out and execute.

Like I said, they're unbelievable shooters from the 3-point line. I hadn't seen numbers like this. It's like a video game. Shoot, 65% from the 3-point line in conference? That's scary. I'm talking about a particular player, obviously.

Again, you're right, being at home is tough. I think we've got nine people staying at our house. So I'm really thankful I'm in the hotel with the team this week/weekend. God bless my wife. She'll be sleeping on the couch. But it is, when you're playing at home, trying to find tickets. The

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

NCAA controls these now so now you're trying to buy some extra tickets. It's crazy.

But at the end of the day you have to put your time aside, and at some point put that phone away and get on that film and make sure you're doing everything you can to prepare your team.

But we've got to take it one game at a time. I think one of the Twitter accounts or whatever, X accounts, 94 feet, I think they predicted this was the number one possible upset, us against Chattanooga. So we saw what happened last night on the men's side. So you can't take anything for granted. And you've got to make sure you're playing at your best and hope you're hitting shots and maybe they miss a few.

**Q. We were talking with Madison in here, talking about the Selection Show and saw you were all playing Chattanooga, you had a moment where you were looking at each other, here we go. Could you describe what that moment was like?**

WES MOORE: It's funny because Madison turned around, looked at me when they revealed us and Chattanooga -- which I said, I knew that was going to happen; I knew based on the numbers they were going to do that. Because they love doing this stuff.

Before they revealed the other half of our little bracket here, I said, get ready, because Tennessee's fixing to pop up, too. And sure enough there it came.

For her, a Chattanooga girl, and, again, there will be a lot of people saying I'm a Chattanooga guy. Spent 15 years there, and it was unbelievable. But it's good to see them back in the tournament and winning championships, things like that.

But obviously you've got to put all that aside and focus on the job at hand, including Madison has to do that as well.

**Q. I asked Kellie the same question here. You both have been coaches of mid-major programs -- Chattanooga, Missouri State, Green Bay -- she talked about the coaching mindset that when you have those types of programs, that there's an "us against the world" kind of chip on your shoulder. Now that you've both gotten to that higher level, so to speak, in terms of exposure, is there a difference in your coaching mentality with a program like NC State versus what could be a mid-major or however we define it?**

WES MOORE: I don't know. I'm a grinder. And this time of year probably doesn't help me much. They're probably

sick of hearing me after about four or five months. And I understand.

But I prepare the same way. And it's still the scout, the film, going over things in practice. It's still basketball. Still the same thing.

I had one of my former players from Chattanooga, who is a high school coach now, text me this morning. And she said that. She said, is it hard getting them to focus. Because with us we were always the underdog and excited for an opportunity to knock somebody off. And I do get that. That's probably a little bit freer, less pressure.

I think at that level your pressure is the conference tournament because you've got to win the conference tournament, no matter what you've done all year. So that used to be the most pressure in the world on me was the tournament weekend because you won the regular season. You're supposed to just roll out and win the tournament, too. And only one team's going.

So for them, they've kind of lived that pressure and survived it. So now they're ready to go for it. I think our biggest win when I was at Chattanooga in the tournament was beating Rutgers when they had Cappie Pondexter and, I don't know, had a great team. And legendary coach, hall of fame coach up there. You do play with house money a little bit. They looked very confident in the conference tournament. And I'm sure they'll bring it with them.

**Q. I saw you got to chat with Kellie and Jon on the court a little bit. Was it nice to connect with them before everything starts, before you're potentially facing them on the court?**

WES MOORE: I went, Jon and I were texting. I went and picked him up last night when they got to the hotel. We hung out, and I had already eaten dinner with the team, but he ate dinner. We watched basketball for a little while.

Like I said they're two of my dearest friends. It makes it tough.

Again, we've got to get to them, and I made that clear to him, too. Heck, Chattanooga is a very good team, and Green Bay is a very good team. We both have work to do.

But on one hand it's great to see them and visit with them a little bit. On the other hand, I wish they weren't here. But no matter what happens on that court, it's not going to change anything.

Like I said, they're two of my dearest friends. I love them.

But we both have to set all that aside. If we get there, again, I don't want to -- like I said, our focus has been on Chattanooga. And obviously we got coaches preparing for Tennessee and Green Bay both. But in practice and all, our focus has been on this first game. And that's what you have to do at this time of the year, one at a time.

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