

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

Friday, March 21, 2025

Raleigh, North Carolina, USA

Reynolds Coliseum

Harvard Crimson

Harmoni Turner

Elena Rodriguez

Abigail Wright

Media Conference



Our preparation has been on point, and I think we're just ready to get after it tomorrow.

Q. One, how was the sendoff? Two, how did you guys get settled in? Did you guys catch any of the games last night with Columbia and so on and so forth? What's it like to have an Ivy team show out already?

ABIGAIL WRIGHT: The sendoff was awesome. I think this is all of our first times in March Madness, so it's just been a really cool experience to begin with.

Settling in and getting to watch some of the games last night was also awesome. It's great to see Ivy League representation, and getting that W last night is huge for the league and just excited to see what we can do as well.

ELENA RODRIGUEZ: Totally. Flying all together to North Carolina, having this experience all together has been amazing. But I feel like, yeah, having that experience like watch the game, especially with Columbia and Princeton, like Abigail said, it's amazing to see how Ivy League is doing on this big stage.

At the same time, we're very excited for tomorrow and very big game for us.

HARMONI TURNER: It felt amazing feeling all that support from Harvard on our sendoff. It was really nice to feel that a lot of people have our backs.

Then watching those games yesterday, like pretty much what everyone else was saying, it's good for the Ivy League, especially Columbia's win. I think it says a lot about we're not just one-dimensional people. Yeah, I'm really excited. I can't wait for tomorrow. Yeah, let's get it.

Q. With this being Harvard's first NCAA Tournament since 2007, you guys were probably either a little young or maybe not even born then, some people have experience to rely upon. What do you guys rely upon to make the step in the tournament to kind of treat it as another game, but yet it is not going to be another game or another environment?

THE MODERATOR: We would like to welcome in the Harvard student-athletes to the press conference. Harmoni Turner is here. Glad to have you as well.

HARMONI TURNER: Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: Also, Elena Rodriguez is here and Abigail Wright.

Q. For any of the players, you've had some success against some Power 4 or Power 5 teams, including the Big Ten. How much confidence does that give you going into this matchup?

HARMONI TURNER: It gives us a lot of confidence. I think we had a lot of emphasis this year of this season being about us and not necessarily worrying about a lot of other -- all of our opponents, and I think that for the most part it's turned out for the better for us.

ELENA RODRIGUEZ: Yes, it's been great to play against these Power 4 or 5 teams in our schedule, but it doesn't mean anything. We still have to show up tomorrow and do our best.

Yeah, it gives us confidence playing against teams with similar style of plays, but it doesn't mean anything. We're going to do our best tomorrow to still get the win.

ABIGAIL WRIGHT: I think they kind of said it best, but this year has been about us, and I think this is kind of our opportunity to prove ourselves and prove that the Ivy League deserves to be in March Madness every single year. So we're ready for it.



HARMONI TURNER: I think you kind of answered it a little bit. They put on their jerseys just like we do. We're walking in this fearless. I feel like our preparation is really great. And we're having fun throughout the process.

I'm incredibly proud of my teammates. I feel like we've come a long ways, and we don't want to just stop here. We've come too far to not just come this far.

I think we're also just enjoying ourselves, enjoying our company, having fun. Again, making a statement that nerds can play basketball too.

(Laughter).

ELENA RODRIGUEZ: I think this question I can answer with like one of our two core values, joy and unity. I think, when we play together and we have fun out there, it doesn't matter if we have experience or not. I feel like we're just going to enjoy the moment and make the most out of this experience because, at the end of the day, we've worked to be here and we've earned the right to be here. So we're just going to make the most out of it.

ABIGAIL WRIGHT: Not much else to say. I think that from the second we stepped on campus in the fall, it's been about the work and the prep. I think that we've had the experience and the schedule that we played this year. Coach Moore scheduled that on purpose so we'd be ready for moments like this, and I think that's exactly what we're ready to do, compete with joy and be united.

Q. Just because I didn't get to ask it during the tournament. This is about Elena, but you have a role as a playmaker, and obviously during the tournament you had nine dives. There's a lot of responsibility on you to be at the top, look at your cutters, look for the people coming off those curls. How did you develop that playmaking skill set? Both of you are kind of in that role a little bit. How have you seen her develop in that role, and how have you developed in that role?

ELENA RODRIGUEZ: Honestly, I feel like it's been part of my game. I feel like one of my most valuable skills as a player, it's having the vision and the basketball IQ. I feel like the coaches have done a great job of putting me in the top of the key, giving me the confidence to make decisions.

Also, kudos to my teammates because they know exactly where to go and how to move the ball, so they make my job way easier. So I'm very grateful for them too. As far as I have the ball, but they also have to move the ball really well. It's definitely a huge part because of them.

HARMONI TURNER: Honestly, I think Elena is just a natural talent. You don't see that finesse very often with a lot of special people. Elena is very special. She's kind of like my partner in crime out there. Just seeing her work is just a beautiful thing, especially like everyone else is getting like a lot of attention. Elena deserves the same.

I feel like she's been doing a really great job this season of just allowing her finesse to take over. We just sit there and just like watching the show. It's nothing new. We see it all day in practice. It's nothing new. I'm excited for the world to see what else she has to do.

ABIGAIL WRIGHT: Yeah, I second that. I think that, as a freshman last year, just following in Elena's footsteps, she's been a great role model for me. It's just pretty incredible to see the impact she has on the game even if she's not scoring 25 every single game. She has an immense impact on the floor, and I think that's something that she prides herself in.

And also we as a collective, we understand and know how she plays very well. She's a huge part of our success in that regard.

Q. Harmoni, for you, Carrie's talked about how she decided to make herself your position coach this year. I'm curious just how that time with her one-on-one has helped strengthen your bond with her beyond where it already was coming in.

HARMONI TURNER: Yeah, thanks for that question. When I found out that Coach Moore was my positional coach, I was like, oh, yeah, we're definitely winning a championship this year. I knew that she was going to put me through workouts that were tougher than the games, and I think that's also allowed me to kind of just calm down a little bit once the game actually like came to play.

I think also it allowed us to bond together and reach a level of relationship that we kind of -- not necessarily was lacking, but didn't really have in the past couple years.

I think just her seeing like my talent in me also trusting her is something that's helped the team in a lot of ways. I'm super blessed and grateful for her, so yeah.

Q. Elena and Abigail, kind of sticking on the theme of Carrie here, like I know this is obviously all of your first NCAA Tournament experience, but with her having been to an Elite Eight with Michigan, I'm curious how much she's given you guys advice about the tournament or told you about her own experience or anything along those lines.

ELENA RODRIGUEZ: Honestly, I think Coach Moore hasn't talked about that much. She's very like be where your feet are. Definitely for her having that experience as a coach, it's definitely great for what's to come. It's going to give us some confidence to remain like constant and very like calm during the game.

But she hasn't talked about it that much, especially to the team. But I feel like that's a good thing. She's just focused on what's upon us and not what happened in the past. I think she's just ready to go tomorrow and ready to enjoy the present.

ABIGAIL WRIGHT: Yeah, I would second that. I think that obviously she has that experience, which has been super helpful in our preparation, but as she always says, it's about us. I think that she's putting most of her energy towards our prep for our game tomorrow right now and using that experience, obviously, to our advantage.

She knows how this game works, how March works, so that's going to be really helpful leading into our run.

Q. Question for all three. First of all, I hope everyone in Raleigh is welcoming you all, congratulate you on your success. I was sort of surprised -- sort of surprised. I know how well the Ivy League is, but to get three bids out of eight teams, I think that's phenomenal. I was wondering when you all realized that, that three teams from the conference were going to make it, what was your reaction to that? How gratifying is it to see the league being recognized?

ABIGAIL WRIGHT: We found out at the selection show actually, shortly after we watched our own selection. We stayed to see whether or not Princeton was going to get in. I think it was just -- we all cheered. We were so excited.

For the league to be represented in that way, it's been a long time coming. I think that we've been so talented over the past decades, but I think that it's finally coming to fruition. To see all three of our teams get recognized for the hard work and just our talent and our schedules was really, really gratifying. I think we were all really happy.

ELENA RODRIGUEZ: Along those lines, I feel like everyone's seen what the Ivy League has put in. The three teams, we all have a 20-plus winning season, and we've beat some really good teams. We have some incredible seasons, not this year, but also a couple years ago too.

It's great to see finally the three of us in here. As Abigail was saying, yeah, we were so excited for Princeton to get in, for Columbia to get in. Yeah, we were rivals back in the Ivy League, but now that we're here on the big stage, we

just want to cheer on each other and hopefully make the farthest run we could ever make.

HARMONI TURNER: About time (laughter). Man, I think we have a lot of great teams in the Ivy League, and unfortunately, in the past it's only been a one-bid league. We are meant for this moment. This is something that we worked hard for.

I'm super proud and happy for all the other teams, Columbia and Princeton, that got in. Columbia's big win yesterday, like that just goes to show that like, you know, stop trying to box us in. I feel like we're very talented.

Yeah, just like super, super grateful and finally glad that it happened.

Q. I'm not on social media a lot. Someone told me your social media was lit, so I checked it out. There was something that you tweeted, you probably remember it, but somebody said, oh, man, she might go here or there, and you're like of course not. I'm staying here. I don't care what happens, I'm here. In the age of NIL and you have all these offerings and all these temptations, how important was it for you to, one, say I'm staying here, and how gratifying was it for you to actually get the job done this year and get to the tournament, get your title, and do it with this group when you have so many options available?

HARMONI TURNER: Yeah, I didn't want the easy way out. I'm super grateful for a lot of people that were interested in me, a lot of schools that were. At the same time, I feel like my relationship with my teammates and my coaches are worth more than any amount of money.

Also, like why be a part of history when you can make it? I feel like we've done so much together collectively that I wouldn't change my journey for the world, and I feel like that's what makes my story that much greater. I'm super grateful for that. I'm super grateful for the people that are sticking with me in this and just understanding that I'm not doing this alone as well.

Very gratifying, very flattered with the interest, but at the same time, I'd rather make history than be a part of it.

Q. Elena and Abigail, what are your reactions when you hear stuff like that and you heard Harmoni was going to be back?

ABIGAIL WRIGHT: My first reaction was excitement because playing with Harmoni is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, as I'm sure it's pretty clear watching our game. I think it just shows the kind of person she is on and off the

court, the dedication she has to the game and to what Harvard Women's Basketball has been trying to do over her career and prior to that and what we're finally bringing to reality now.

It just speaks to her and just, again, her dedication to our team and her teammates and the coaches and the love she has for the game. It's just a pretty incredible experience to be a part of.

I thank her for coming back, because yeah.

ELENA RODRIGUEZ: Her resume speaks by itself. There is not a lot I can say that is not already in there. As a teammate and a really good friend of Harmoni, I can say it's been amazing to share this journey with her, especially the two of us, we're both seniors. Getting to do this our last year together, winning the Ivy League Championship, and now being here means the world to us.

Only the two of us have known all that we have done to get here. So seeing like making it happen in reality, it's just amazing.

Honestly for me it's just a pleasure like to play alongside her. It makes everything easier. At the same time, she's one of the best like basketball players at Harvard has ever seen in their jersey. So it's great to make history with her.

Q. We hear so much about NIL, the transfer portal, how you navigate through it. I want to know how you navigate through being a student-athlete at Harvard.

HARMONI TURNER: I knew that was coming.

Q. It had to. Elena, we'll start with you since you're on camera.

ELENA RODRIGUEZ: It's definitely rough, but at the same time, like we knew what we were signing up for, and it's a privilege to get to Harvard and get the best of both worlds. I mean, we're like living proof of that.

I feel like the Harvard experience is just great. You get the best on the academic side. You meet like incredible people along the way. And at the same time, you get the best part of athletics. You really improve not only as a player but also as a person.

I think it's just such an enriching experience and is a once in a lifetime opportunity.

ABIGAIL WRIGHT: I can go. I would like to mention we're on spring break right now, which is really nice because we're not missing classes.

(Laughter).

But I think that what Elena said is right. Coming to a school like Harvard, any of the Ivy Leagues, academic schools, it's really rewarding to see your work in the classroom and on the court become worth it.

You have all of your teammates and your coaches by your side doing it right alongside you. The ball will stop bouncing at some point, so having that academic degree and just those experiences from college to graduate with, I think are really important, and they enhance your experience as an athlete.

It's just been an incredible two years so far on both ends. So I wouldn't change it.

HARMONI TURNER: I guess in closing, like along the lines, it's very rewarding, very gratifying just because it's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Not everybody gets accepted into Harvard. It's a beautiful thing to see.

And like once you realize where you are and the people that are surrounding you and the support system that you have, it doesn't matter what you're going through, you know that you're going to be okay and you know that you have a really great team behind you, whether it's basketball or not. Supporting you throughout your entire life, the rest of your life.

It's very gratifying to accept, and I think the adjustment piece is just like any other university you go to. You're away from home, away from family. Like you've just got to treat it as such.

Yeah, just like lean on your people, and I feel like we've done that.

Q. This is about Coach Moore. I asked her about this yesterday. She's done a lot to empower you guys on the court with an identity and then as well as off the court as an identity. I was wondering -- I'm sorry to put you on the spot. She was the first black woman to lead the program to the tournament in Harvard history, and I was wondering what that meant to you guys, especially the culture she's built around you guys to be yourselves and be basketball players at the same time.

HARMONI TURNER: It means a lot. Representation matters. I feel like Coach Moore, what she has done, just the three years she's been here, you'll think she's been here for 20. I'm incredibly grateful for her. I'm thankful for her because she's done so much, not just for myself, not

just for the team, but for the black community, for women, and for a lot of minorities.

I feel like that's the best role model you can ask for. I tell her every day she's my Coach of the Year because of what she's done on and off the court, and I truly stand behind that. I feel like our entire team does as well.

The beauty in that is that she's not finished. She has a lot more to give, and I can't wait for everyone to see that.

ELENA RODRIGUEZ: Totally. I mean, I feel like Coach Moore is definitely inspirational, like how she leads this team, how she improves herself every day. She's such a hard worker. Her work ethic, it's something that I've never seen before. I feel like you can tell based on how we play and how she has built this team. We're so proud of her.

As Harmoni said, like she's not done yet, and we're so excited for what's to come. For now she's done a pretty good job, the only three years she's been here, to set the tone. She's built a championship room here at Harvard, and we're so very proud of her.

ABIGAIL WRIGHT: I really couldn't have said it better. I think that being a part of Coach Moore's first recruiting class is an experience that I will never forget. Every single day, I'm grateful for her as a person and a coach. She cares about us so much on and off the court.

What she's done in the game of basketball at Harvard is incredible, but that doesn't speak anything to the kind of person that she is and just the love and care that she pours into us every single day. I think everyone deserves to have a Coach Moore in their life, and I hope they get to at some point.

Yeah, she's a complete game changer in women's basketball, but specifically in all of our lives, I think she has changed it in more ways than one.

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