

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

Saturday, March 22, 2025

Raleigh, North Carolina, USA

Reynolds Coliseum

**Michigan State Spartans**  
**Coach Robyn Fralick**

**Grace VanSlooten**

**Jocelyn Tate**

Media Conference



overall I just had a lot of fun. Just happy to still be one of the 32 team still playing.

JOCELYN TATE: I felt like we were just prepared, and although my matchup was Harmoni I felt like it was a team effort. We practiced and worked on it and we communicated well. We moved together and I thought that was really good.

**Q. Jocelyn, you had a three pointer during the big run in the third quarter. How important was it the way you guys responded after they got within a point?**

JOCELYN TATE: Well, we just like to get like stop, score, stop, score and build on our leads. We don't want to feel comfortable and make comebacks. We just like to build our leads, yeah. I just said the same thing, but it's okay.

We like to build our leads here, yeah.

**Q. Jocelyn, you mentioned your matchup was Turner. What was the game plan against her, the scout? She's kind of everywhere every game.**

JOCELYN TATE: Just keep her off the three-point line and gap help in the paint.

**Q. Talked about the slow start last year. You got off to the fast start you wanted this year and then the offense went stagnant for a while. Were you trying to force the ball inside too much? Seemed like they were knocking a lot of balls away. Just what happened after that quick start?**

GRACE VANSLOOTEN: I think we got away from our ball movement. I think we started off the game pushing the ball in transition and swinging it around, and I think we got away from that which definitely hurts our game and make it a lot more stagnant and the for the defense to guard.

That was the main problem there.

**Q. If I counted it right, this would've been the lowest scoring game for Harvard and third for you guys. I think you guys knew that was going to happen coming**

Michigan State 64, Harvard 50

ROBYN FRALICK: Yeah, really, really proud of our team. We feel like this is a big step for us. We were here last year. I think we learned a lot about what the tournament is like, what it feels like. I thought we were prepared.

I just thought our tough -- the thing we've been talking about a lot is real confidence comes from toughness, not whether or not the ball goes in or not. I thought we had that.

We knew they were going to be a tough matchup. We feel like they were playing their best basketball, especially through the Ivy League tournament, and I thought our preparation really helped us to be successful tonight.

But a lot of credit to Harvard. Harmonia Turner is a great player. What Coach Moore has done there in a short amount of time is pretty incredible. A lot of respect for them going into the game, and a lot of credit to them for the season they've had.

**Q. A lot of talk before the game about playoff experience, tournament experience. You got your first game. Jocelyn, you had a big role defending Harmonia Turner. Talk about your games today.**

GRACE VANSLOOTEN: I honestly just had a lot of fun. Like I said, I've never been to the NCAA tournament so I was really excited coming into this game.

I think we played with a lot of intensity and we really want this win, and I think that's what we went out and did. Yeah,



**in; two really good defenses. As players, do you get up for games like this where you know stops are going to win this kind of game?**

GRACE VANSLOOTEN: Yeah. I mean, I definitely get excited. I think we are a very defensive sided team, and we take a lot of pride in our defense. We love to press and kind of fly around and make other teams feel pressured and hectic.

I think this was a lot of fun. Harvard's press is really good and took a lot of preparation coming into that. Definitely got some steals off that. Yeah, I definitely get up for more defensive games. I think it's a lot of fun, and especially the physicality and everything like that.

So, yeah, I get excited for it.

JOCELYN TATE: Exactly what she said. I would just say I felt like we knew both teams were really good at defense and we wanted to win that matchup. Our defense also helps or offense, so that's like our fuel.

**Q. Can you talk a little bit about the role of free throws in winning this game? I believe you guys scored 12 points off free throws than Harvard did. Yeah, was it part of game plan to get to the free-throw line and win it there?**

JOCELYN TATE: I would just say I think getting fouled and getting to the line is a part of our offense. I wouldn't say it's anything like different or spectacular, but that's our every game type of thing.

We work on our free throws all the time so we're prepared in those situations.

GRACE VANSLOOTEN: Yeah, I think drawing fouls and getting to the free throw line is a part of every game plan. As much as you can get to the free throw line that's to your benefit.

Yeah, like she said we spend a lot time on it and work on so when we do get those fouled we're ready to knock them down.

**Q. Some teams don't like playing physical basketball, the physicality of it. Do you like to enforce your physicality on those opponents just as much as you try to absorb the physicality from them?**

GRACE VANSLOOTEN: Yeah, I love being physical. I like that contact, and I think it's definitely taken some getting used to. That's something I really improved on at Michigan State, is absorbing contact and getting used to

that physicality. I love it. I think it's a lot of fun.

JOCELYN TATE: Yeah, I think it's one through 15 on our team. We're really big competitors and want to win. We know we can win that physicality margin.

**Q. Grace, you actually had a double double without any turnovers. Only like the 13th performance. Knowing that Harvard was the kind of defensive team, was that a focus for you?**

GRACE VANSLOOTEN: Yeah, I think so. I think at halftime and after the third quarter Coach was really challenging me to get some boards, and the rest of the coaches. That's kind of what I went in and did.

We knew they send five to the glass and rebounding would be a really big part of this game. It definitely wasn't the best, but I think we turned it up a notch towards the end of the game.

**Q. One of my favorite quotes from yesterday, which shows how boring I am, was your coach said you have multiple presses and it depends our you guys to determine how effective it's going to be. I watched the first two minutes and I was like, oh, they fly around a lot. You guys touch your chin and like a trap comes. Yo, this is going to be nuts. What is it like when you're communicating? How do you manage all the different schemes that you have at your disposal and when to use them? How did that work out today?**

GRACE VANSLOOTEN: I thought they went really well. I think in order for a press to work you have to have a lot of trust in your teammates, and I think that's something we have. Just knowing that your teammate is going to rotate to the next player and kind of close that trap. I want to give out a shoutout. I think Jocelyn makes our press go. She is out there flying around and tipping balls and doing whatever she can.

She throws her body on the floor. I think that energy gets the rest of us going to kind of get up in the press. A lot of props to Jocelyn.

JOCELYN TATE: Thanks, buddy. I would just say like the experience and then how much we have been working on it throughout this year. Grace, everybody caught on so fast to the press. Once you know how to read the defense and move together it makes it all really fun and easy.

I think that's why we're really good at it, because we have fun with it. It's really fun to fly around and sprint out.

**Q. For both student-athletes, after Harvard's season**

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**and last week's Ivy tournament, there was a lot of talk about them being a trendy upset pick. Is that stuff that you heard or do you tune all that out this time of the year?**

JOCELYN TATE: I did hear about it. That's not a big deal. Everybody has their own opinions. That's okay. I think it adds plot to life, so, you know, make it fun. Plus they're a good team, so, yeah, we respect them.

GRACE VANSLOOTEN: Yeah, I mean, kind of the same. They're a really good team. I think other people's picks don't really matter to us. We know what we can do.

We just prepare for everybody like they're the same.

ROBYN FRALICK: This is our superstar, my eight year old, Clara Fralick. What do you like to do after the Spartans win?

CLARA FRALICK: The victory gritty.

ROBYN FRALICK: The victory gritty.

**Q. She was studying that stat sheet pretty hard.**

ROBYN FRALICK: Yeah, she loves her Spartans and I'm glad she's here with me.

**Q. If you could comment about the fast start you want, and then you scored some free throws and off a steal. Otherwise the offense wasn't producing anything for a long stretch. Then you came back in the second half and were able to get the ball inside a lot. Talk about the adjustments you made, what they were doing to you, everything.**

ROBYN FRALICK: We got off to a great start. We knew that was important. It's important every game. I think it's really important in this tournament.

And then they're a good team. They clawed back. Part of it we were fouling so during that stretch I think in the first quarter they had two field goals and seven free throws so it's really hard to get in a flow when you're fouling.

I thought that made the game choppy a little bit for us. When that happened we just weren't moving the ball the same trying to do too much off one pass or two passes. Harvard is too good of a defense to get a good shot off that.

I thought the flow, we were getting stops early and playing better offense. We know we started fouling. I thought it made us just play disconnected.

**Q. The blow there in the third quarter, that natural for your team to be unfazed by that and just get after it again? What was your impression of what happened there?**

ROBYN FRALICK: We got kind of lucky. I think we gave up four shots on a possession and they didn't score. We kind of dodged one there.

But we play in the BigTen and 12 of the 18 teams in our league are in the tournament. We have seen it all. We really have. We've seen the best teams in the country, the best players, tournament teams pretty much night in and night out.

So no, we don't get fazed. We've been down big, come back, up big, we've given up leads. It's part of the game. I think there has to be an endurance for the game, but after that if we don't control our defensive rebounding this game is going to be really hard.

We didn't do a good job on that. That's something we have to clean up. When we did we were rebounding so aggressively or we were able to go get fouled. That's something we need to do better. I thought we dodged a bullet early and then settled in.

**Q. Obviously Harmoni ended up with a tougher night, it was more so less about how you guard her, but how you take away her options. The roller, you sent help immediately on rolls. Three layups off those. Had to make long passes to corners. Just seemed like you tried to make it very difficult for her to not only score herself but generate something outside of that.**

ROBYN FRALICK: We knew coming in she's clearly the focal point of the team. Our game plan was to take away her threes, be really good in our gaps, and really early in help. A lot of times in their two-man action they throw it to the roll, so we wanted to take that first option away.

When she drives she's a tough one-on-one matchup. We could guard together and really try to take away the paint. And we had three matchups on her. We are fortunate we went in the game knowing Jaddan, Jocelyn and Nyla could guard her. We watched a lot of games where there is just "a" matchup on her.

We felt like three and switch them up. She works hard. She's got a motor. She never gets tired. Goes after every ball. We knew we were going to have to change that up. All three did a great job and as a team we did a great job. Those were the priorities for us.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

ROBYN FRALICK: Yeah, this time of the year that's a little easier to control, how do we make the game hard on the defensive end. I feel like something we feel like is a strength of our team is we have a lot of -- so often it gets talked about somebody being hot on offense. You can get hot on defense.

That's something we can control. So our preparation of, hey, let's guard together, get back to -- we came of the BigTen tournament and we were so disappointed with our defense. We just felt like we got away from so many of our principles off the ball.

And so these two weeks I felt like we worked really hard on getting back to being much, much better at building pressure as a unit off the ball as well. Tonight I thought it wasn't perfect but it was good enough.

**Q. Coach, Harvard obviously has a really strong defense. If there is any one area that may be vulnerable it was their free throw rate. Is that something you purposefully took advantage of?**

ROBYN FRALICK: I don't know purposefully. We just felt like if we were early in help and early in gaps we would do a much better job of defending them without fouling.

And a lot of our free throws game off when we actually did get a defensive rebound. Them so aggressive to rebound that they went back. I felt like that was where we got fouled. Grace drew ten fouls. We felt coming in she would be a tough match up inside.

First half we didn't have a breakthrough with that, but in the second half we did.

**Q. I think you just answered my question. Looking at a lot of stats, assists, turnovers, steals, blocks, a lot are even. They had to foul 25 times and you guys only have 16 fouls. That's from being a physical team and being in control of the game or how do you explain that?**

ROBYN FRALICK: I thought it was a combination. I thought Grace did a good job imposing her will in the paint in the second half. As I shared when we did have defensive rebounds we had numbers advantages, and I thought we did a good job being aggressive to the rim and getting to the free throw line off that and getting some and-ones.

**Q. So when Harmoni comes off, gets to a screen, and you decide to send two at her, how do you go about**

**saying, we trust everybody will be in the right spots once you send the extra defender? She has to make the right spread you're kind of gambling being we'll make you make the right play.**

ROBYN FRALICK: Yeah, we did put two on the ball on her a lot. We had a lot of ball screens and handoffs. Did get us on some splits. We wanted to get the ball out of her hands. You watch the Ivy League tournament and she was so dominant.

We knew as a team if we were going to do that, then off the ball you have to load to the ball and guard it together. Like I shared, it wasn't perfect but I'm proud of our defensive effort. I thought she's a very, very good player. As a group I like the way we dialed in on that end tonight.

**Q. With your relationship, past history with Carrie, can you talk about what you might have said before and after the game with her?**

ROBYN FRALICK: I mean, it was pretty quick. There is not a lot of time. I just told her congratulations and good luck. What she's done at Harvard in such a short amount of time so impressive. I know it's going to continue. Everything she's part of, everything she's touches, excellence becomes attached to. It's hard to get here and she's done it in a really short amount of time.

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