

# NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - Green Bay vs Minnesota

Friday, March 20, 2026

Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA

Williams Arena

## Minnesota Golden Gophers Coach Dawn Plitzuweit

Sophie Hart

Amaya Battle

Media Conference

Minnesota 75, Green Bay 58

THE MODERATOR: Coach, go ahead, opening statement.

DAWN PLITZUWEIT: First and foremost, hats off to Green Bay. I thought they played a really. Really good game. I thought our fans were absolutely incredible throughout the course of the entire game. I certainly believe that they gave us a ton of energy. And it's a good thing that basketball is a 40-minute game because we needed 40 minutes. We played really well certainly down the stretch of that game and in the fourth quarter.

I think started off with, from what our coaches said was seven straight stops and then we were able to get some things going and able to score it at the rim a little bit and then hit a couple open shots. So, again, I thought our young ladies played with a great deal of resilience because things, when we did get really good looks early in that game, they didn't fall for us.

But I thought our young ladies stayed true to competing and staying true to ourselves and continued to play with a lot of toughness and found a way down the stretch and that's certainly something that we now can build upon I think moving forward and excited to continue playing.

**Q. Take me to the change over there before the fourth on the bench. Kind of what was being said? What was the mood? You guys were down, hadn't really played well to that point. What were you guys saying to each other?**



SOPHIE HART: Yeah, I think we were just being loose. I don't know if it was something specific, but I know Coach P pointed it out, that we were laughing, we were having fun and that's we feel like that's when we play our best basketball, when we're kind of just a little bit lighter. During the first part of the game, I felt like we were a little tense and then we kind of found our groove and just enjoying it together I think is a big, big focus for us, too.

**Q. This is for Amaya. Considering the struggles in the first half was shooting and how things were going then that first one dropped for you in the third quarter, what did that do for you? How did that feel?**

AMAYA BATTLE: It felt good. Any time a shot goes in you feel good so it gives you a little bit of a boost, but, yeah it definitely felt good. Made the hoop look a little bit bigger.

**Q. For Amaya, can you just talk for a moment about the importance of or the impact of defense and how you turned that into offense there in the fourth quarter.**

AMAYA BATTLE: Yeah, we were talking about how we kind of didn't have a flow that game and a lot of it came because we weren't playing our best defense. We started getting stops and it started to flow better for us. Our defense is a big part of what we do.

**Q. For Amaya, I saw you kind of cheer when Tori checked in at the start of the fourth quarter after dealing with some foul trouble. What did she mean to you guys at the start and just what does she mean to you guys as a whole?**

AMAYA BATTLE: Yeah, Tori is a motor. She never see her really quit or stop. She'll get knocked down, go back up and she's moving all over the floor. I was super excited to have her back in the game and that's somebody else that can bring the ball up besides me so that was nice, but, yeah, I was just excited to have her back out on the court.

**Q. This is for both of you, how big of a difference did this crowd make for you and having the entire state rally around you?**



AMAYA BATTLE: I was saying in the locker room after the game, that's probably the loudest it's been, I think, the whole time I have ever been here. It's been loud before but it was like, wow, I actually can't hear anything. I was calling out screen switch and I don't think anybody heard me. It was a ton of fun. It was nice to have them rally around us.

SOPHIE HART: Yeah, I think we have just building it for a little while. Amaya has been here for four. I played -- gosh, I'm old so I don't even know how many seasons at this point. So I feel like it's just -- we feel extra proud. A lot of us are from Minnesota and so knowing that the state's rallying behind us as we go for our final few games here together, it's been a lot of fun.

**Q. Being in this environment for the first time as a program and having the crowd there, could you feel the nerves collectively?**

SOPHIE HART: I don't know if it was nerves necessarily. I just feel like we didn't quite have our offensive flow. Felt like the ball was sticking in our hands a lot. Maybe we were taking some forced shots all the way around. And defensively, I felt like we were doing what we were supposed to do but they hit some tough shots, too, so give credit to Green Bay.

But then I think once we started kind of clicking in that third quarter, we were good from there.

**Q. For Sophie, early on, the threes weren't falling for your teammates. In a situation like that, is that something you relish where you know you're going to be putting the team on your back or the offense on your back a little bit so you can then open things up with a strong middle?**

SOPHIE HART: I mean, I'm not gonna lie, if we get Mara or G an open shot, I'm going to let them take it any time. I don't care how many they missed before. I have full confidence that they're going to make the next one. But I think just knowing that this team, we're very balanced. You look at our scoring and each night it's a different leading scorer. I think that takes a lot of pressure off of us as a team because you know that you can rely on somebody else. Main it was my turn to go and score and then it's going to be somebody else's to go and score. I think that's what makes us difficult to guard.

**Q. What does the next 48 hours look like and what is it going to take in the next round to punch a ticket to the Sweet 16?**

AMAYA BATTLE: I'm still waiting for the schedule so I

don't know. Is that what you mean? Like, what do you mean?

SOPHIE HART: I think just a lot of rest and recovery, yeah. I'm sure our coaches, they're bill on film so they've probably been scouting away hopefully. We'll get our groove on later on. But, again, we don't really have the schedule yet, so.

THE MODERATOR: New other questions for our student-athletes? Thank you, you can head back to the locker room.

First question for Coach.

**Q. How much did Tori's foul trouble just kind of be disruptive? When she's on the court, it just seems like you're a completely different team.**

DAWN PLITZUWEIT: We're a lot better when she's on the floor, so it does set us back a little bit and we've got to continue to play well, even when she's not on the floor, but that's certainly -- and she picked up two fouls that I thought she needs to be a little bit more careful, a little bit more aware in some of those situations, but it does hurt us at that point in time.

At the same time, I thought there were, at the beginning of that game, we got really good shots and we just, we didn't even -- we weren't close to making them, whether they were around the rim or from the arc. Then it felt like then we tried to force and tried to attack and we weren't moving the ball quite as well because we weren't making as many shots.

So at that point in time, again, I think having Tori back for a little while in the third quarter but certainly the fourth quarter kind of really helped us with just the movement, the flow and all of it at that point.

**Q. Did you think about challenging her foul at all or what was going through your head? Or what did you see on that play?**

DAWN PLITZUWEIT: Well, I wish that we could at that point in time but we're not allowed to, really. That's not something that's in our game yet. Maybe it gets to it there at that point in time. And I don't really know that it was -- it probably was a foul but there was probably one before that that maybe kind of encouraged her to do that. But they're not going to -- it is what it is. That's part of the game. You have to be smarter at that point in time.

**Q. Coach you said it time and time again that your team's strength is their ability to stay loose amid**



**pressure-packed situations. The team, Tori McKinney told us somebody cracked a joke heading into the fourth quarter. Who cracked that joke? Who is able to keep them loose in that pressure-packed moment?**

DAWN PLITZUWEIT: Right. So, and, again, I think our crowd was incredible and I thought at the beginning of the game, sometimes when you want something so badly, it's just hard to relax even though you're trying to smile and be relaxed, it's just so hard to do that, you want something so bad. I thought finally going into the fourth quarter, I remember it being Amaya on the bench and Amaya made a comment, hey, we've been in this situation before.

A drill that we do, three on two and a half and we start down by ten and we're not down by ten so I think we're in a good spot. I looked at her and I'm like you have never started down by ten. The amount that you've ever started down by is five. So we're arguing back and forth and so I said no, I think you're making that up at this point in time.

Then they were kind of loose at that point in time and they were talking about, oh, we've done this a bunch of times, we'll played well in the fourth quarter so we can do this. So they were sending themselves the right messages at that point.

**Q. I was wondering if you could just share what you guys did against Jenna Guyer. She came in as their best player and you really seemed to take her out of the game.**

DAWN PLITZUWEIT: Well, I thought we were really trying to make catches challenged with her. I think she gets opportunities in transition, either as a rim runner or from the arc and I think she got one of those against us. Maybe that was in the Thursday quarter when they went on a run.

She had an arc shot I think on the left wing or left rail. They do a really good job of getting her in the post. I thought for the most part Amaya made those passes pretty challenged and pretty difficult and she did get it, she has a little bit of size, maybe not as much as Jenna Guyer, but has some size to make it a little bit more difficult to score over the top of her.

Ball screen coverage is hard with her because she pops a lot of them. So you think -- but we don't necessarily want everybody switching and guarding her because Amaya felt like it was the best match-up and at some point in time we had to figure out we had to trust everyone to do it. We had to keep making adjustments but, again, I think she had our attention because she's Player of the Year in their league and someone who makes a lot of things happen and is their leading scorer and also leads them in arc shot

attempts. I think our players were aware and trying to do their best on her.

**Q. Coach, I saw you embrace Amaya after the game. She obviously left her blood, sweat, and tears on the court, but outside of her play, how does she emotionally lead her team by her actions?**

DAWN PLITZUWEIT: I thought, again, when there was a time-out when Mara hit a shot and they were all celebrating Mara at that point in time. She's the leader in a lot of those ways, but, again, I think the example going into the fourth quarter, talking about, reassuring her teammates, this is what we do. We practice this. We're going to be okay. This is our time.

Again, for whatever reason, we got stops and we were able to create in those opportunities, we were able to get the ball around the rim which we couldn't really get the ball around the rim or when we did get the ball around the rim we didn't score it or we couldn't get it around the rim often enough.

So I just think her -- she's really loose. She's really relaxed in a lot of those settings and I thought she did a good job. She made really good decisions and she hit some really big arc shots for us too. And she rebounded at a high level. She does an awful loss for us.

**Q. What stood out to you about the defense in the fourth quarter?**

DAWN PLITZUWEIT: Well, I thought we finished plays at a really high level. I thought when the game started, they got some offensive rebounds. We were able to create some turnovers but when they got some shots, they were able to get some offensive rebounds against us. I thought in the fourth quarter, it started with a defensive rebound and then there was a foul, I think, trying to get through a screen, an awareness piece.

I just think we were a little bit better versions of us I felt like at that point in time. I thought our crowd gave us a lot of energy to get to that point but the five players that were on the floor and the energy on the bench has to carry them into that setting to make it happen.

We can give you an idea and a game plan all we want. That's great. We're not the ones executing it. They're the ones that have to do that and they did it at a really high level this that fourth quarter.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach.

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