

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - William & Mary vs Texas

Friday, March 21, 2025

Austin, Texas, USA

Moody Center

**William & Mary Tribe
Bella Nascimento**

Natalie Fox

Monet Dance

Media Conference

THE MODERATOR: We will start with questions for our student-athletes. First question?

Q. Bella, are you getting into the groove of this? You're up on the stage now, been here for a few days. You won a game. What's it like to continue this process, this successful process that you have had?

BELLA NASCIMENTO: Yeah, I'm getting into a groove, my teammates are getting into a groove and I think we just want to get out there to play. We're just eager and we want to compete and show everybody who we are.

Q. This I guess is for any of the players. Has it settled in yet what you guys have accomplished and the history that you're making or is that something you're not really going to think about until weeks, months, maybe even years down the line?

BELLA NASCIMENTO: Personally I'm not thinking about where we're at right now. This is still such a crazy experience to me and I bet for all my other teammates as well. We're blessed to be here and we're excited. We're making history. This is a one of a kind opportunity, a moment for us to shine.

NATALIE FOX: For sure. We joke about how we think you could write a story off of our story, but, like, thinking about it and everything we've done, it doesn't quite... you can't really comprehend everything until maybe after. Right now I'm just kind of living in the moment with my teammates and enjoying it while we're here.

MONET DANCE: It is a great accomplishment and we're



blessed to be here and this opportunity that we have. I think our team is focused on the next game and how we can impact that and how we can shock the world.

Q. This is for all of y'all. Texas is known for its tough defense. What challenges do you anticipate facing tomorrow and how is your team preparing for that?

BELLA NASCIMENTO: Yeah, Texas is a really good team, number one, obviously. The main thing is that they're really big and we're not as big and so we just have to play physical, play tough and match their intensity. Even though we lack height, being aggressive and trying to punch first I think will stump them a little bit.

NATALIE FOX: Yeah, I'm pretty sure we're going to focus on what's gotten us here thus far, playing hard, playing intense, going for all the 50/50 balls. Focusing on what we do and just matching their intensity and playing our game.

MONET DANCE: I think height, it does play a big role in this game. Our posts are going to be boxing owl their posts so it's going to be a big emphasis for your guards to come in and get the rebounds but I think the main focus is not getting too high or too low because this game is definitely going to be loud and we just need to focus on what we came here to do and execute that.

Q. When the regular season ended on March 8th, did you envision two and a half weeks later you all would be here on this podium or did you surprise yourselves even a little bit?

BELLA NASCIMENTO: We definitely envisioned ourselves winning a championship and that's what we did before. We went to the tournament for playoffs. We had a little bonfire moment, like us and the team and we made like a vision board of we wanted to accomplish this postseason and coming here was definitely a part of that. We're still super excited to keep playing and just keep on, deep the ball rolling.

NATALIE FOX: I think we were just taking it one day at a time, like playoffs, we kept saying, you know, we can focus on being tired tomorrow. We can focus on this tomorrow.

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We just played in the moment, did what we had to do in the moment and, like, just kept going day from day which has gotten us to where we are now.

MONET DANCE: I don't think we necessarily surprised ourselves. I think we put the pieces together at the right time and in doing that, we were able to show basically everyone that we are capable of doing things. We have the talent, we have the potential and we just put it together.

THE MODERATOR: We're going to turn to some questions from folks via Zoom.

Q. Hey ladies, what's happening?

STUDENT-ATHLETES: (Laughter) What's up?

Q. A question for each one of you. Can you give me two non-basketball things this week that is going to stick with you forever? It could be meeting an alumni, the hotel, seeing all the NCAA signs, maybe getting the police escort to the arena, whatever like that.

BELLA NASCIMENTO: Yeah, we have a little... what's it called when we walk out and our band is there cheering us on? I don't know what it's called but we have a little walkout ceremony which is dope and awesome that all of our fans, our parents, the band's out there cheering for us. Just earlier today, a couple of us were playing cards in the lobby and just enjoying the moment and staying present.

NATALIE FOX: For sure. One of the things I'm probably never going to forget is just all of the overwhelming sport we're receiving from our school and our staff. There's watch parties all over Williamsburg and we're seeing videos of that so that's definitely going to stick with me, and, yeah, just being able to sit outside in the sun and spend time with my teammates and just bond and joke and enjoy the moment.

MONET DANCE: Y'all took all of them. (Laughter) I was going to say going outside after this, kind of like overwhelming experience being in this atmosphere and kind of getting to go outside and just hang out with teammates and the same thing Bella said, playing cards this morning.

Q. And then belly you mentioned it in your opening remark that you basically have waited your life for an opportunity like this. Now that it's happening, again, a question for all three, what's the thought of playing Texas? Obviously I know you all are confident and I know you aren't intimidated by playing Texas, just as a little girl growing up to playing in the tournament and now you get an opportunity to compete against what

many people perceive as one of the top teams in the country.

BELLA NASCIMENTO: Yeah, just having this opportunity to compete with one of the top teams is incredible, something that we all have been working really hard towards and wanting to accomplish. We just want to go out and make a huge impact on the court, whether that's sharing the ball, getting defense I have stops, rebounding, we just want to play together and stick together and this is for sure something we'll never forget.

THE MODERATOR: We're now going to David Johnson joining us via Zoom as well.

Q. Natalie, I wanted to ask you about last night. I know none of you had played in this kind of a setting before but you're a freshman and you were so huge in the fourth quarter. Kind of take me through that, what you did to keep your poise and play probably your best game so far.

NATALIE FOX: I kind of just was like doing what my teammates needed me to do. We knew we could out-rebound them so I just kind of focused on getting some more O-boards and putbacks because they're the easiest layups to get for me and having my teammates back, making sure I help out on defense, being where I'm supposed to be and doing my role and my job just to support this team and take us as far as we can go.

Q. I was wondering if both Bella and Monet could speak to that as well. She had six rebounds in the fourth quarter alone, several follows and so forth. How important was she in pulling out that win?

BELLA NASCIMENTO: Yeah, that was super important and I think that is like feeding into her confidence more and it's really showing out on the court what she's capable of doing. We knew she was able to do this all along, step out into the bright lights and shine. That's what she does. Big Nat Fox, you feel me? (Laughter)

MONET DANCE: She did play a crucial role -- I'm sorry... Nat Fox. (Laughter) She did play a crucial role. We knew she could do it just like Bella said. I don't know, we're proud of you. Real talk. You stepped up. True freshman. You're great.

NATALIE FOX: Thank you.

Q. One more if it's okay. Natalie, I know you're going to see some size against Texas. Your thoughts on that? I know you probably haven't gone against them yet or any time like that yet but just your general

thoughts on having that kind of matchup coming up.

NATALIE FOX: I'm just excited to be able to embrace this opportunity. I always love to be able to play a little bit more physical, getting inside and, like, see what I can do against these tougher, bigger, older teams so I'm kind of just excited to be able to -- it's like a test for myself, see what I can do against Texas.

Q. Thank you so much.

THE MODERATOR: We'll return now to questions from the media members in Austin.

Q. This will be really for any of the players. Your teammate, Cauley, I guess, went through kind of a rough experience after a game earlier this year with some pretty ugly stuff on social media and she reached out to you guys for support. How did you rally around her and help get her through that, and what was the message throughout the team about what to do from that moment?

BELLA NASCIMENTO: Yeah, so, with all that, we just let her know that we have her back and we're here to support her and everything and our main focus was to forget about the past, like have short-term memory. Forget about all the fouls. Forget about all the backlash. Everything like that and focus on what's next and what we can do to prepare for our next game, for our next went because it doesn't matter what people say. People are always going to talk but you always got to block out the noise.

NATALIE FOX: For sure. We just let her know we have her back and everything that happened, it was a team effort. The loss was a team effort. We're a team. Nothing's on her and all the people that talk, like, they're just going to talk, so, let them talk and just stick with the people who know you and who love you and it's her team.

MONET DANCE: We start off by apologizing for not automatically going up to her after that game and then she wanted revenge and we went on a revenge tour. That's really how it went. (Laughter)

THE MODERATOR: Any other questions?

Q. Not nearly as serious a topic but have y'all adjusted -- are y'all still on east coast time? Are your people back in Virginia kind of complaining about a 9:45 start tomorrow?

BELLA NASCIMENTO: I mean, it's only like an hour difference. It's not that bad, but it is, like, these late games for sure we're not used to at all. Playing at 9:00, 8:00. It's

my bedtime... what? But super excited to be here though.

THE MODERATOR: Anything else from our media members here? Ladies, thank you so much for your time. We look forward to you competing tomorrow night as well. Thank you very much.

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