

# NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - Virginia Tech vs Oregon

Friday, March 20, 2026

Austin, Texas, USA

Moody Center

## Oregon Ducks

## Coach Kelly Graves

## Mia Jacobs

## Katie Fiso

### Media Conference

Oregon 70, Virginia Tech 60

MODERATOR: We are now joined by Oregon head Coach Kelly Graves, sophomore guard Katie Fiso and senior forward Katie Jacobs. If coach will give an opening statement and then we'll take questions for the student-athletes.

KELLY GRAVES: First of all, I just want to congratulate Megan and her team, Virginia Tech, on a well-played game and a great season. I really grew to appreciate their team a lot in the last few days of just preparation.

They're a really good team. They're well coached, and I thought they played their hearts out tonight. But I'm happy for us that we're moving on. These two were obviously a huge part of it. But I just thought we played a really well-rounded game both ends of the floor. They got loose a little in the second half in fast break points, but I thought we really did a great job for most of the game in that area which was our number one key.

Yeah. Just excited to be going on.

MODERATOR: Questions?

**Q. Katie, could you speak to the job you guys did defensively coming out of halftime? Did you make many adjustments? What was the key to going on such a big run there?**

KATIE FISO: Yeah. We keyed in a lot to the scout. We focused in on the scout before the game, knowing personnel, knowing who are the shooters, knowing who to



close out on and knowing who to stop short on.

And then when we did get beat, our rotations were key today, and I think that was what helped a lot to transition to offense. So our defense was great. Solid.

**Q. Mia, how are you feeling right now? Did you think you'd be able to go back in the game?**

MIA JACOBS: Yeah. Obviously not knowing if it was going to be my last game, I kind of wanted to push through a little harder. But I'm a tough cookie. So it was good. But yeah.

**Q. For either player, they cut the lead down to four points early in the third quarter, and then you went on an 18-0 run to take control of the game. What did you like about how you were executing offensively and defensively during that 18-0 run?**

KATIE FISO: Yeah, we were keyed in, we were locked in. We knew the game wasn't over until the last buzzer sound. So it was intentional for us to lock in on defense, be in our rotations and push in transition, feeding that hot hand Ehis, Mia, whoever that may be. I think that was key to success for this game.

**Q. It was brought up the other day that you didn't have a lot of returning veteran players from last year's team. I think you and Ehis kind of had some fun with that. Specifically with you, how did you feel the team handled the pressure, handled the event, handled the scene? Clearly you guys won, but did you guys come in with any nerves?**

KATIE FISO: Nah. We didn't come in with no nerves. We knew what we had to do. We knew it was going to be a tough matchup, and like I said, we knew it wasn't going to be over until the last buzzer.

Yeah, I mean, we were confident in our preparation work. We did a lot of prep work, shout out to the coaches and our coaching staff. They helped us a lot to be prepared for this game. So I think it was just a matter of doing it and seeing it on the floor. So, yeah.



**Q. Mia, what exactly happened on that play with your chin, and was your leg bothering you at all or was it just hitting your chin on the floor?**

MIA JACOBS: Yeah. My leg is feeling really good, actually. But I went to dive on the ball, and I kind of got squished almost and landed on my chin pretty much. So that kind of caught the floor and my head. So that's pretty much.

KELLY GRAVES: I grew up on bloody, gory movies, and it was bloody and gory. I saw it firsthand right there.

MIA JACOBS: Yeah. It was kind of just dripping.

**Q. You all rotated 13 players in. Can both of you talk a little bit about just having that kind of depth on your roster and being able to utilize it in this game?**

MIA JACOBS: Yeah. It's great to know that the next girl is coming in, there's no dropoff, and everyone brings something different to the table. So being able to play with them or have them come off for us, it's a confidence feeling, and it's really nice.

**Q. Katie, for a while there they were in line to have maybe their worst shooting game of the season. What worked so well with your defense?**

KATIE FISO: I would say just our flying around, our intensity, knowing that if I get beat, I know someone has my back. And just that's what we hang our hats on, our defense, our rotations, having each other's back. It was key for us to do that. So, yeah.

**Q. Mia, you guys out scored them 34 to 16 in the paint. What did you like about kind of how you used those mismatches and kind of attacked them inside, especially in that third quarter?**

MIA JACOBS: Yeah. We have some really good inside girls, but we all bring something different, which is great. I think we did a really good job of feeding our big girls, Sara, Ehis, Amina. Everyone brought something else in. Sara brought some really good minutes, too. And I thought that everyone was just doing a great job, and just being able to put the ball in kind of spreads it out for everyone else, too.

**Q. There were a lot of games this year where you guys start out really hot and then things kind of fizzled a little bit. This is a really good Virginia Tech defense. You guys started out well, but you didn't really fizzle. I'm asking Coach Graves here. What was the difference for you guys today, and did those**

**experiences during the BIG TEN season sort of prepare you to not falter in a game like this?**

KELLY GRAVES: Yeah. That's a great question.

MODERATOR: The players only have two more minutes to answer questions. I'm so sorry. Let's continue with the players.

KATIE FISO: I mean, that's what the BIG TEN prepared us for. I feel like the BIG TEN is one of the best conferences in this country. So all those hard games, all those, like, lows, we learned from those lows, and that's why we were able to push through these 40 minutes, you know, staying high.

We wanted to be this great team, and in order to do that, we gotta play all 40 minutes. So that was really key and intentional for us this game.

**Q. Mia, you came here to play on this stage. Now you've experienced success on this stage. What were your emotions knowing that you guys get to stay a couple more days and now you've got an NCAA Tournament win on your resume?**

MIA JACOBS: It's great to be not just on an NCAA Tournament team, but a team that got to win, so a lot of people can say they've been here, but not many can say they've got a win. So that's really special. Yeah, it's something that I was working towards, and I'm so glad that I'm here and I'm being in the moment with it.

MODERATOR: We'll turn to questions for Coach right now.

**Q. My last question for you, Coach.**

KELLY GRAVES: Asked and answered. (Laughs). I forgot. I'm old. I'm old.

**Q. It was just the fact that there were a lot of games this season where you guys started out hot and then kind of fizzled. This time you guys didn't do that. Did those experiences help you and did they exceed your expectations, because you wondered how this young group might react to this environment.**

KELLY GRAVES: Yeah, the more games you have like that, you learn from them. We always talk about we either win or we learn. And I just thought our intensity level was really good from start to finish.

We didn't have the ups and downs. Even though I know they outscored us in a couple of quarters, I just thought we

were pretty consistent tonight. We took care of the ball relatively well. I don't think we turned them over a whole lot. So it just wasn't one of those games where, you know, like you said, we've had some ups and downs.

Maybe it's some maturity, you know. We can hold onto a lead and actually build on it. You know, so, yeah, I was really pleased. It was a good effort. Their preparation, I know Katie talked about preparation. I thought our coaches did a great job. My staff is amazing, and they had our team prepared. And they really locked in for the last few days on this. And we probably watched more film on Virginia Tech than we've watched on anybody. We spent a lot of time really focusing on this game.

**Q. KG, you said yesterday Mia can be an X factor. How much of an X factor was she, but also Amina and Sara, the production you got out of them as well?**

KELLY GRAVES: Yeah. I'm glad you mentioned the bench. I thought our bench, particularly in the first half, was really strong for us. It's been that way for most of the year, but we get different ones, and tonight it was the inside play. We really felt we had an advantage inside. A lot of the things we did after timeouts were geared towards getting it inside, and I thought our kids executed so well tonight on ATOs.

I'm just really proud of them. They did what we wanted to do. I thought defensively we were on point. They have a couple great scorers. I know Baker got loose there late in the second half. But the job we did on Wenzel and Nelson, I thought, was just outstanding. And that won the day, our defense.

Offensively we were okay, but defensively I thought we were pretty darn good.

**Q. Defensively, as you just mentioned, you guys were able to deny them penetration for a lot of the time, and since Texas is also not a great three-point shooting team, will that be a kind of similar point of emphasis defensively in that game?**

KELLY GRAVES: I haven't turned my attention. I've watched some games, but not intently, and purposeful with Texas. I just, you know, they're a one seed for a reason, right? They're going to be very good.

But, yeah, they have some weaknesses, and anytime you play somebody, you try to exploit those best you can. But I haven't really thought that far ahead. But I do know this. We better be able to defend on Sunday or we're in big trouble, because they're obviously an outstanding team.

And I've coached against Vic a lot of times. We've had some great battles. The two of us combined, we've gotten be a few technicals against each other a few times, too. So it should be fun.

And I apologize for assuming that it might be Texas -- that was the question -- because they still have to play their game, too. But we understand that that could happen.

**Q. What did you see from your offense and defense that you liked during that 18-0 run there in the 30 quarter when you took control?**

KELLY GRAVES: I thought our energy. I mean we got some steals finally. We only turned them over three times the first half. That's been one of our biggest strengths this year.

Now, we didn't turn them over a ton the second half, but we did get some at the right time and we were able to create a little bit and up the tempo kind of the way we wanted.

And, again, we were getting contributions from lots of people. So it wasn't really any one thing during that run. Ultimately, anytime you have a run on anybody, it's the defense, right? It's the defense. And I thought, again, that was on point tonight. Our rebounding was solid. It wasn't great, but it was solid tonight.

Yeah, thought it was a pretty well-rounded, good, solid game that we played.

**Q. Kelly, you mentioned yesterday that Tech has so many different guards that you gotta figure out whether to go under or whatnot. They missed a lot of buckets around the rim. What did you like about kind of your interior defense when they tried to get downhill today?**

KELLY GRAVES: I thought we loaded up pretty well. Yeah, they didn't get much easy. Even though they ended up with some fast break points, they weren't critical ones. I thought we did a good job when we needed to in fast break.

Yeah, I mean, we threw in a little bit more length tonight, and that always, I think, would help in that regard.

They're a good basketball team, you guys. Megan does a great job. I really enjoyed watching them. And this is a good win. We're going to enjoy it.

**Q. Ari hit a couple of shots, but seven rebounds from her. Sofia goes scoreless, but presumably if you have a great defensive effort, she's a key to that. What are**

**some things maybe that we might have missed that the two of them did to help key that effort?**

KELLY GRAVES: That's who Ari is. She's an under-appreciated player, and sometimes even by her coach. She just does all the little things that it takes to win games, and everybody has to have someone like that. She just makes things happen, sometimes for the good and sometimes for the bad, but usually for the good. And I thought tonight she just did a great job being that menace that she can be. And I'm glad that you recognized her contributions, because she is really important to what we do.

Oh, and then Sofia the same way. She's more of a kind of a lock-down kid. Her length, she just gets hands on things. And she was the primary defender on Carleigh Wenzel. And I thought she did a terrific job. Carleigh never -- plus the foul trouble, I think, she never really got into a rhythm until it was kind of too late, because she's an outstanding player, seriously. We recruited her, and so I've followed her for a long time. And she shows up on my TikTok feed from time to time, too, because she's in my contacts. So I really pull for her. I think she's a heck of a player and had an amazing year for them.

This is a good team, and they're going to come back stronger, I'm sure.

**Q. What were you doing defensively to make it hard for their guards, like Wenzel and Nelson to get shots?**

KELLY GRAVES: Well, we could match her length. She's a long guard, and Sofia is, too. The one thing Sofia Bell is is she's one of those stick-to-it kind of kids. You say, we've gotta take her out of the game, she's going to find a way to get it done. So I don't think she got a ton of really clean looks. And there was usually that hand in there.

And then, you know, this is a big stage, and then you start to press a little bit, and I thought that happened. Plus, she got in foul trouble and had to sit a good portion of the first half. So I just don't think she ever really got in that rhythm that I've seen her be in, as well as you have.

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