

# NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: Second Round - Oregon vs Texas

Saturday, March 21, 2026

Austin, Texas, USA

Moody Center

**Oregon Ducks**  
**Kelly Graves**

**Mia Jacobs**

**Katie Fiso**

**Ari Long**

Media Conference

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with questions for the student-athletes.

**Q. You guys have three ranked wins on the road or at neutral sites. Two against Maryland, one against USC. What's allowed you guys to kind of find the best in your guys' game in those meetings on the road and how do you maybe kind of internalize that in tomorrow's game against Texas?**

MIA JACOBS: I think we do a really be good job at staying together and no matter where we are it's the people on the court and the girls, like it's the team that stays consistent, so that also is a really good contributor to that.

KATIE FISO: Like she said sticking together, being one unit. There's a lot of outside nice, a lot of refs that might not be on our side that game. So getting downhill, getting to the foul line, controlling what we can control.

ARI LONG: No, I think they got it.

**Q. Katie and Ari, obviously both of you were on this team last year when you guys had to take on Duke in the round of 32, so you had the experience of what it's like facing a top-ranked team in the country, in an environment like this in the March Madness tournament. What are you guys kind of remember from that game and the crowd and the atmosphere and what were some of the lessons you learned that you feel like you shared with teammates like Mia and others that weren't here to make sure everyone**



understands what they're about to experience tomorrow when tip off gets under way here at Moody Center.

ARI LONG: I think just being ready to play as hard as we can, obviously it's going to be a tough game, and just trying to control what we can control. Last year I think getting a taste of it was cool, just kind of know a little bit more what to prepare for and what to just yeah, prepare for, really.

**Q. Katie, maybe you could start with one out. How similar or not is this matchup to the other day. Is anything carry over, just what are the biggest things that stand out as you start to look ahead to Texas and is there anything can you take from yesterday's effort or do you have to kind of flush that completely?**

KATIE FISO: It's obviously good to feel good when that gives you a little boost of confidence. But it's a new day, a new opponent. Just keying in on what we need to get better at and focus in on ourselves and what how we can be a better team come Sunday, so yeah.

**Q. So many players have stepped into different roles for you guys this season who were either here last season or are just joining the program. Was there anything that you guys did as a group or individually to kind of help everybody jell in those new roles and kind of learn each other a little bit more?**

KATIE FISO: I know it was key for us during spring and then coming summer when everybody was coming around, we would always just play with each other, we would always go up-and-down, five on five. Whether that was we were smack talking each other, uplifting each other, helping each other up and stuff like that. I think that's what really started to create that chemistry own court. Then just kind of kicking it with each other off the court a little bit, started to build that chemistry on the court.

ARI LONG: I think encouragement, too. We have a lot of players who have stepped into bigger roles and so just knowing that we got their back and they have our back and just playing with that confidence.



**Q. You obviously had a crash course in trying to understand what this Texas team is all about. Just in a span of 24 hours. What have you seen in any film that you watched so far and what makes them so difficult or maybe one of the most difficult opponents you guys may fairways from what you've seen this season?**

MIA JACOBS: Yeah, they're a great team. Obviously they didn't get a 1 seed without proving it. So we know that and we are going to bring our best foot forward. But they're a great defensive team. But they do have holes, they're not perfect, and our game plan is going to be really good. And if we execute it's going to be a really good game.

KATIE FISO: Yeah, they hang their hats on their defense and -- oh, Ari? Well, shoot. They hang their hats on their defense and their pressure defense, especially right off of their bucket. They're not even thinking about celebrating or anything like that. They're going to be getting into you, but just being strong, confident in the work that we put in, we're a great team, we learned a lot over the course of this season through the highs and the lows, so hopefully that can carry over to the Sunday game.

**Q. To that point, Ari, what's your comfort level at this point in the year helping maybe ease the pressure on Katie as the ball handler to try to break some of that pressure and deal with some of that pressure they're going to presumably try to put on you tomorrow?**

ARI LONG: Yeah, I think I'm ready for it. I feel like Katie takes a lot of the load most of the time, but I try to help whenever I can. Obviously we have AT too who handles the rock a little bit. Yeah, just getting comfortable, getting it back to her, getting in our sets and then go to work from there.

**Q. Katie, wondering if you could just talk about what Texas can throw at you from the perimeter. Got a player like 5'-6" Harmon who can be so disruptive, Jordan Lee's got a lot of size, there's just a lot of speed and physicality out there. How do you handle that?**

KATIE FISO: Just trust in the work that I've put in and the confidence that my team has in me. That helps me a lot. I know like Ari said, when we have each other's back, like anything can happen. Just having that belief in yourself that, hey, like we put the work in, we did all this stuff, like it's nothing that we haven't seen before. We played in the Big Ten. Like I said, the Big Ten's one of the best conferences in the country. So we have seen that type of pressure with Ohio State when we played Ohio State. So it's not anything necessarily new, but it's just a new team, a new environment. So it's just about going out there and doing it.

**Q. Mia, the contributions from the forward group yesterday, across the board, obviously hugely helpful. How different is the matchup for the bigs tomorrow and what will it take to try to have a similar impact on that game?**

MIA JACOBS: Yeah, it's great that we have so many different bigs coming in to. I think we played all five last night. It was great. Because we're all so different, each game is going to be different as well. So we have different contributors each night, and sometimes one big is better than the other, just because of matchups and things like that. But it's going to be tough, but I think we can match their physicality and we can kind of move around and we're definitely more mobile than they are, so them trying to guard us is also going to be a problem. So excited to see that and I think we have a good game plan.

**Q. You watched Ehis now all year, practiced with her, played with her in games. How is she so effective when she's usually giving up size to still produce the way she does?**

MIA JACOBS: Yeah, I think she stays like really low and balanced, which is great. I think she gives us a big target to pass to. I think her confidence has grown so much from the start of the year. I think everyone backs her and we, she can feel that confidence from everyone else. She's able to do what she does and we all support her through that too.

**Q. Katie, you talked a lot about the season how you always try to make sure you're having fun on the court and I feel like that really epitomizes with this whole group. But when you're in a situation like this where the pressure and everything kind of becomes a little bit more intense, how do you still find that fun on the court when you understand that if you lose your season's on the line. But obviously if you win you guys keep on dancing through it. How do you kind of keep that fun always at the forefront?**

KATIE FISO: Yeah, I think that's one of the main things in this game of basketball. There's a lot of highs, there's a lot of low, there's a lot of added pressure. But at the end of the day it's just basketball and it's just the ball going in the hoop. Sometimes it does, sometimes it doesn't. Just a matter of that day. But trying to find that joy consistently no matter what the outcome is, no matter who we're playing. I could lose a hundred games and I'll still choose to love this game. I can win a hundred games, like it's my love for the game is never going to go. I don't put my joy in something that's inconsistent. I love this game no matter the highs and the lows. It's still going to always be there.

THE MODERATOR: All right. Thank you.

(Pause.)

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with questions for coach.

**Q. What's your motivational style and approach in these kind of March Madness win-or-go home games and does that change year to year or based on whether you guys are the higher seed or the lower seed?**

KELLY GRAVES: Yeah, I think if you're around our program and me as a coach over the years, I try to keep 'em as loose as possible. I mean, sometimes the pressure can be too big in these kind of moments, and so I think as a coach they're going to, you know, go off the tone that I set so yeah I think we just try to keep it loose and act in some ways -- they understand that this is big, but we try to make it as normal as possible.

As far as the seeding goes, sure, we've been higher seeds and lower seeds. I think in this particular instance we really have nothing to lose. So I think we can go out and play loose and I think that might help us. So, it kind of differs a little bit, I guess, but we're always loose, to be honest with you. That's kind of been our MO.

**Q. Who are the players who are kind of encouraging and fostering that atmosphere in the locker room generally?**

KELLY GRAVES: Well, it starts with our stars. Obviously Ehis, if you knew Ehis, I don't know if she has a serious bone in her body. She wasn't here on the podium or you would have seen that. And then Katie, same thing. She's wired a little differently than Ehis, but she's still loose. She's so grounded in her faith that she truly believes there's nothing that she can't handle in life. And the rest of 'em, same thing. If you were out there in the hall you would hear, you know, they're in their playing games and having fun and that's kind of who they are. Really close group. Really close group.

**Q. Your forward group was productive yesterday across the board. How different a matchup is it tomorrow and what does it take for them to be as impactful?**

KELLY GRAVES: Well that's our biggest concern. I would say well it starts with transition and our transition, you know, that starts taking care of the ball and taking good shots. The second concern is, yeah, points in the paint, offensive rebounds, they're going to be significantly bigger than us across the board. So, yeah, it's just it's going to be

one of those things where you try to neutralize their best rebounders, their inside kids, and then the guards are going to have to do a great job of picking up the scraps. But that's going to be the biggest challenge I think tomorrow is how we can handle the boards.

**Q. What do you remember about that 2019 game against Vic and Mississippi State in the Elite Eight 8?**

KELLY GRAVES: Honestly, one of the greatest games I've ever been a part of. I think the most well-played game I've ever been a part of. Both teams. I think it was 88-84. Obviously a big stage, winner to the Final Four. I think we combined for like eight or nine turnovers. I think both teams shot over 50 percent from the field. It was just a great basketball game. It went back and forth. We were fortunate enough to get the win, but that was a long time ago, I had a whole different team. And he's had a different school. But we've had some good battles together over the years. This is the first time I've played him here at Texas but Mississippi state I think we played three or four times against each other. Great coach. Great coach. Somebody I look up to, I admire. What he's done here has been incredible, really. Yeah, his team is well coached. I mean, every game you look at where are they weak, what can we exploit? Well they have size, they have depth, they have quickness. They're not the best shooting team in the country, but they are a great mid-range shooting team. They score around the rim. They're great in the paint, they rebound well. They're obviously tenacious defensively. There are not a lot of weaknesses on that team. They have got a bunch of different players that can have big nights. They have got All-Americans. They have been in this moment before. This isn't new to them. They're playing at home, that helps. So they really have all the advantages. So what we have to do is go out with really nothing to lose and try to do the best we can. And I believe in my team. I think they believe in themselves, so hopefully we'll see that confident team out there tomorrow.

**Q. Dealing with their pressure, taking care of the ball, how much of that is on Katie, what are your thoughts on Ari, AT, their ability to maybe help take some of that load off her shoulders?**

KELLY GRAVES: Yeah, well, Katie can't play 40 minutes against that kind of pressure and against an elite defenders like they have, starting with Rori. But yeah, so it's going to be everybody. Everybody's going to have to help. Sometimes we use even Ehis as our secondary ball handler as our center. So it's just all hands on deck tomorrow, no question about it. By the way going back, we had an ESPN game against Mississippi State one time, Holly Rowe was there, and I got a technical. Now, he got a technical too. It was a hell of a game. But that was where

I did the -- I told the official, you know, listen, they just flop when they drive, and then I did this, like, you know, you bit, you bit, you took the bait. I got T'd for that. And that was the first question Holly asked me out of the halftime was about that. So, but Vic, he evened it out later in the game and got one himself.

**Q. I was going to ask what he did to get his technical. But you spoke about their mid-range game. When you look at Madison, specifically what makes defending that mid-range game of hers so difficult?**

KELLY GRAVES: Well, A, she's really, they're aggressive, all of 'em, but she in particular. You know, she's fun to watch. Now when you have to, when you're preparing to play against her she's not that much fun. But she really is fun to watch what she does on the court. She's just a jack of all trades. Obviously in any moment can take over the game. I think in her development she's going to have to be more consistent from the perimeter, but you're looking at a future WNBA all-star, in my opinion. She can do everything. She's quick with it. She can get up quick and on anybody. She can create space for herself. That's going to be a challenge. Not exactly sure how we're going to stop her, but we're going to do our best to neutralize her for sure. I don't think you can stop her.

**Q. You've obviously had a little bit of a relationship or a connection with Texas' head coach over the years. What's that been like, the battles over the year, even thinking back to Mississippi State several years ago and what do you maybe take from a moment like that, if there's anything to take from a moment like that heading into this Sunday?**

KELLY GRAVES: That was a long time ago, so not really much. I admire him because we're in the same generation. And that's I think pretty cool. A couple older guys. I won't say old, but older guys that are competing at this level. I just enjoy him. He really coaches with a passion. His players play the same way. They feed off their coach in that regard. He's obviously been successful at every stop. I love that he and course what he does in defense. He's a great defensive coach first and foremost. And his kids just play free. You can tell they like to play, they have fun together, and they really compete. That comes from him, his personality.

**Q. You mentioned the difficulty of dealing with Rori Harmon. Her career stat line stands alone for just everything she's able to do on the court. Describe for us the difficulty of playing against a player like that and what she brings to them?**

KELLY GRAVES: Well, first and foremost, I am a fan of

Rori. I love how she plays. She's so passionate. You can't help but love her, really. Again, she's, when you're trying to prepare for 'em it's a little bit scary, but she, you know, Booker's a great player, Jordan Lee's a great player. Oldacre. Bryanna inside. Carlton. They have got a lot of really good players obviously. She's the one that makes 'em go. I think they are who they are because of her in large fashion. You're always on attack with her at both end of the floor for 94 feet you're on attack. She's either in your shorts defensively or she's looking to attack and create for others. So yeah, a huge admirer and, yeah, big fan. Tomorrow I won't be. All right. But, yeah, fun to watch. And I've gotten to know her a little bit too through the years. She's an equally impressive person as she is a player.

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