

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

Sunday, March 22, 2026

Austin, Texas, USA

Moody Center

## Oregon Ducks Kelly Graves

## Katie Fiso

## Ari Long

### Media Conference

Texas - 100, Oregon - 58

THE MODERATOR: We'll go ahead and get started with an opening statement from Coach and then take questions for the student-athletes.

KELLY GRAVES: Well, first of all, congratulations to Texas and to Vic. They're a really good basketball team. We're just not where they're at right now. They played well tonight, we weren't at our best, but I always give the credit to our opponent. They made us play on our heels most of the game. We're disappointed that we're not moving on, but, you know, at the same time, I'm not going to be negative and down because this was a great year for us.

We're kind of a homegrown team in terms of, you know, we had players that had smaller roles last year and they moved into bigger roles. We didn't just go out and pay and plug and play kids. And I'm proud of that. They stepped up. 23 wins. We won a couple games in our Big Ten tournament. We won here. We just didn't have what they had today. And that part's disappointing, but I'm going to remember the great things, especially with these two. I know they played well the entire season and certainly during tournament play. So I'm really proud of our team. I am.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the student-athletes, please.

**Q. Katie, we talked a lot about the pressure you guys were going to face from their defense coming into this one. How did it feel like you guys handled that? How much of a factor do you think it was in this?**



KATIE FISO: I would say we kind of handled it all right. We had a lot of turnovers. But I feel like at first, in the first half, we were kind of more slow-paced, and then in the second half just a little drop and the pressure kind of got to us a little bit. But kudos to Texas. They have a great defensive team, so, yeah.

**Q. Ari, I asked Ehis earlier about the second half. She said you guys were pretty pumped at halftime. Only down 11, felt you were still in it, and then everything just kind of spiraled out of control, and she thought that maybe some people got down on themselves a little bit. What do you think went wrong in that quarter?**

ARI LONG: Yeah, I think Texas just kind of put together good possession after good possession, and it slowly just kind of crept away from us. But when it gets to a point, it kind of gets a little tough to just kind of keep working back into it, but I think we still tried until the end, so I'm proud of us for that.

**Q. Ari, we talked about a lot of different factors potentially in this game leading up to it. Didn't talk a ton about them making a bunch of threes. Just how much defensively does that kind of get you out of what you wanted to do when they're hitting shots like that on top of everything else?**

ARI LONG: Yeah, it's tough. We were trying to pack it in, but, you know, then they hit some, so we kind of had to space out a little bit, and then that kind of left the big kids exposed down low. So it's tough. It's tough when they make shots, and they made a lot of 'em tonight, so...

**Q. Can you follow up on the thought of the growth this season and obviously stepping into a bigger role this year, but then the development you feel like you got and the group got together and kind of the trajectory you're on?**

KATIE FISO: Yeah, it was obviously a different role, a different position, different expectations this year. But I feel like everyone that was needed to step up, they stepped up.



Whether that was like Ari, Sophia, Sarah, Ehis, like they did an exceptional job this year. I'm really proud of them, really proud of the work that they put in. Just excited to see the next step that they take. The ceiling's high for them. Just super, super excited for that growth.

**Q. Coach just talked about how you returned a lot of players that didn't have big roles last year, I think you lost four out of your five top scorers last year. Now next year you're going to bring back four of your top four, plus Elisa will come back so what do you think the potential is for this team next season?**

ARI LONG: I'm excited. I think we have a lot of good guards, a lot of good bigs, and we're going to take this time now to just get back in the lab and get better and come back even stronger. So I'm really excited. I think we'll be able to jell in the off-season, especially. We were able to jell a lot more this year. So I'm just excited. I think we're going to be dangerous next year.

**Q. You talked coming into this about enjoying the situations like this, kind of no matter what. Your love for the game. Obviously it got away from you guys in the second half, but how much were you enjoying kind of some of the one-on-one battles and matchups, the being able to perform in this environment, what was that like in the first half in particular?**

KATIE FISO: Yeah, what a blessing it is to be here. Not a lot of people get this opportunity where we're at. So enjoying every minute, enjoying all the highs, the lows. And I always like to say myself at the end of the day, like all of us are, we're still winners, no matter the outcome of this game, you know, not because of what we do, because of what Jesus did on the cross. I'm really heavy on my faith. If Jesus said I'm good, then at the end of the day I'm good. At the end of the day it's just basketball. Just what an amazing experience this is. What an amazing experience it is to share it with these people that I care about. It's just a blessing. I'm just super thankful for the future to come. So stay tuned.

THE MODERATOR: All right, thank you for your time here this week. We'll take questions for Coach.

**Q. We kind of talked to the players a little bit about what it's like playing in that type of environment, especially when the crowd gets going behind 'em. What's it like coaching in that, like especially like when it's a run and everything seems to be going loudly for the other team?**

KELLY GRAVES: Well, certainly it's an advantage. But they earned it, right. They earned the 1 seed. They

earned two games at home. I think at some point -- and I've been a 2 seed, we've been a host several times, so I understand it. I think we need to get to a point where, you know, we do this on neutral sites. But they deserved it. They earned it. They were a heck of a team. So it makes it tough. But at the same time we play in the Big Ten and pretty much everywhere we go we get great crowds. So we have seen that. Playing at Iowa, playing at Ohio State, Maryland, they have big great crowds and so I don't think that was really a factor. I mean I thought we played well early. Then they just kind of started rolling. It was like, you know, plug this hole and then they do this. Listen, they're a really good basketball team. We just were not, we're not there yet. But I don't think the crowd, I mean, yeah, I'm sure it energizes them, I don't think it really psyches our kids out too much.

**Q. You go into halftime, they have got a lead, but you're within shouting distance. What did you like that you were doing, what did you want to try to maybe tweak and then what happens in the third quarter that they kind of gapped it?**

KELLY GRAVES: Yeah, well we actually took care of the ball a little bit better in the second half. The turnovers are huge though because they got, what? We had 15 turnovers. I think they had 23, 24 points off those turnovers. So they made 'em count. But I thought in the first half we turned it over a few times, but we were hanging in there. I thought we did a great job on the boards. Booker was getting hers, for sure. But I thought we had done a pretty good job on the others. We felt pretty good with where we were at at that time. Because I thought we had some open looks and, you know, they didn't go. And again it just started to pile on. That third quarter they really took it to us and we didn't respond all that well, unfortunately.

**Q. We talked about it yesterday, but why was Madison such a matchup problem today?**

KELLY GRAVES: Because she's really damn good. There's nothing she can't do. We just don't have anybody physically that can matchup with her. If we take Ehis off any of the inside kids, then we're in big trouble there. It's just a tough matchup, and she had a great night. She really did. She shot it well, got to the rim, she was aggressive. Just hat's off to her. I mean, she's a first team All-American for a reason. And she played like it tonight.

**Q. You know the best teams in the country, where do you think Texas is going into the regionals and what gives them a chance to win it all and maybe what doesn't?**

KELLY GRAVES: I haven't played UConn, I haven't played South Carolina, I haven't played LSU. I played them and UCLA, and they're both really good. I wouldn't even opine on that. I think they have as good a shot as anybody, and they have played some really good teams and done well against 'em. So I would assume -- and Vic certainly knows how to navigate the NCAA tournament. He's gotten to that Final Four several times. So, you know, I think he's going to lead 'em in the right direction. But they really have everything. There's nothing that they lack. We thought one of their weaknesses was three-point shooting, they go 8-12. So they have got size, they have depth, they have athleticism, they have playmakers. I thought we did a great job on Rori tonight. She was kind of a, I wouldn't say a non-factor, but -- a she's an All-American. She's a WNBA point guard. So they just keep coming at you. You know, so I hope that they do well. I think you always cheer for the team that beats you. But again, I'm really proud of our team. I mean, if you would have told me before the year that we would win 23 games, get to the second round of the tournament, I would have said, based on kind of the inexperience that we had, I would have said, Oh, I might take that. So we just got beat, these guys are just better. They were better than us tonight.

**Q. Looking ahead what, aside from whoever you add, what does this group need to do to get over the hump and get to the next round, like individually and collectively, bigger, stronger, quicker faster, what?**

KELLY GRAVES: I think we need more playmakers. We rely on Katie a lot. And she's just physically, you know, it takes its toll over 40 minutes a game. Especially in the conference that we play in. There's no night off. So we need more playmakers. I think we just got to get some more size. We have an I think a really good freshman center coming in, about 6'-4", 6'-5". We're just undersized. Mia Jacobs at 6'-1" at your power forward and Ehis at barely six foot, trying to guard inside, yeah, it makes things difficult. More depth, perhaps at point guard. But definitely, we got to get stronger. We got to live in the weight room, okay. That's what we got to start looking like. They were bigger and more physical than us at every position and it makes us difficult for us to kind of get -- we were running our offense 40 feet away from the hoop. You can't win games that way. It was difficult for us to get the ball, just simple, you know, wing entry, and they're pushing us further and further out. I think a lot of that is strength. A lot of that is strength.

Please tell the Texas folks that they did a great job. I wish 'em the best.

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