

# NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: Regional 3 Semifinal - Louisville vs Michigan

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Fort Worth, Texas, USA

Dickies Arena

## Michigan Wolverines Coach Kim Barnes Arico Olivia Olson Syla Swords Mila Holloway

Sweet 16 Pregame Media Conference

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Michigan Head Coach Kim Barnes Arico. We'll start with an opening statement from Coach.

KIM BARNES ARICO: Good morning. It's great to be here in Fort Worth. We just finished an awesome practice, and excited to be in the warm weather. Really just excited that our team is here in the Sweet 16.

We have had a really special year, record-breaking in program history, and we have some incredibly talented players and great people inside of our program.

So we know we have a tough match-up tomorrow versus a Louisville team that has been here year in and year out, has a great program, and we're excited about the opportunity to continue to play and to continue to be here in Fort Worth.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open it up to questions for Coach.

**Q. I was wondering how would you compare Mila Holloway's personality when she's on versus off the court? How important has she been during this run?**

KIM BARNES ARICO: Yeah, if anyone watches Mila Holloway play, you just think she's this steady, calm presence for our team. She never really gets too high. She never really gets too low. She's been like that from



the minute she stepped on campus.

Her first career game was against South Carolina as a freshman. She started at the point guard spot. That's not easy for anyone. Throughout her career, she hasn't only played the unbelievable teams in our conference, but she's also played against UConn, against Vanderbilt, against some of the best programs in the country. Her demeanor really never changes.

Mila is kind of the same off the court. She is the kindest, sweetest, caring individual in our program. She's a great, great teammate. She wants to be great for everyone else. If she makes a mistake, she feels bad. If she misses somebody on a pass she feels bad, and I got you next play.

She's just a player inside of our program that continues to improve day in and day out and has been a tremendous player inside our program, starting as a freshman at the point guard spot.

**Q. I'm not sure if you saw Cori Close's comments yesterday in Sacramento about this being -- she's as tired as she's ever been based on all the changes in college basketball the last couple of years. Can you relate to that? What kind of response would you have to that to how things have changed?**

KIM BARNES ARICO: Yeah, I always say we're getting tired because of the changes, not because of our age. Cori and I are probably in the same boat. We've been doing this for a really long time.

I think the changes in college athletics have been incredible in the last few years. We've all felt it, whether that's our travel, whether that's NIL, whether that's the transfer portal.

But a few years ago when all this started to come into play I knew as a coach and I talked to our players and I talked to our staff, like, times are changing; we need to evolve. That's part of it. We need to grow. We need to step up to the challenges, because if we can't, the game, the landscape, all of it is going to pass us by.

So, I mean, Cori, I didn't read her stuff. I try to stay off of the social media, because I mean, a lot of stuff that I'm hearing from yesterday, you know, people are doing the comparison game or people are -- coaches are being negative to other leagues or programs, and I try to just stay in our lane and coach our team and do the best that we can.

But Cori is one of the best in the business. If she's saying that, it's real. UCLA's travel -- I mean, we go out there one time, and I'm, like, oh, that just hit, and it just hit a little bit different.

I'm sure she certainly feels it. I'm sure the players in her program definitely feel it. But it is what it is right now, so we are going to spin it and make it the best that it can possibly be.

**Q. I think it was after the first or second round game you had mentioned the Bev Plocki and Carol Hutchins and some of the other sports coaches at Michigan that you had gotten close with over the years. I'm curious what you have learned from them. I don't know how much softball and gymnastics you can implement into your practice, but even how you go about your day, how you structure things in practice, maybe how you think about the year and the seasons and how they change, what you've taken from them?**

KIM BARNES ARICO: Yeah. Hi, Chantal. I think coaching and coaches are so similar, even if you coach different sports. You might not be talking about the exact Xs and Os of basketball or the flips of gymnastics, but as a young coach coming into Michigan, I wanted to learn from those experienced championship coaches that came before me.

You know, I did mention them the other day. Michigan has had some incredible, incredible championship coaches. That's Carol, Coach Hutch, for sure, but Bev Plocki, Ronni Bernstein. You could go down the list. Marcia Pankratz. Like won Big Ten championships and NCAA championships.

Great coaches. I think as any young coach, I'm not a young coach in the business anymore, but even as an old coach, you just want to continue to learn. You want to continue to grow.

So coaching is building relationships and believing in people and getting people, players, to believe in themselves more than they ever thought imaginable. That really doesn't have a lot to do with Xs and Os. That has to do with building relationships and caring about people.

Hutch is one of the greatest to ever do that. You know, our team watched the documentary on Pat Summitt the other day. When I think about Pat Summitt, I think about Carol Hutchins and the impact she had on softball.

But how many people could learn from Pat, and it wasn't basketball. It was how she treated people, how she got the best out of people, how she created this championship mentality regardless of sport.

I bet you could take Hutch, and she could probably coach any sport, and I would say the same about Pat Summitt. You could probably put her into any sport and she could be successful at it.

I feel fortunate, and I said that the other day. Part of the reason that I came to the University of Michigan and I left my family and everything I ever knew on the East Coast was to be surrounded by that type of excellence and that type of picking of the brain that I can do on a regular basis of all of those coaches.

We spend a lot of time together. We spent a lot of time together during COVID. We couldn't do anything, so we would go over everyone's house and sit outside and we would just talk. We would just talk as coaches. How do you get to this level? What you do on do? What are your practices like? What are they structured like?

The women's lacrosse coach is pretty new in this business, but she's one of the most decorated players of our team, and Hannah Nielsen, she's always coming over to practices and always picking our brain. The game is so similar.

I think we can all steal ideas from each other. I think that's what makes Michigan special. The women at Michigan are powerful and strong. The coaches at Michigan are absolutely incredible. I said this the other day: Everybody talks about the men's coaches and whether that had been Coach Harbaugh, Coach Beilein, Bo Schembechler. For me what drew me was the women coaches at Michigan.

Now my relationship with them has helped me to become a better coach.

**Q. Two questions, because I don't think I get a follow-up, but how tough is it not having Macy available? Also, you talk about the sophomores. What about the quad squad? What did that mean for this program?**

KIM BARNES ARICO: Yeah, so I'll start with the quad squad. For those of you new in the audience, a couple of

years ago was the first time in my coaching career that I was really, really affected by the transfer portal, and it was the year that kind of NIL exploded, transfer portal exploded, all those things exploded.

Because in my career as a coach, not very many people left our team, one, and two, in my time at Michigan, not very many people leave Michigan because the Block M and the Michigan brand and the network and everything that comes with our university is absolutely incredible, so not a lot of people want to leave, ever.

When the transfer portal hit our program, that was like a crushing blow to me. As a coach, it made me reflect on how could I grow, how can I get better, what do I need to change?

We had four people returning in our program at that point. Four players. Of those four, only one really had playing time. Only one returning had experience, and that was Jordan Hobbs. The other three really hadn't played much. Macy Brown, Alyssa Crockett, who are still members of our team, were a part of that quad squad, as well as Greta Kampschroeder.

We met. I mean, we met every day all day. They kind of got the nickname the quad squad. What are we going to do? We don't even have enough people to have a team next year. What's going to happen?

I remember one of those first nights Jordan Hobbs' parents sent me a long email, and it just said, hey, Coach, this is the landscape of college athletics. We got your back. Jordan loves it here. She loves this program. She loves you. She loves this university. You know, go with people that want to be here. Shift your mindset.

For me that was kind of eye-opening. You know, as I was crying trying to go to bed, that made me shift and turn. Let's celebrate the people that stayed. Let's celebrate the quad squad.

The four of them and myself just continued to grow and learn together. Our incoming sophomore class were seniors in high school at that time, and I remember calling all of them and telling them what was going on, and they were, like, Coach, we got your back, we're coming. You know what that means?

That means more opportunities for us. We'll be ready to go. We'll be ready to play.

I was, like, oh, my gosh, these are high school kids. They have no idea we're opening up against South Carolina, and they're, like, that's good, Coach, we're fine, we're fine. I'm,

like, oh, boy, all right. They don't know what they don't know.

But then we opened up against South Carolina, and we played them to a one-possession game, and Sylla Swords in her college debut had like 27-13.

I was, like, okay, maybe they know more than I know. I don't know.

That's kind of the story of the quad squad and how the quad squad embraced our freshman class at that time.

Macy and Alyssa are still left, and they're critical members of that squad. I can't say enough about both of them. Alyssa Crockett being a senior and Macy Brown being a junior. Macy, for those of you that don't know, is the heart and soul of our team. I'm a mom of three, and I have told Macy Brown's mother since I have known Macy, which was probably about 8 years old, that if I could adopt her child, I would want her adopted into my family. If I could have her marry into my family, I would want her to marry into my family.

She's just absolutely the most incredible human that you've ever been around, the most unselfish person, the biggest heart, the biggest cheerleader for everyone in our program. So when she went down in practice the other day, it was just crushing. It was crushing for all of us. I think, you know, every teammate has rallied around her, and every teammate feels the exact same way about Macy.

She's here with us, which is awesome, and I'm sure you'll hear her voice on the bench.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you for your time. We are joined by our student-athletes Sylla Swords, Mila Holloway, and Olivia Olson. We'll take questions for our student-athletes.

**Q. Mila, what does it mean to represent Michigan? Your grandpa went there. Your mom went there. What does it mean to wear that M and represent the colors?**

MILA HOLLOWAY: It means a lot. I mean, I'm glad I could come and represent them and my family and Michigan in the right way. Just trying to carry myself the right way, be a great example for the people coming after me, and, yeah, just do what I can to represent Michigan.

**Q. This seems like the game of sophomores. There are three starters who are all second year players. You guys obviously. Can you talk about what a difference it makes to have the experience together in this situation, but also not the desperation of this is the**



## last shot?

OLIVIA OLSON: Yeah, I think we're really just excited, and we had a lot of opportunities to play in big games last year as well as throughout this whole year. We've been put in -- Sylva said it before -- like every situation possible, it feels like. We're just really using our experience as fuel to keep going and accomplish our goals. We accomplished our goal of being able to host, and I think we're taking great strides.

It's been really cool to just be sophomores, but we don't want to just be known as sophomores. We want to make it as far as we can, and that's the goal.

## **Q. For all of you, what did you learn from the Iowa loss in the Big Ten Tournament that you can kind of take into these big games going forward?**

SYLA SWORDS: Yeah, I would say just to not take any game for granted and recognize that every possession matters. Whether it's first quarter, first play of the game, whether it's third quarter, we have to be making sure that we're playing our hardest, diving on every ball, executing to a T in every possession, because you never know how the game is going to turn out in the end.

I think that game against Iowa we watched a lot of film, we learned a lot individually even of where we can be better. It's great to have a learning opportunity like that heading into the tournament.

MILA HOLLOWAY: Building off of what Sylva said, just knowing the importance of each possession. We went back to the film and we all saw possessions where we missed the rebound or missed the block-out, didn't dive on the floor for a 50/50. All of that little stuff adds up.

We ended up losing that game by a large margin of points, but I mean, it could have went any way. If we would have did those little things, we wouldn't have been in that position. So yeah.

## **Q. Kim was just speaking about you all remaining committed after she lost so many players to the transfer portal. Can you take me back to that time and why you decided to stay here and then what the quad has meant to your development in college so far?**

OLIVIA OLSON: Yeah, when we committed, we committed to Coach Arico and we committed to Michigan. We were going to follow through with that.

We believed in her. We believed in each other, and I think in doing so, it just showed our loyalty to her as well as, like,

she recruits good people, and she recruits talented people and all like-minded.

I think just sticking together and we all have like-minded goals as well as her. So it just means a lot to play for her and be able to represent her after that. We know it was not a great time, but like, being able to stick with our commitment, we knew we wanted to.

SYLA SWORDS: I think touching on that, we were all very secure in our recruiting process and in our decision. We had went through it and given ourselves the proper time to talk to the right schools, and Michigan was still that program that we wanted to represent.

I think ultimately that's why we're such a tight-knit team, is because we had the chance to leave. We had the choice to leave. We all decided to stay. That was a mutual decision, but that was also within ourselves.

I think that's a special thing nowadays even with the transfer portal is you don't see that every day. That's why we're so tight-knit out on the court and off.

## **Q. Coach was in here talking about Mila, how stoic she is on the court, but not necessarily the same off the court. For Olivia and Sylva, tell us a little bit about what Mila Holloway is like when you're not on the basketball floor with her.**

SYLA SWORDS: That's a good question. I mean, you can see -- (microphone distortion).

OLIVIA OLSON: Mila has a different relationship and close relationship with every single person on the team. That helps so much for her as a point guard knowing people's tendencies and knowing and team overall chemistry.

She will go out of her way to get to know every single person differently. Whether she knows if someone can joke around a lot or if you need to be more like straight-up with someone or get on someone, like, she really knows people.

I think that means a lot to our team, and I think that just shows how good of a person she is.

## **Q. I have been around Coach for her entire 14 years. I know how hard she is on her point guards especially. Can you tell me a little bit about your relationship with Coach and what it is that she does to bring the best out of you when you're on the floor?**

MILA HOLLOWAY: I mean, love Coach Arico to death. She is someone who will be real with you, be straight-up.

It's important you get to know her off the court and build that relationship. I've just been trying to go to her office more joking, talking about life, do all those little things to build our relationship.

On the court she's definitely going to hold me to the highest standard possible. She's never satisfied, and that's something that I love about her. She brings the best out of each and every person on our team, and I'm grateful to be a part of this team. Grateful to play for her.

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