

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 Syla Swords Olivia Olson Te'Yala Delfosse

Sweet 16 Postgame Media Conference

Michigan 71, Louisville 52

THE MODERATOR: Welcome to today's press conference featuring the Michigan Wolverines. Joining us today we have head coach Kim Barnes Arico and her student-athletes, Olivia Olson, Syla Swords, Te'Yala Delfosse. We'll start with an opening statement from Coach.

KIM BARNES ARICO: We're excited to still be playing. I think we have an incredible team, and the country got to see them on display today. We had a slow start. Louisville is a great program. We knew they were going to try to speed ups.

It took us a minute to settle, but then once we did, I think our confidence exploded and we just were really disruptive on the defensive end, which we pride ourselves with being, and that allowed the floodgates to open on offense.

Just really proud coach to be sitting here today and these three next to me were phenomenal. Happy to be advancing.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open it up to questions for the student-athletes.

Q. For Liv and Te, could you just talk about your roles in the second quarter press and how that kind of just built momentum during that 16-0 run.



OLIVIA OLSON: I think our press has been our strength the whole year, so we didn't want to shy away from that. I feel like we didn't really press in the first quarter that much. They were kind of sending people out, and we didn't really gamble on it at all.

Te did a great job coming in and using her length to get steals and turnovers. I thought our second line did a really good job of moving and getting the next person.

TE'YALA DELFOSSE: Yeah, we knew that defense ignites our offense, so we tried to run and jump as much as possible and try to get other people to dribble the ball up the court. Slowed them down and rushed them a lot.

Q. Olivia, I know you've been asked about this a lot, but this is such a spectacular class that you've been part of, and I think people around the country have watched you guys grow up. You're still only sophomores, but watched you grow up the last two years. What's it been like for you to be with this group and just I guess the chemistry and how that comes together in games?

OLIVIA OLSON: Yeah, I think it's just a credit to Coach for recruiting this class and recruiting people at Michigan. It's the best place in the world, and we wanted to come here to play for her and to play for each other and to be able to do something that has never been done before.

Like Naz was here, which was really cool. Last time they went to the Elite Eight she was part of that. It's kind of a full-circle moment just for her to be able to be back and us being in that environment again and this class.

We're so connected, and it's the whole team really, but it's just the Michigan culture. We have a lot of people that flew in for this game, and it means a lot to us to be able to play in front of them.

Q. Syla, what did you make of it taking more than six minutes for y'all to score, and what do you think kind of settled you all in after that?



SYLA SWORDS: Can you repeat the first part?

Q. What did you make it taking more than six minutes to get a point, and what kind of settled things in?

SYLA SWORDS: (Microphone malfunction) -- so in the huddles our focus isn't even, okay, what do we need to run or who do we need to get the ball to. It's was how can we get rebounds, how can we get stops to score.

Q. Te, you were playing a lot of different roles. How do you think your versatility has improved over the season and your confidence improved playing all those different roles?

TE'YALA DELFOSSE: All the practices, individuals, Coach (indiscernible) and Coach Justine, shout out to them. They've really worked me getting to my spots and using my length and using my speed.

Also, defensively trying to use my length as well, give people a step and just be very disruptive.

Q. Syl, first part, did Naz share any advice about playing today? Also, the second question is, if people were unfamiliar with Michigan now, obviously this is a big stage and you showed them what you can do, what does today's game say about Michigan?

SYLA SWORDS: Yeah, I would say speaking not only on Naz, but her whole senior class that came through Michigan, they stuck through Michigan for four years. She just talked about how she saw what the Wolverines stood for and wanted to do something different.

And we, kind of the three of us, but also the rest of the 11 people on our team all align with that. And a lot of us could have went anywhere in the recruiting process, but we knew what Michigan was about, and we were excited to be something new and building our own legacy.

So she was just talking about in big games and big matchups you have to be proud of that. And Liv was talking about earlier when we were speaking about what we wanted to do during this game, she talked about everybody was a contender at one point.

We have the big top dogs right now, but everybody started somewhere. I firmly believe that this is our starting point and just touching on your second question, we're a really fun brand of basketball to watch.

Anybody, the three of us, anybody on our roster can go off and have a game, have an exciting game. Te coming in, shooting layups over top of 6'4" players. Brooke Daniels,

who is 5'7" getting touch-back rebounds and-ones, or Liv being able to come up the floor and break down any point guard in the country.

Anybody can come out and have a night. We're an exciting brand of basketball to watch, and we can beat anybody in the country, and I believe that if we're on our A game.

Q. Could you elaborate on the third quarter run, which I think was 19-2, and how you were able to kind of use that second quarter momentum in order to just build that run?

OLIVIA OLSON: Yeah, when we just take a breath and relax, we have so much fun. So you could see that at the beginning of the third. We were just having so much fun and all the work with that we've put in in practices, all the hard preseasons, Coach getting on us. She's thrown everything, every single possible situation at us this year in practice.

So just that third quarter we were just really playing loose and having fun, and I think that's what ignited our run.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, ladies. We'll now open it up for questions to Coach.

Q. Coach, I wanted to know if you could explain to me the baseball jerseys you had on today. Obviously I think I've seen them before, but they're a little different this year. I wanted to understand about the jersey and maybe about yours as well?

KIM BARNES ARICO: Yeah. So last time we were in the Sweet 16 with Naz's group I wore the jersey. The No. 11 is special in my family. I lost my brother, and that was kind of his number; so that was really important to me.

This year I lost my dad, and that was kind of his number as well. So it holds a special place in my heart. Hence, the reason mine is a little bit different and a little bit smaller, even though I think I'm big in my mind.

That was the connection of that with me. I thought the staff -- our staff is incredible, and a lot of times I get to sit up here and our players get to sit up here, but the stuff that our staff does behind the scenes and the impact that they make on our program is unbelievable.

You know, I thought it would be fun for them to jump onto the baseball jersey thing as well, and they were all hands on deck. Our equipment manager, you know, he contacted baseball, softball. Mine is softball. But we were able to pull it all together.

It just gives us a different look. We did it last time. If we keep this thing going, it will be our Sweet 16 thing.

Q. Te'Yala Delfosse, Kendall Dudley were both plus 25. I think Te'Yala was plus 30-something in the plus-minus. Those two clearly changed the game. How did they make that happen for you guys today?

KIM BARNES ARICO: Yeah, Te'Yala Delfosse, people have talked about her all year long. She is certainly the X factor for us. If she can get going, we are really, really hard to stop. It just gives us an extra secret weapon. I mean, she can affect the game in so many ways, and everybody saw that tonight.

She's just different; she's really special.

But Kendall Dudley is the same. You know, Kendall transferred after her first year from UCLA, and she came in, and she was out for all of preseason. She's just kind of getting her confidence back, getting her feet wet. I said every single day, she just gets better and better. She's going to be one of these guys that's a double-double machine by next year, and I just have a tremendous amount of confidence in her.

She steps up. She buys into her role. She buys into the scout. She just wants to defend the other team's best player. She wants to rebound the heck out of the ball, and she made an impact.

Those two guys, when you have two players coming off the bench that can make the impact that those two made tonight complementing our starting five, I think it makes us really tough to beat.

Q. Coach, the whole idea of there's a little bit of a feel of a vibe of 2022 with Louisville again, the jerseys, seeing those kids that you had four years ago. What has it been like in terms of building that feel for Michigan women's basketball? And then if you could also just talk about this class, this sophomore class that you brought together.

KIM BARNES ARICO: I think you hit on some really important things. The vibe is very, very similar. Naz's class came in as a group of five, and they did things at Michigan. They did things inside Michigan women's basketball that had never been done before.

Obviously Naz was at the head of that, being our first All American, but we went to places that we never went before, and those kids were incredibly hard workers. They understood their role. They bought into whatever was

needed. Danielle Rauch was a part of that group. She's now on our staff, which really helps bring that back. Her and Naz are still best friends.

So Naz has been around a lot this year. We retired her jersey. It's great having her around. Even earlier this year I had her reach out to Syla and chat with Syla a little bit, because Syla's role from freshman year to sophomore year drastically changed because of her leadership role.

She went from having Jordan Hobbs, you know, as a senior who graduated, now I got to be a sophomore, and I have all these expectations, and I got to score, I got to defend, I got to do this, this, this.

Plus, I got to be the leader of our team as a sophomore. How do I go about doing that? She picked Naz's brain on a lot of that stuff, so I think the chemistry, the unselfishness, the love for Michigan, the pure joy that they have playing with each other, all of those things are very, very similar to the '22.

Louisville early in my career, it seemed like we got them in every bracket. I'm not up here complaining. I know there's been a lot of coaches come through that said they get the same. I say, oh, golly, if you want to say how many times I played Kim Mulkey or Jeff Walz, check the numbers. It just happens when you advance in the tournament.

So I was not looking forward to playing them at all, but heck, it feels so great to be on the other side of that. So that's a little bit about the connection with those two.

I think those two groups are really connected. Danielle Rauch spoke to the team this morning. We did a little team project this morning. The coaches led our circle this morning. She said, one thing that Coach said to me long ago that stuck with me and through tears, was that we're doing this for Michigan. We're doing this not for ourselves, not for our team, but for Michigan.

I think that is the way when you talk about this group and you talk about this sophomore class, they bought into that vision, which in this landscape of college athletics with the transfer portal, with NIL, with all of that, we got ourselves some old-school people that are really buying into development.

I mean, you heard Te'Yala Delfosse, I want to be developed. Her mom is always saying, like, she wants to be the best she can be. Can you help her get there? The same with Olivia, the same with Syla, the same with Mila, and the same with Kendall. You can go down the line on every player in our program. They want to be great, and they feel like Michigan can really help them be great.

Not only can Michigan help them be great on the basketball court. Michigan can help them be great in the classroom. Michigan can help them be great in the community. Who still believes in that? Wow, I'm a lucky coach, because I have a group of young women that really truly do, and it's been special to coach them.

Q. Geno started his presser today by kind of talking about how the rims, they're new and they don't have a great bounce to them and was reading off a bunch of the stats from the two days both here and in Sacramento, six teams shot well below their averages. You guys finished about at your average. You started 1 of 4 today. I was curious if you had any thoughts on the rims and if during shoot-around if it required a little bit of a --

KIM BARNES ARICO: I can't believe that Geno has had this much time to really analyze all this, but not a shocker. Shout out to Geno. Thank for finding something. Was that because they scored in the 60s yesterday? We don't have to play them next, right, because I don't want to tell him that. That might have been their season low. I don't know.

I think every gym we go to the rims are different. We're a team that we're our best obviously when we're making shots, but we're a team that buys into the defensive end and the rebounding end.

I didn't even really look at the numbers today. I can't answer his question, but if he analyzed it, I'm sure it's probably correct.

Q. I know you touched on Te'Yala today, but can you talk about what it means her trying to get minutes last season as a freshman and coming off the bench this season, what it means for her to break out on the biggest stage she's seen so far?

KIM BARNES ARICO: Te'Yala has broken out for us in so many games throughout the year. I think she's -- like I said I think she's our X factor. I think she's our difference maker. When she plays great, we have a chance to beat anyone.

She a kid that came in as a young player in this game. When I think of Syla Swords, she played in the Olympics as an 18-year-old. When I think of Olivia Olson, she played for Team USA as a 15 or 16-year-old. When I think of Mila Holloway, she played for the Canadian U19 team.

Te'Yala Delfosse doesn't have any of these experiences. She's a baby in the game. She is a sponge. She is learning and growing and wants to get better every single

day.

But I always say, too, when this is all said and done, when they hang up their shoes, whenever that might be, because that five of them have a chance to play in the W, Te might be the best one out of all of them. That's the type of upside that she has. That's the type of love that she has for the game.

I think she's continuing to grow, continuing to get better, and we just pour into her as much as we can, because she's just amazing.

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