

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: Regional 3 Final - Michigan vs Texas

Sunday, March 29, 2026

Fort Worth, Texas, USA

Dickies Arena

Michigan Wolverines
Coach Kim Barnes Arico
Olivia Olson
Syla Swords
Brooke Quarles Daniels
Elite 8 Pregame Media Conference

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Kim Barnes Arico. Coach, your opening statement.

KIM BARNES ARICO: It's great to be here. We're excited to have advanced and have a day off and try to prep for Texas, who is a great program. Kind of little bit of a home game for them. They had a great crowd yesterday, so they are an incredible team, and we're just resting, recovering, and trying to prep for the game tomorrow.

Was really proud of our team. Thought we did an amazing job yesterday and happy to still be playing basketball.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Coach.

Q. At least in terms of approach and strategy, do you see Texas as kind of a mirror image of y'all with what y'all try to do with pressing and forcing turnovers?

KIM BARNES ARICO: Yeah, that's a great question. They are similar. I mean, we're trying to get to that level of being a consistent Final Four team and having the experience that they have.

But you know, both Madison Booker, Rori Harmon, you know, started as young players in this program and are where they are today and have a tremendous amount of experience and growth. They only have three losses on the season, and that's due to their team sticking together, that core group.

But the way that they pressure, the way that they get up,



the way that they defend, their toughness, how relentless they are, I mean, those are things that our program definitely prides itself on. Our rebounding, another thing we really pride ourselves on.

We've been tested. We're not always the tallest team on the floor. Texas has a little bit more size than us, but we've been tested in every single game. Even yesterday in the Louisville game, everyone talked about their rebounding, and we outrebounded them by nine at the end of the day.

The rebounding is something that we pride ourselves on as well. But yeah, I would say we have similar styles, for sure. They have a little bit more experience and depth I would say, but the way we want to play the game is definitely similar.

Q. If I'm not mistaken, I think Syla is the first player you've had who had international senior team experience coming into college before she played even a possession of college basketball. I'm curious what that experience was like coaching her given that she had that kind of experience and if it changed the way that you have even coached other players that haven't had that experience?

KIM BARNES ARICO: I don't think there probably are very many players in the world that had the experience that Syla Swords had coming into college. I mean, she was an Olympian before she stepped on campus. That's very, very unusual.

I just think those experiences that she had growing up -- and I know you guys have been listening to her all week. She sounds like a grown woman. She sounds like not a young college basketball player. She's very mature. She's very experienced.

I think growing up in a household of college basketball players and coaches really helped her get ready for her international experience, but she was on the biggest stage in the world, and she performed as a young kid. I think that's different.

It's different to coach just her experiences and her maturity



and her understanding, her IQ. She wants to be pushed. She wants to be challenged. She sees the game at a very high level. She wants to continue to grow.

So those are all things from a coaching perspective from the minute she stepped on campus that were really important to her. I want to go to a place where I can continue my development. I want to go to a place where I have that comfort level of being myself, and I think all of her experiences have allowed her to become a leader of our team at a really young age. That's something that's really unusual.

Similar to Naz, and I might have said that the other day, you know, Naz had a lot of international experiences. It wasn't playing with her senior national team. You know, it wasn't an Olympic experience, but I think those experiences allowed Naz to lead us at a very young age. Sylva has done the same.

I just think her maturity and her experiences have allowed her to be a tremendous leader for us.

Q. You talked about this game tomorrow being kind of like a home game for Texas. Having a similar experience against UConn and knowing that you guys had -- or were able to compete at such a high level in that game, what kind of comfort does that give you heading into tomorrow in a similar situation?

KIM BARNES ARICO: Yeah, I think one of the things that we've been able to do since this sophomore class has stepped on campus is to play against the best and to challenge ourselves against the best.

You know, last year that was opening up against South Carolina, but this year it was going to Connecticut, not at UConn, but to Connecticut to play against Connecticut; to go to New Jersey to play against Vandy; to challenge ourselves to play against Notre Dame on a neutral court; to play against the great teams in the league.

To really to challenge ourselves against the best of the best. A lot of programs we're playing in the Sweet 16 we had played in the regular season. I think those opportunities are only going to help. Some of them we lost. We lost one-possession games, but we needed to be in those experiences to really understand it, and we needed to play Connecticut in Connecticut so if we are in a situation like we will be tomorrow that we've had that type of experience.

So I think, you know, every situation is a little bit different. This is the Elite Eight. You know, it's not an early season game, so it will be a little bit different, but we were very

intentional with our scheduling and our players wanted that type of schedule to prepare themselves for the end of the season.

Q. Being in the Elite Eight, Michigan is amongst programs with such a rich program history whose student-athletes excel in college, but also in professional basketball. How does it feel to be here for the second time, but also to be here with this roster, with this group of women?

KIM BARNES ARICO: Yeah, you know, our team, we've been doing all kinds of team-building activities and spending a lot of time together the last few weeks. You know, our team, each individual, is bringing different quotes that mean something or resonate with them. Then we talk about them every day.

But one of Liv's, and I won't say it correctly, but it goes something like, you know, you had to be a contender before you were a champion. You know, you had to be there before you were on the other side.

That's kind of where our program is right now. You know, we're a contender and we've gotten to this point. We have the pieces to be champions. So we are in the Elite Eight with a lot of programs that have rich basketball tradition.

When you think of the Texas of the world, I grew up as a young kid watching Texas women's basketball. When you think of UConn women's basketball, I mean, we all grew up watching UConn women's basketball. Notre Dame, you know, the same thing.

So there's a lot of programs that are left that have had rich tradition, but there's one, you know, in the University of Michigan -- there's probably more -- that you had to be a contender first before you get there. Those words are coming from the players in our program. They decided to come to the University of Michigan when they could have gone to the programs that had that rich tradition, but they wanted to do something different. They wanted to be the first to be the champion. They wanted to hang that banner for Michigan.

Those are the reasons they came to Michigan when they could have, you know, gone a million other places, but they wanted to do something special here. We are in new waters, but we are loving the moment and feel like we have so much more left to give.

Q. You kind of touched on it earlier, but I wanted to ask you, what makes Rori Harmon, the Madison Booker, Jordan Lee so dynamic on both sides of the ball? How hard is it or difficult is it to kind of game

plan against them?

KIM BARNES ARICO: Yeah, I mean, we're a program, like we talked about a little bit earlier, that prides itself on playing defense and rebounding. Then when you add the talented pieces to it, boy, you have an opportunity to create something really special.

Well, Texas, I mean, you have Rori Harmon, who is arguably one of the best point guards in the country that plays both ways. She defends her butt off, 94 feet as well as playing offense at a really, really high level.

When you have someone that's willing to sacrifice and play that hard both ends of the floor, I think that's really special, and that's really rare. We feel like our players do the same thing, but you know, that's hard to do.

It's not easy to be a point guard and to handle that type of pressure and to run your team and to, you know, get everyone involved and all the things that you have to do on the offensive end, but then to be your team's igniter on the defensive end, that's really special.

Madison Booker, I mean, I just -- sometimes you catch yourself watching her going, oh, my gosh, oh, my gosh. Like, is that going to go in? Is that going to go in? Pretty much they go in.

She is just phenomenal. Her pull-up game is, like -- I mean, you can put it with anyone in the world, and I think, you know, she would win that contest. She just has a knack for the goal. I mean, she shoots it, and the ball goes in. So she is just a really, really special player.

Then I would say Jordan Lee is someone that I recruited for a really long time. You know, I've gotten to know her. I've gotten to know her family. Just hearing all the stuff, you know, I know she wants to be a doctor and I know how important her academic piece is, but how driven she is. She reminds me of our kids.

She's in that same class with, you know, Olivia and Syla and Mila and our big sophomore class. I recruited her. She played USA Basketball with some of them. She played Canada Basketball with some of them. Our kids really know her well. I really know her well.

Just who she is reminds me of our players. Just driven at a really high level. Just unselfish. I mean, she's on a team with these superstars and these All Americans, and she finds her role and is able to contribute on a great team.

The players on our program are the same. Like how can I help our team be successful? What do I need to do to help

our team be great? If tonight I need to score, then I'll score. If tonight I need to get rebounds, then I'll get rebounds.

Those are the kind of kids we have on our team, and Jordan Lee really reminds me of that type of mentality.

Q. How have you sold your team on becoming so -- like Kirk was talking about the defensive pressure. How do you work on that, and how have they embraced that?

KIM BARNES ARICO: You know, we always talk about Michigan women's basketball being the hardest-working team in America, and I know that sounds cliché and I know every coach says that because you want your team to work really hard, but we have measuring sticks for that. We have practice points every single day. We have game points, and we try to measure intangible things: diving on the floor for loose balls, winning 50/50 balls, taking charges, rebounding the basketball, things that don't necessarily always show up in the box score.

We celebrate those things, so I think as a coach what you emphasize becomes really important to your team, and they really believe that. So, you know, we have stickers. Everybody has a block M on their locker, and every time you get one of those intangible plays in the game, you get a basketball sticker on your block M, and I come in, and I look at that before every game, and then I talk about it before every game and who is willing to do the little things that none of you guys see that make a difference in inside our program and make a difference in our success.

You know, we've charted through the years, any time we get ten stickers in a game, we're going to be successful in that game. So that's always, like, our number one goal. Can we get ten stickers? Can we do things that other teams aren't necessarily willing to do?

So I just think it's a point of emphasis of ours. Then when your players see that it really does result in success, they buy into it even more.

Our defense this year at the beginning of the year, we were really concerned about our defense. We were, like, oh, my goodness, the kids were putting it on their goal sheets. I'm, like, we can't stop anyone. How is this going to be our team goal when, you know, we're not successful in our first scrimmage of the year?

But I think our team really made a commitment to the defensive end and to rebounding. I think when you have someone on your team like Brooke who really spearheads that, you know, she doesn't take very many shots, she's

okay with not taking very many shots. You know, people game plan because she doesn't take very many shots, and she still goes out and impacts the game every single day.

Yesterday she had nine rebounds, seven on the offensive end. She's 5'7". There was a game yesterday -- I have a lot of kids 6'3", 6'4", and she was the leading rebounder on the floor at the end of the game. She picked up 94 feet. She really ignited our defense. I know, you know, Louisville is a team that can usually score a little bit more. I think our defense really was really disruptive to them, and that's something that we take a tremendous amount of pride in.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you for your time today. Welcome the Michigan Wolverines. Our student-athletes joining us today are Olivia Olson, Brooke Quarles Daniels and Syla Swords. We'll now open it up to questions.

Q. Brooke, you were able to impact the game without scoring as much with nine rebounds yesterday. Why is that important for you to fill up the stat sheet? Also, your thoughts on the match-up with Rori Harmon, your thoughts on her?

BROOKE QUARLES DANIELS: Yeah, I mean, I don't know. I think I had about seven points, so I think definitely I impacted the game offensively.

I think with our team thriving off of scoring, a lot of points in transition and offensive rebounds, it really helps our team out within that aspect. About 30 or 40 points of our team total comes from offensive rebounds in transition and off of turnovers.

I think that's one of the biggest things that I've been able to bring to the team. That's kind of what my game has been prided on ever since, like, playing.

Yeah, just about Rori Harmon, she's a seasoned player. Fifth-year starter. She's going to be a great match-up for us, and I think it's going to be a great game ahead of it.

Q. Syla, a big part about this program is your coach has been here for a very long time. She's done it. She knows what she's doing. She's very loyal to this program. What is the value of loyalty when you were coming in as a recruit?

SYLA SWORDS: Yeah, I think that's something my family has always instilled in me from the very beginning of just my recruiting process is recognizing who likes me as who I am, not just as a player, but as a person. I think that has shown through.

I was recruited by Michigan before even moving to the U.S., while I was still playing in Canada, playing high school in Canada. So she doesn't just say she's loyal. She actually shows you that through her actions, and she recruits loyalty through within her players. That creates for a very good atmosphere to play in.

Q. As you guys know, the nature of basketball just can be a game of runs, so kind of understanding that, how do you make sure that on a Texas run maybe you guys are sticking to your game plan and not letting the crowd kind of change any of that in your game plan and then on the other side when you guys are able to make a run, kind of just working to build off of that and drive that momentum forward?

OLIVIA OLSON: Yeah, I think we've gone into a lot of games and will go into tomorrow's game the same of just staying level-headed the whole time and focusing on our team and who is in our circle and not letting the outside voices get to us and really just sticking to our game plan on the highs and lows of the game.

We know we're going to have bad plays, but really just the importance of sticking together and keeping the same energy throughout the whole game.

Q. Olivia, asking you to look back a couple of years, but what do you remember about Aaliyah Crump and her game and you guys getting to go at each other back in Minnesota?

OLIVIA OLSON: Yeah, we played each other in high school when she was at Minnetonka, and she's a great player. I loved playing with her, and I'm really kind of proud of the Minnesota players and how they've risen and what she's doing at Texas. I'm excited. She's a three-level scorer, and it's going to be a great match-up.

Q. Brooke and Syla, ultimately do you see Texas as very similar to what y'all do and what you try to do? Ultimately, is this just going to be a test of who has the best defense?

SYLA SWORDS: Yeah, I would say obviously they have an advantage and sense of they're more experienced than we are. They have Rori Harmon, Madison Booker who have played five years in college or Madison Booker who has played for team USA, and that's just an advantage in itself just seeing that they've been in positions like this, played in Elite Eight games, having the game being played in Texas.

But it's nothing that we're afraid of, and we're excited to match up against the best of the best. Excited to test

ourselves and ultimately we have each other's back through any team that we're going to play against.

BROOKE QUARLES DANIELS: Yeah, I mean, I would kind of say the same thing. You know, we both pride ourselves on our presses, and that's where the majority of our points come from. I think, yeah, they do -- when you do have a fifth-year veteran point guard running your team, you do have, you know, a little bit more expertise in that way.

Vic Schaefer is an amazing coach. He always, you know, finds a way to get his team in these big moments and just being in the Texas crowd, too, but I think ultimately, it's going to come down to grit and defense as well.

Q. For Syla and Olivia, Coach was speaking about some of the quotes that you all's players have brought to the group. One of them might have been something along the lines of you have to be a contender first to become a champion. What does that quote in particular mean to you all and to this group as you look to bring Michigan women's basketball back to a high level?

SYLA SWORDS: Yeah, so we had this team exercise where everybody had to bring a quote to the table, and we put it in a binder. This was the quote that Liv brought. That was something that kind of brought us all here to Michigan anyways, is we knew that we were going to have to build something new, obviously on a great foundation started by players like Naz Hillmon, like Katelynn Flaherty, but we were going to have to build something new within ourselves to get us to different heights, to different things that the program hasn't been before.

That quote I feel like really encapsulated what we thought we could do with this program, but also what we committed to. We talked about the loyalty piece. It's a loyalty to understanding that we're not afraid to do something new, and we're not afraid to reach new heights.

OLIVIA OLSON: No, I think it was just important to me, because that's why we came here. Like Syla said, we want to be champions, and we know that other teams, like, they've done that before, but we really came here because we wanted to do it together. We wanted to do it for Michigan.

Just to kind of remind everyone, like, every champion that was before has always been a contender or at one point was a contender. That's where we're putting ourselves in position to do too, so yeah.

Q. For any of you, Kim was just here talking about the

block M and the stickers on the locker and representative of the intangibles. How much of that embracing that is part of this team's DNA in diving for balls and being so focused on the defensive end?

BROOKE QUARLES DANIELS: Yeah, I think Coach has really emphasized how important those loose balls are and taking charges. Because I mean, we've kind of seen throughout the season how if we don't do that, it's always a close game or we can't come up with a lot of those balls that we need.

I think that's something that we've all really challenged ourselves as players in the program is to get ourselves extra possessions, you know, when our shots aren't falling or we can't create those turnovers that we need and just representing the block M.

It's the best university in the world. Just being able to have that plastered everywhere about and right by your name is just a unique experience that only a select few can have.

SYLA SWORDS: We measure that every day in practice too. We try to get ten stickers we call them. You get a littler sticker on your locker for every loose ball, every charge you take. We each have a measurable of that, and you see how you're progressing.

I want to touch on a comment that Brooke said earlier about her offensive production. She's leading in the stickers on the team. You see her locker, it's full of stickers. While not every game she's the top scorer, she's assisting or creating opportunities for everybody to be able to score.

I like to think that we're one of the best offenses in the country, but a lot of that starts with her, and a lot of that is what she does. So not everybody's role is going to be outwardly seen, but from the public, it's different. We know what we have and we know what Brooke brings, we know what Liv brings, and we bring something different.

But those however many 86 points we're scoring averaging in a game, that's from every single person collectively and not one person's effort.

Q. Olivia, we talked about this is the only one-two match-up in the women's regionals, but talk about the experience that Texas has, and everybody second year in the program obviously getting these experiences. How much is it not be satisfied with just getting the experience and getting this, but to make the most of it? You never know what's going to happen next.

OLIVIA OLSON: Last year we kind of just went into



... when all is said, we're done.®

everything saying we have nothing to lose, we have nothing to prove really, and this year, like, we have everything to prove. We want to make it as far as we can and we want to compete with the No. 1 seeds. We've shown that we can.

So we're ready to just go in with our all and compete. Like we said with the stickers, we're going to go and get all the loose balls and fight for the 50/50 balls and work as hard as we can. That's what we've prided ourselves in. I think that's what's won us games so far this year, and we're not going to back away from that.

Q. Brooke, how many stickers do you have on your locker? What do they look like? Does it say UM, or what do the stickers look like?

BROOKE QUARLES DANIELS: It's just, like, a block M, and it's like a basketball sticker. Honestly, I don't know how many that I have, so -- yeah, it's about a full block M and part of the other one, so I don't know. Maybe, like -- how many do you have?

SYLA SWORDS: 30 per block M.

BROOKE QUARLES DANIELS: Yeah, probably like 30, 35.

SYLA SWORDS: More than that. She's almost got two block Ms. She's being humble.

Q. Curious from each of you guys, obviously it's a big game, Elite Eight with a chance to get to the Final Four, but at the same time, how are you kind of staying calm within the moment understanding that it really just is another basketball game?

OLIVIA OLSON: Yeah, we don't want to treat it as something more than just a basketball game. We want to keep our same energy and composure, but we know it's big, and this is what we play for. We played the whole season to get to this moment, so we're going to keep playing our hardest and keep the characteristics of Michigan basketball, but we're going to -- we want everyone to take another 1% above what they usually give.

We want to do a little extra on the scout. We want to do a little extra on prep for the game day. We want to do just a little extra to get over it is -- Texas has basically a home crowd, so we need to do as much as we can to prepare for the game. Then once the game time comes, we just need to let it come to us.

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