

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

Sunday, March 29, 2026

Fort Worth, Texas, USA

Dickies Arena

**Texas Longhorns**  
**Coach Vic Schaefer**  
**Rori Harmon**  
**Bryanna Preston**  
**Sarah Graves**

Elite 8 Pregame Media Conference

THE MODERATOR: We welcome Texas Longhorns Head Coach Vic Schaefer. We'll begin with an opening statement from coach.

VIC SCHAEFER: Good morning, everybody. It's a beautiful Palm Sunday morning. Appreciate everybody being here. For those of us that have been raised in the church, it's a special day. I appreciate y'all being here and taking time out of your day, but Palm Sunday is really, really special.

It was special for me as a kid growing up in the church. It's a day that -- it's all about giving. I think that's something that when you look at my team and you see how they give of each other, to each other, it's what makes them really, really special.

God gave us his son. A week later after today it was obviously way different than today a long time ago, but yet, that was his gift to us. As I listened to my preacher this morning preach back in Mississippi talking about how this is a special day and a day that God gave us his son, I think of God giving me this team and how special they are.

It's just really been fun to coach them. Yesterday we had -- we played a really good Kentucky team, but obviously we played really well. Now we've got to get ready for a tremendous Michigan team. Kim has done a great job. I've watched them from afar for several years. Her team plays really, really hard like mine does.

We'll have to have -- we'll have to play really well tomorrow



night, but we're excited about that opportunity and, again, know that we're going to get -- this time of year in this game you're always going to play somebody really, really good.

They're well-coached, got really good players, great players. There will be some match-ups that are going to be critical in the ball game.

Again, appreciate y'all being here. It's a beautiful day, beautiful Sunday afternoon -- or Sunday morning. It's morning, isn't it?

THE MODERATOR: Morning, yeah.

VIC SCHAEFER: I'm not sure what time it is. I haven't been sleeping very much. If y'all have some questions, I'll be glad to answer them.

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

**Q. Vic, I'm assuming you crossed paths with Jody Conradt quite a bit before you took the job, but I just wondered how important was it to you to have her to be a part of the program, and how much do you think her presence gives your players a sense of the history of the program?**

VIC SCHAEFER: Well, I can tell you it was critical. You know, me growing up in Texas, coaching in Texas. We actually shared a story last night about maybe the first time I crossed paths with her in a personal setting. You know, physically being in the same presence. It was way, way back in 1990 when I had just taken the job at Sam Houston State. I think we were in Duncanville High School over here in Dallas, and she was recruiting Cinietra Henderson.

I was this young green -- real green -- coach. You know, when I took the job at Texas it was critical for three things: For Coach Conradt, for Chris Plonsky, CP, who is here today, and for Kathy Harston for me personally to know that I had their support and their blessing, because in my eyes, they are Texas women's basketball. I don't take being given the opportunity to be the head coach at Texas lightly.



I understand the history. Do my players? Probably not. But if you asked the history of any of these players going back that far, they're probably not going to understand that.

Coach has been around. When I took the job, I envisioned me and her having coffee after games the next morning, talking about the game the night before. I mean, I just have so much respect and admiration for her and what she's done in her career.

But those three women have not only given their lives to Texas women's basketball, they've given their lives to women's basketball period. We are where we are today because of what those three have done for the game.

I just, again, am really blessed to be at a place and, again, understand the history and tradition there and don't take it lightly. Love her being with us. She's with us now. It means a lot to me. It means a lot to my players. It does. To answer your question.

**Q. I was curious, you were talking about matchups a little bit. How would you compare Rori to Brooke as far as point guards? Is this ultimately a test of who has the best defense?**

VIC SCHAEFER: Yeah, I think there's going to be a lot of tests tomorrow. I think both teams just play the game so hard. You know how I feel about my point guard. I think -- I don't pay a lot of attention to social media, but I did hear something about some website picked the other point guard yesterday in matchups.

That's a bad decision.

But again, we have a lot of respect for Michigan and their players. Again, I'm not trading any of mine for anybody. I love my team. I love my kids. I love how they're really focused right now. I love their demeanor. This team cares deeply about each other, more so than any team I think I've ever had.

I was reading where the coach at St. John's, Rick -- huh? Yeah, Pitino. He was talking about how his team was so unique this year that they never -- going back to the summer, they never had a fight. Nobody ever got mad at each other. You could probably say the same thing about my group.

They might have challenged each other at times, but there's never been anything like that. No shouting matches, nothing. I mean, this is a team that's really close and loves each other and plays for each other. I'm really proud of them.

Again, it's been fun to be a part of it.

**Q. (Off microphone.)**

VIC SCHAEFER: I think obviously you and I both know defense plays a big part this time of year. A lot of times when you're -- we treat this as a road game, so you know, there are certain things that we have to do on the road, we feel like, in order to win.

Defense is certainly a part of what we do at Texas, and I think watching film on them, boy, they can play a lot of different ways defensively. I think, you know, I got one day in a shoot-around to try to get my team ready for that.

**Q. One of the things that Kim was talking about earlier, she said she and her players have had this sort of mentality that you have to become contenders before you become champions as you're building a program. I wondered if you could relate to that -- I know you can -- with what you did at Mississippi State, and how you do have to make those steps and what that's like for a program?**

VIC SCHAEFER: Yeah, you can go back to the Sweet 16. In '16 we get beat by 60 up in Connecticut by Connecticut by the best team in the history of the game, and then 365 days later God gives us the same opportunity on the biggest stage, the Final Four, when they won 111 straight, and that same exact team that got beat 60 a year before stops the nation's longest winning streak at 111.

It took a ticket -- unfortunately, it took the ticket getting beat 60 to get the ticket that helped us win in the semifinals over in Dallas. Sometimes those are growing pains and things that you have to go through. Certainly I think that's a fair statement by her. I think it's very true.

You go through these stages. Again, I've said this a million times. The only thing harder than building it is sustaining it. Like, that's really, really difficult.

You look across the country. There's lots of teams that five years ago they were, you know, had some pretty good success, stayed in the top whatever, and now all of a sudden -- they're still competitive and they're in the top 25, but they're not in that top 10 neighborhood year in and year out.

I think that's what's hard on us coaches. I think that's what Cori is talking about. It is hard. We're not -- she's not asking -- I don't think any of us are asking for any sympathy or anything like that. It's just, man, it's tough to live in that neighborhood consistently year in and year out.

We all embrace it. We all love what we do and who we do it with, but the fact of the matter is this isn't easy. Winning is really hard, and winning at that level consistently year in and year out, it's really, really, really hard.

But, again, I don't need to be up here defending anybody. I just think that was the comment, that it's just really hard to sustain and be in this neighborhood year in and year out. It's just hard.

**Q. Rori spoke yesterday about urgency, again knowing any game could be her last. How much do you feel like Texas playing its best basketball these last couple of weeks has been the team playing for her knowing that for her?**

VIC SCHAEFER: Yeah, again, I'm not ready for it to be over either. I hugged her this morning at breakfast and said those same words.

I think, again, our team embraces and loves each other equally. I think everybody knows, you know, we've got four seniors, potentially five if I don't get that year back for Sarah, but I think for all of them the coaches consistently told them, you don't take these things for granted. I don't take these times for granted. These times are fleeting.

So when you're in that moment, I want them to really step back and, as the old folks would say, smell the roses, all right? Really embrace, hey, we've gotten to this point. We need to really understand what it's taken to get here, because you know, we're going to try to do it next year and the year after and the year after.

But really embrace and understand where you are, what it's taken to get here, and then we have to continue to try to live at that level. I do think we're all aware of we're not ready for it to be over with.

You know, for Rori, again, I've spoken many times about -- I've seen her every day for five straight years. It's going to be a little different. It's going to be way different, you know, not seeing her. That's part of the process.

**Q. You talked about others giving their lives to Texas, so why have you given your life to Texas?**

VIC SCHAEFER: You know, I office two blocks from where I was born. The hospital is not there anymore. It's a vacant lot. I guess that's a sign of getting old.

But growing up in that state and, you know, knowing the history of Texas in general and especially then in my industry, Texas women's basketball, again, I understand the people that I work for, the people that I represent. Not

just my administration, who has obviously entrusted me with their women's basketball program, a program that they feel very fondly of, but again, it goes back to the history of Texas women's basketball.

Having done this for a while now, but done it at a young age when it was, you know, Coach Conradt and how good they were for so many years and the elite level that they were at, and so that was kind of my charge, was to try to get them back to that elite level.

So for me I'm all in. I was all in at Mississippi State. I'm all in at Texas. And I knew that when I took the job. I knew what came with it. I knew what the expectations were, and I wanted that. I embraced that.

But I think for me, you walk out on that floor yesterday, and there was 12,000 fans in there. That says a lot about the people that care about our program. I carry that. I carry that weight. Again, I don't run from that. I don't want my players to run from that. I want them to really embrace the name on the front of their jersey, because if you represent the name on the front of your jersey, the back will take care of itself.

I think that's where our kids are. They understand that. Again, we're in an NCAA Regional, and you go out there and there's a lot of orange in that building yesterday, and that's special. I mean, that's really, really unique and really special.

You know, it's a place of elite. It's a place of greatness, but it's also a place where there's so much support. Coaches supporting each other. We've got a WhatsApp, all the coaches. I'm not a big WhatsApp guy, but in recruiting sometimes you got to use it. So I forget to get on here, but right now we have so many teams playing, but all the coaches are supporting one another. Hey, great job. You know, our men's women in diving just won back-to-back national championships. Everybody is on there. Everybody is on there about Schloss. They're on there about us. It's a family.

You don't get that everywhere. We had it at Mississippi State. We've got it at Texas. He's obviously got a date. He's looking at his watch. But I'll finish with this story.

I think my second year we were 29-7. We went to the Elite Eight. We finished fifth in the country. I'm at a head coaches' meeting. There's 20 of us. We hadn't added beach volleyball yesterday. There's 20 head coaches at the table. As I'm sitting at the table, I look around, and there's ten head coaches that played for the national championship. Ten. Four of them won it. Six of them finished second. I finished fifth in the country and went to

the Elite Eight, and I'm not even in the top half in the room.

For me that's why you're at Texas. You want to be around greatness. You want to be around people that are wanting to be the very best you can be. So if you want that, if you want to wear that, if you want to try to be the very best you can be, that's why you're all in at Texas.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you for your time today, Coach.

VIC SCHAEFER: Praise the Lord and hook 'em horns.

THE MODERATOR: We have student-athletes joining us today, Rori Harmon, Bryanna Preston, and Sarah Graves. We'll open it up to questions.

**Q. Sarah, Coach just said if you take care of the name on the front of your jersey, the back will take care of itself. I'm curious how you feel about that, especially given the week you've had?**

SARAH GRAVES: Yeah, it's awesome, because you kind of see the audience's reaction last night to somebody that doesn't play much and puts all their energy into Texas, and Texas fans give that back. It's not like they're chanting for Sarah Graves.

They're chanting for the idea of college sports, that there's more than just yourself and more than your own success and kind of pouring into each other gives more to you than anything you can do for yourself.

**Q. Rori, Vic said he gave you a hug at breakfast this morning and said he didn't want this to be over. There's urgency here to win a championship. Are you feeling that urgency, and how excited are you for this next couple of weeks, if you guys win today?**

RORI HARMON: Yeah, he did say that. That's exactly how I feel. I've had several conversations with my family, Shaylee, about I've never felt more locked in than any time in my career until, like, now.

I feel like I'm very locked in, and as a team, like, we all feel very locked in and we don't want it to end right now. I think that's the type of urgency that you're seeing and what you saw in yesterday's game. Yeah, we're just going to keep playing as hard as we can and leaving it all out on the floor.

**Q. You look at this match-up, and there's a lot of similarities in these two teams. The one differentiating factor, you have the experience of being here. They're still trying to get to where you guys are. Can you talk about gaining that experience and what it's like to**

**move from trying to get there to being there to kind of trying to get farther?**

RORI HARMON: Yeah, Michigan is a great team. They're the No. 2 seed. There's eight teams left. They're here for a reason. That's something that you have to pay attention to, but yeah, having experience does help a lot. It helps a lot.

Like, you understand the urgency that you have to have, the focus and the discipline that you have, and the connectivity and chemistry that you have to have with your teammates at this moment, because any game could be your last game. You don't want to look back and regret, oh, I didn't play hard enough or you didn't leave it out on the court.

But, yeah, having that experience with Coach Schaefer and a few of us who have been here a couple of times, a few times, it definitely helps. We're trying to get that to permeate throughout our team.

**Q. Rori, kind of building off of that, the Michigan folks are talking about this idea of you first have to be a contender in order to become a champion. As you all -- you in particular -- have helped build this Texas program back to getting back to relevance, getting the Final Four and hopefully even more, how would you describe that particular experience from your point of view and your vantage point of what it took to build from a contender and hopefully into a champion?**

RORI HARMON: Yeah, it takes a lot of toughness, and I think that's what our team has. We've been -- we've fought some adversity this year, and how you respond to that adversity kind of just shows your true colors and your true character.

I think we've responded in several situations, whether it's, like, injuries or losses. Like, we've always been able to respond very well. I think those teams that can respond like that when things may not be going your way have a great chance in the tournament, because in games -- and especially when you're playing higher seeds and higher competition, like, there's going to be moments where it's not going to be going perfectly. How are you guys going to keep your composure? How are you going to stick together as a team?

I think with that type of experience and more experience that we've had in the past, it helps a lot in these situations.

**Q. Rori and Sarah, the Michigan players are a little bit fired up about a UT social media post yesterday where it looks like you're putting Texas on the regional**

**championship line. Was that intentional? What was that all about?**

RORI HARMON: No, of course not. It was not intentional. Obviously, like, no one recognized in the moment, and if we did, we would quickly change it because we hadn't even played that game yet.

But, of course, if you are the other team, you're going to use anything for fire and anything for fuel, so that's valid enough. But obviously we made a mistake and we owned up to it immediately as we recognized. And we didn't recognize it until we left, so -- and no one else said anything.

No, yeah, we hadn't played that game yet, so obviously we hadn't won it. No, that's fine. They can use that for fuel.

SARAH GRAVES: It's an example of having too many people putting their word -- we had five people holding it, so we were so focused on putting it straight that we didn't even look at where we --

RORI HARMON: We were all arguing who was going to put it up, because we don't want to -- some people don't want to do it. We want other people to do it. We're not even, like, focused on the board itself. We're trying to make sure the sticker is not on still or it falls off. It was just so much happening in that moment. We made an honest mistake.

SARAH GRAVES: Not intentional.

**Q. This is for all three of you. Michigan is a very strong shooting team, but what is it about these defensive matchups that you guys are excited to play them tomorrow?**

SARAH GRAVES: Just a fast-paced team, and we love fast-paced teams. We like playing up and down the court and putting pressure on them. They do the same thing to us. So it's a pretty even match-up, and we're excited to play.

BRYANNA PRESTON: Yeah, I think it will be fun. Tough battle. First time seeing them, so just having the veterans that we have to lead us, start us out the gate, we're super excited to play them. They're young, but a lot of pride, a lot of fight. It will definitely be an exciting match-up.

RORI HARMON: Yeah, it's something -- they're a great team, obviously, and I see a little bit of the SEC in them. They play super hard defensively. They get a lot of rebounds. They crash. They're diving for loose balls, 50/50 balls. It's obviously a little bit different than what

we've seen, but you know, it's a little bit of familiarity with a lot of teams that we play in the conference.

**Q. Bry, the no-look pass yesterday, how often is something like that worked on in practice? Sarah, you have, it looks like, different demonstrations of celebration. I just want to get your thoughts on your reaction to that and how many different celebrations you have? Start with Bry.**

BRYANNA PRESTON: Honestly it was just a feel for the game. We do -- you know, it's a lot of moments in practice where I do do passes like that, and in-game. If you are a Texas fan and at the home crowd that we have back in Austin, I always like to get the crowd going, keep everybody excited, on their toes, because you never know what to expect.

But I saw a play, and it just made the crowd erupt. That was just a great moment, an energy shift for us, so...

SARAH GRAVES: I think she did a behind-the-back pass in the first round, if I'm not mistaken. Yeah, we're getting used to it.

To answer your question about celebrations, I'm not even sure what I did, because the problem is they're so talent and they're so good at what they do, that I start running out of things to do on the bench, so I start pulling out random things.

I'm laying on the floor and just thinking whatever is the first thing that comes to my head. I think Bryanna Preston is one of the best passers in the nation, so to see her do something like that is so exciting. We see it every day. Electric.

**Q. Vic said today there was another website that rated the match-ups and gave Michigan the edge at point guard, and Vic said that was a big mistake. I was curious your thoughts on that and what you would think about Brooke?**

RORI HARMON: Yeah, I don't really pay that much attention to those things. He might, but (laughing) I mean, the game hasn't been played yet, so we'll see what happens then.

Yeah, I don't pay any mind to that. I'll do what I need to do for my team so we can win, and I'm sure she'll need to do what she needs to do for her team to win. It's going to be one of those matchups.

**Q. Bryanna, this is a big year for your basketball development, and you have two accomplished**

**veterans on the team right next to you. What do you think your biggest takeaways from this March Madness from them two has been? For Rori and Sarah, what are you most excited for about Bryanna's development?**

BRYANNA PRESTON: I would say to stay poised and no matter what basketball is a game of runs. You know, it can be in our favor. It can be against us. So just making sure I stay poised, especially as a point guard of this team, to make sure I can direct our other teammates to get them where they need to be or making sure that me and Coach are on the same page, running plays, pushing in transition, whatever that may be.

So just, you know, staying under control, making sure my teammate knows that I got them, you know.

SARAH GRAVES: What was the follow-up question about?

**Q. (Off microphone.)**

SARAH GRAVES: So much. She's continued to do so well this year. It's really hard to stay ready for the moment when you don't know when your name is going to be called. So to go in and not only lead yourself in a good manner, but also taking responsibility for all five on the court is a really difficult task.

I know Rori and Bry are both used to it an insane level of responsibility that no one else gets. To see Bry always ready for that moment and always ready to lead others and execute in a good manner herself is really cool to see. She's going to do some great next year. She's a great leader.

RORI HARMON: Yeah, to see her growth over freshman year to now, to grow that much in a short amount of time and in this program underneath Coach Schaefer as a point guard, it's very challenging.

For someone like Bryanna to -- not Bryanna -- someone like Bry to do that, I'm super proud. I'm glad that she's the way she is. She's just always willing to learn, always willing to give to others as well. She's an electric player, like, as you guys know, for sure, who are at the Moody Center quite often. You can't catch her. That's not even the thing that's that important. It's her ability to be a great teammate and be a great leader and just be able to feed to other people all the time.

You can't really find that a lot in a lot of players, but Bry is always ready for the moment. I kind of made a joke the other day. I feel like every time she gets on the court, it's

not even about the shot-making, but she doesn't miss. She comes on the court and things change. Like, she's like making shots, running, getting the crowd excited. Things change whenever Bry comes on the court.

I've seen that growth, and I'm happy to see what she can do next year.

**Q. Earlier today Vic talked about the impact that Jody Conratt had on him when they first met in the '90s; now she's in Fort Worth. How does it feel to have a sort of legendary coach like that kind of being around the team, and what does that do for y'all moving forward?**

RORI HARMON: Yeah, I got this question asked yesterday, or something similar. I was, like, Jody doesn't, like -- Miss Conratt, Coach Conratt. She doesn't really, like -- she's always around us so much, but for someone of her caliber and her knowledge, she doesn't give us enough advice.

I'd love her to talk some more. For her to be in our -- like around us a lot, I get the feel. I feel her presence. I feel that national championship presence. It's that undefeated season presence around us.

That's almost like all you need. When she's around, she likes to keep her peace, keep her distance. She talks to Coach Schaefer, obviously, a lot. To feel her energy all the time, that's something I think we need as a team. The historical, like, traditional runs at the University of Texas, that's really good. We really take pride in our tradition here.

SARAH GRAVES: Yeah, we're so lucky to have her around. We talk about legacy, and one of the greatest coaches to ever do it. I mean, we see her hanging in our practice gym. We see her hanging in the Moody Center because she's such a legend.

To have her come represent what we think is the best university in the world and give us advice and show us how it's been done before. She's the only one to ever win a national championship at Texas is awesome. She was giving some advice to the freshmen yesterday. She's also encouraged me in practice.

Having a legend like that talk to you really means a lot, and it changes the way that you approach not just basketball, but life and how we approach each other as teammates.

BRYANNA PRESTON: Yeah, I think her résumé speaks for itself, so just to have her around. Any time you walk past or just say hello, it's always, like, yeah, like, I did this.

It's like a reminder, like, yeah, I went undefeated, national championship, and I'm here to, you know, give that energy to y'all.

So it's really wonderful to have her around.

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