

# NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - South Dakota State vs Washington

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Fort Worth, Texas, USA

Schollmaier Arena

## Washington Huskies Coach Tina Langley

Elle Ladine

Avery Howell

Sayvia Sellers

Media Conference



**Q. When you play a team for the first time, like you haven't seen them before, how important is that first ten minutes of that first half? For any of the players.**

SAYVIA SELLERS: Yeah, I mean, I think playing a team for the first time, like obviously you see them on film a lot, but it's very different once you get on the court.

And so just trying to see how they play and what they're doing, trying to figure it out the first ten minutes so we can prepare and make changes live in-game will be really important.

**Q. Sayvia, your journey is pretty awesome, you come from Alaska. Can you talk about what it was like to get recruited? And then you've really burst onto the scene this year and had a really great season your junior year. What has it been like to get to this point and play in these big moments in March Madness?**

SAYVIA SELLERS: Yeah, it's really cool. I think being from Alaska is pretty funny. It's a good conversation starter. No, being recruited was really fun, obviously. I chose to come to U-Dub for a lot of reasons, but it was really the people.

And so I'm just really grateful that I get to experience moments like this with the people that I choose to spend my four years with.

And so I'm really excited for us.

**Q. What did you take away from last year's NCAA Tournament appearance, and how much better and more comfortable do you feel that you've already been there and know all of this?**

SAYVIA SELLERS: Yeah, I mean, I think from last year, I think we learned a lot. Just kind of trying to stay in the moment. I think just taking the experience that we had last year and really trying to grow off of it has been something in the back of our minds all year.

And so I'm really grateful that we had that experience.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open the floor for questions.

**Q. Elle, you've been around this program for a while. Talk about getting to this point. I know last year you guys made the NCAA Tournament. But talk about getting back here again and this group trying to get something done.**

ELLE LADINE: Yeah, I mean, we have a great group of girls. We've all been around. Avy is obviously new. But we kind of just have had the mindset the past four years, and I know this is how Coach Tina runs her program, but one game, one practice, one day at a time. We just always stick to that. And that's what it's been like this year as well. It fortunately brought us back here.

**Q. Avery, you made a deep run a season ago, but your role has increased this year with Washington. Can you talk about what you learned from last year's run and what you're taking into this year's experience?**

AVERY HOWELL: Yeah, last year we made a really good run, like you said. I think that just helped me gain confidence that I was prepared for that moment. And I hope to bring that this year and just be a steady force on the court. Whatever the team needs from me, I want to provide that just so our team can be as successful as possible.

Last year was a lot of fun, so I'm excited to be back this year and have a good couple games.



Obviously in the moment I wasn't. But I think that we learned a lot. And so I'm really excited to just be here with the same group of people and trying to get better.

ELLE LADINE: Yeah, I think something that I took away was that every team you face is going to bring it, no matter who it is. And so I learned a lot from that last year.

And I think coming back, obviously you have more confidence naturally. We've been here before. So just trying to continue to learn, stay in the moment, and yeah.

**Q. Just having made that run with SC last year to the Elite Eight, what does it take to win in this tournament?**

AVERY HOWELL: I would say it takes just staying in the moment. We've all kind of touched on it. But every single game is going to be tough. Everyone is prepared for March. That's what's so fun about it is everybody is ready for the big moments.

So I think it's just taking it game by game, focusing on what's right in front of you and not letting anything take you down the line of who's next, whatever. I think it's just staying in the moment and then staying with the people that you're with, the coaching staff you're with, and just really trusting each other.

**Q. As you guys look to South Dakota State, what do you guys see on film? They're a physical team, they're tough. Definitely one of those programs that comes in with upset on their mind. What do you see on film, and how do you plan to attack them?**

SAYVIA SELLERS: Yeah, obviously watching them on film, they're a good team. They won their conference. They've played a lot of good Power Four teams. And so I think we're just trying to scout them really well. I think our team knows them pretty well. So they play really hard, and so do we. So it will be a good one.

**Q. Have you guys played your best game yet? And if not, what does that look like?**

ELLE LADINE: That's a good question. I think we're just trying to get better every game, every practice. And so, no, up to that answer, I would say no, like we just keeping on fighting to be the best we can be on the court. So just, yeah, try to get better every game, every practice.

**Q. Can you guys talk about being on the national stage right now and what you want people to know about Washington basketball, how you got here and what this program is about from a culture vibe?**

SAYVIA SELLERS: Yeah, I mean, I think this team is very committed to each other and committed to what our coaches and everyone in our program is saying. And so I think -- I don't know. I think we've stuck together, and this team really trusts each other in what we're trying to do.

So I think going into the tournament, we're just very confident. I think we've had a great week of practice to just try to get better and things that we need to focus on.

And so I think just, you know, being confident is really important. But I think we're excited and we're ready.

AVERY HOWELL: Just to add on to what Say said, I think this whole season we've had a lot of focuses culturally about like every single day, the small things, habit to excellence.

And I think that the work we've done all year and all the practices, all the preparation is going to be why we're confident going into this first round game. We know they're a really great team. It's going to be a dogfight. That's how every single March Madness game is.

But the culture and the expectations and standards we've had all year from our coaching staff and how our whole team has taken that in every single day is going to be a big reason why we have confidence and why we're super connected on and off the court.

ELLE LADINE: We're also here to serve one another. We're here to play for each other, not for ourselves. When you have a team like that, when we're all playing together, for one another, with a shared purpose, you can go really far.

**Q. The evolution of your game has been really fun to watch. I mean, you were obviously a super elite player coming out of high school. Your last year at USC, a shooter, primarily, this year I think we're leading the team in rebounds at over eight a game. Your three-point attempts have gone down, but your percentage has gone up. How have you been able to showcase the completeness of your basketball ability this year, and how do you think that overall has helped Washington?**

AVERY HOWELL: Yeah, I think I'm just trying to do whatever the team needs from me for us to be successful. So if that's getting rebounds, I love to do that. And defensively, I've been priding myself a lot on my defense, rebounding, things like that.

But then also just be able to have multiple ways to score,

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

not just relying on my three-point abilities, but I've been getting to the rim more and just trying to be a little more versatile just so it's harder for the defense to guard.

That's something I've been able to develop and showcase a little more with Washington, and that's been awesome. At the end of the day, whatever it is for my team, I just want to help in any way I can.

THE MODERATOR: Any other questions? Thank you.

We now have Washington head coach Tina Langley. Coach, start with an opening statement on just being here at this year's NCAA Tournament.

TINA LANGLEY: Yeah, just really excited to be here with this group of young women. It's been an incredible season thus far. It's been fun for us to get to know each other even more deeply, to commit to something bigger than ourselves and just to go to work every day with people that you love.

And so excited to continue playing. We have a class, a senior class of five young women, and then we have some newcomers. And so it's been fun to continue to grow together.

So excited for the opportunity.

THE MODERATOR: Open the floor for questions.

**Q. You mentioned the seniors. Talk about the group getting to this point. And they got a little bit of experience last year, a little taste of the NCAA Tournament last year. What do you think that experience does for this group and their desire to want to play for each other, as they were talking about?**

TINA LANGLEY: I think Elle did a beautiful job talking about the culture itself and just trying to be in the moment and be a little bit better each day.

And so when the senior class, especially our four seniors that have been here for four years, came into the program, we had a lot of growth ahead of us. And they were such a tremendous force of culture and work and talent, obviously.

And so it's just been really neat to see them continue to help us grow each year. So from last year to this year, was our first time in the tournament for a long time. And so to be able to walk in and know that we had pushed to that point in the program and then to take another step is, again, just a tribute to them and the work that they've put in.

**Q. It's a bit of a homecoming for you. What's it like to be back in Texas?**

TINA LANGLEY: I love Texas. It was my home for a long time at Rice University. And so a lot of great memories here, a lot of great people here. And so excited to be back.

**Q. As you take a look at that South Dakota State team, they're one of the hottest teams in the country right now. What stands out when you evaluate them on film?**

TINA LANGLEY: I have so much respect for Aaron. He's done an incredible job. This program has been in the NCAA Tournament year after year. He's a great coach. Very disciplined team. They do so many things well. They have a tremendous post inside. They shoot the ball really well. They share the ball well, defend.

And so it's going to be a tough game. But excited for it. It's fun to play in the NCAA Tournament. Every team you play is a really great team. But a lot of respect for Aaron and for South Dakota State.

**Q. When you first were announced to this bracket, what were your initial reactions to the teams that you saw that you might potentially match up for? And what's the biggest thing you've learned in that transition from the Pac-12 to the Big Ten in your time at Washington?**

TINA LANGLEY: Remind me of the second one in a minute. The first one. Yeah. So I probably don't have a great answer to this because I'm not very much a reaction person. I just think I need to get more information on everyone. And so just an opportunity to scout was -- the first thing I thought of was like, okay, let's go get film and let's learn a lot about our opponent.

And so, again, already knew a little bit because I have so much respect for him and his program. But it's really neat to watch film and get to know them. They do a great job.

So excited for the opportunity was my first reaction.

**Q. And then second question, you spent a couple years now in the Big Ten, you came from the Pac-12. What is the biggest thing you learned about building a program and competing in those two different conferences that have pretty different play styles too?**

TINA LANGLEY: The Pac-12 was a lot of fun. It was a lot of play styles. It was a lot of coaches choosing to use different systems. So that was a lot of fun each day.

The Big Ten, same thing. Some of us came together, so we have some of those similarities. And then obviously going across the country and playing the best -- arguably some of the best teams in the country is really a great opportunity each day.

We have a lot of young women that want to play professionally and that will play professionally. So it feels very much like a professional schedule at times as we prepare, change our time zones. We just did it again. And then you play early sometimes and late sometimes.

So it's an opportunity to understand what it is to be prepared in all circumstances and how you prepare your body and your mind. And so it's been a great experience for us to learn that.

**Q. For folks who have not seen South Dakota State, is there anybody in the Big Ten that they remind you of? And what can you tell us about their forward, Brooklyn?**

TINA LANGLEY: Yeah. So I think Meyer is -- well, if you do a statistical analysis, she's actually in some systems paired with Lauren Betts and her efficiency. So she's incredibly talented. And then they have great players around her. And their system is very strong because they do a great job of spacing the floor and sharing the basketball, and everyone plays in their strengths.

And I think that's sometimes a hard thing to get, especially today in college basketball. A lot of people want to play in weaknesses. And so they do a great job of playing in strengths.

And very high IQ. And they run a great system. They're very smart. They don't beat themselves. They don't turn the ball over. They don't really foul. And they do a really good job of playing high-level basketball.

THE MODERATOR: Any other questions? Thank you, Coach.

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