

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

Thursday, March 19, 2026

Fort Worth, Texas, USA

Schollmaier Arena

South Dakota State Jackrabbits

Coach Aaron Johnston

Madison Mathiowetz

Brooklyn Meyer

Media Conference



to go into last season, fourth time making the tournament, and also getting to do it alongside each other as well?

BROOKLYN MEYER: Yeah, it's been amazing. There's nowhere else I'd rather be, no other team I'd rather be with. It's just been awesome to get this experience with everyone. And I feel like we're just here making the most of it, and excited to see what happens.

Q. Madison, talk about the nonconference portion of your schedule where you play a lot of quality teams, and the Summit League is always a grind, as any league is, but the nonconference quality teams that you see compared to your postseason teams?

MADISON MATHIOWETZ: Yeah, I would say our nonconference schedule is tough. And we use that to prepare for games like these, NCAA Tournament, when you're in a field of the best teams in the country.

And I think just using that experience of playing in tough games where every single possession matters will help us immensely when it comes to our tournament games.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, guys.

Would you like to give an opening statement on what it means to be in this year's tournament?

AARON JOHNSTON: Yeah, it feels really good to be back. It's fun to see our team just excited and have another opportunity to keep their season and for our seniors to keep their basketball careers going. It's just a neat time of the year to recognize that for our team and every team across the country.

We're really pleased to be here. This is just always a great event, great highlight to our season. And looking forward to getting out there on the court practicing and get gaming.

Q. Since Selection Sunday, what have you learned about Washington, and what is it going to take for you guys to beat them?

THE MODERATOR: Open the floor for questions.

Q. Brooklyn, what's it going to take to knock off Washington tomorrow?

BROOKLYN MEYER: Yeah, I feel like just sticking to our game plan. And obviously our coaches are going to put us in a good position and prepare us well.

So I think just going out there and playing hard and kind of just sticking to what we do.

Q. Madison, you guys have been here a few times before. What kind of experience does that bring to the table, and how do you help the younger gals on the team with your knowledge?

MADISON MATHIOWETZ: Yeah, I would say having experience in the NCAA Tournament is a big factor. I mean, having your feet there before, knowing what the experience is like helps you not only play better but just enjoy the experience a little bit more too.

I think that us just giving confidence to those younger girls, reminding them that at the end of the day, it's just another game, to go out, have fun, compete with each other, and then good things will happen.

Just keeping that reminder of staying confident and just going out and having fun and playing for each other.

Q. This is your fourth tournament appearance in four years, both alongside each other. How does that feel



AARON JOHNSTON: Yeah, you do, you find out Selection show night, and you're kind of just in limbo for a few days before that and kind of -- I don't know if relaxed is the word, because you have an anticipation coming up. As soon as you get an opponent and a day and a game, you shift into film mode pretty quickly.

They're really good offensively. They do a great job of just pushing the pace, they play very fast, they can score a lot of points. And they're very balanced. They have really good guard play, but really play four perimeter players all the time, they can all pass it, shoot it, they can post up. Their posts are very active. They can play inside and out.

Just a really hard team to defend because of their balance on offense and then the pace that they play at. And because of all that length, they're really long in the perimeter. They're really good defensively. They get passing lanes, they can challenge things, they rebound really well.

So they're just going to be a hard team to slow down.

Q. You have some tremendous senior leadership. How awesome has that been to have every day this year, and how much are you going to lean on them tomorrow?

AARON JOHNSTON: You know, our seniors have been great, not only this year but every year. And I think what makes Brooklyn and Maddie and Ellie so good is they had great seniors before them.

It seems like every year that we've been in the tournament like this, you can always look at senior classes that were really important throughout the year of developing and leading and just helping our team be at their very best.

And that's what our three seniors this year have done. They've been fantastic. They've been a part of a lot of wins -- NCAA Tournament games, NCAA Tournament wins, conference wins, tournament wins. They just really understand what it takes to be successful.

And they're a great bunch. People that get to know them know that they're just great, great people. And it's pretty easy to see why they're successful. They're driven. They're committed. They're great communicators. They're everything that you would think they're going to be.

But they just really appreciate the work that goes into being really good. They put a lot into it on and off the court. And as I said, they learned from some great seniors before them.

Hopefully their legacy and their message will be passed on to our next group of good seniors here in the next couple of years too.

Q. You've won ten in a row coming into the tournament here, and won the tournament to get the automatic qualifier. Do you feel you're playing your best basketball right now of the whole season?

AARON JOHNSTON: Yeah, I think we really are. Our schedule, our season has been a challenge. I've said this before, but our strength of schedule and our nonconference games is still ranked somewhere in the top 15 of the country.

So it was a very difficult November and December for us. I thought we really played well. We won a lot of games then. So it wasn't just limping through that. We played well.

But since then we've grown. We've grown because of that schedule, we've grown because of our conference schedule. We've had some really good wins in January and February. We also had a couple losses that just gave us a chance to refocus and really think about what we want to do to be better.

And I think we've taken all of it, everything that's happened this year we've kind of taken it and embraced it and tried to learn from it.

Every coach wants to say this, but I think I would have to say yes, we're absolutely playing our best basketball the last six weeks or so of the season. We've had to do it through injuries, so it's not like everything has just fallen into place. We've had to move lineups around and shuffle people.

But some of those adversity things have helped us get to a place where we're really playing well together right now too.

So I think this year's team has taken everything, the wins, the losses, everything in between and figured out what it's going to take to be at our very best, and they're definitely there right now.

Q. Earlier today they mentioned senior leadership, maturity, very smart, high-IQ basketball players. What makes them such a good team, Washington Huskies, to face?

AARON JOHNSTON: Yeah, I think their overall skill level combined with just the right level of athleticism. They've got both of those. Sometimes you play teams that are off

the charts in one area or the other. But Washington puts both of those together.

Teams that are able to score points and score a lot of points this time of year are really hard to play against because it's just hard to slow them down. And this tournament, you've got to -- you've got to defend really well and try and slow down some good teams. You've got to be able to score against them. Washington does such a good job of scoring in bunches. So they can make it really hard for you.

They put together a really, really good team. They've grown a lot themselves in the last handful of years too, and she's done a great job there. They're a fun team to watch because they're really dynamic on offense and do a lot of good things.

THE MODERATOR: Any other questions? Thanks, Coach.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports