

# NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - Arkansas State vs UConn

Saturday, March 22, 2025

Storrs, Connecticut, USA

Gampel Pavilion

## Arkansas State Red Wolves Coach Destinee Rogers

## Crislyn Rose

## Wynter Rogers

### Media Conference

UConn 103, Arkansas State 43

**THE MODERATOR:** Joining us from Arkansas State Head Coach Destinee Rogers, student-athletes Wynter Rogers and Crislyn Rose. We'll start with an opening statement from Coach.

**DESTINEE ROGERS:** Well, first, regardless of what the outcome was or what this game looks like, God is still good. We are so thankful for the journey that we've been on this year. We've been counted out all season long, and I thought that in spite of, we were able to have a great season.

Picked 13th, finishing second in our conference, and then going to the tournament and winning the tournament for the first time ever in program history, this does not take away from that. We want our players to walk out of the locker room with their heads held high. I don't think that we have anything to drop our heads about.

I couldn't be more proud of this team, couldn't be more proud of this group of seniors. A lot of them chose to come here for their last year, and they're walking away a champion. So I'm proud to be the head Coach of Arkansas State, and I love this team.

**THE MODERATOR:** Questions for the student-athletes.

**Q. You guys shot 6 of 40 from the 3-point line. Did you feel that you had good looks tonight -- or this afternoon?**

**WYNTER ROGERS:** I feel like we did have some good



looks. We just didn't execute. We didn't make shots.

**Q. Crislyn, I'll start with you. Just with the speed and athleticism they had, they really had no problems breaking your press. Did it take a quarter, quarter and a half for you guys to kind of adjust to the speed because you haven't seen a team like that to this point?**

**CRISLYN ROSE:** I feel like we just needed to be more aggressive in order to stop them from breaking our press. I don't feel like it was speed and athleticism. We just weren't as aggressive as we normally are. So I feel like that was the biggest difference from today's game and our previous games.

**Q. For both of you players. The caliber of play with UConn -- and I appreciate you've seen multiple defenses and play -- what can you take from this to go about next time because knowing as athletes, you guys would right back on the court right now if you had to, but what can you take away from this that's going to help you get better in the offseason when you get your next go-around at this?**

**WYNTER ROGERS:** I feel like it was just a good experience to be here and play against a team like that. Now we know what to expect. Our school has never been here before, so now we just -- we already said this. We're going to be back. We're going to be back. We know what to expect, and hopefully it will be a better outcome next time.

**CRISLYN ROSE:** Yeah, obviously what she said. That was a great team we just played against definitely. Just experiencing it and getting the experience to play them, I feel like just helps a lot in general. I feel like we played against a lot of defenses this year, and wasn't nothing different than what they did against different teams. We just didn't really play like we play.

**Q. From hearing your name called on Selection Sunday until the game today, can you speak of how the team felt, the excitement, and just the overall experience of being in your first Big Dance?**



WYNTER ROGERS: It's very exciting. You know, this is something you dream of as a kid, you know, dream of growing up. You watch it on TV every March. It was just a blessing to get here and all our hard work paying off. It was just a great experience to be here.

**Q. Just with the support you guys have gotten out of Jonesboro, and the community has gotten behind you all as you have made this run. I know it's just a few minutes after the game, so kind of you're still probably gathering your thoughts, but just any thoughts on the community support that's been behind you this whole ride?**

CRISLYN ROSE: I feel like when they say we've been counted out a lot, that was kind of included in that. We didn't have as much support as we wanted, but we earned it. I'm glad that we got the Jonesboro people behind us like that, because that do mean a lot to us. To come out there with a crowd full of people, and you have your one section behind you, so that's very -- we're blessed to have the supporters that we do.

**Q. Obviously despite the results today, you guys are champions. How does it feel to have champion next to your name and be part of a history at Arkansas State?**

WYNTER ROGERS: It feels great. Like you said, for the rest of our lives we're going to carry that title with us, so just having pride in that, it just feels good.

CRISLYN ROSE: It's a great feeling. I mean, to watch all our hard work pay off and to be able to say that about yourself is a great feeling. Then to do it with this team I would say is even better.

THE MODERATOR: Wynter, Crislyn, thank you. Questions for Coach.

**Q. I don't know how it was said, but earlier it was said that there is sort of a talent gap between your team and the other team just in terms of height and maybe some of the players. Do you feel that when you play at this level when you are playing a No. 1 team -- or No. 2 team in the country that's been ranked throughout the year?**

DESTINEE ROGERS: I think that the biggest obstacle that we faced today was we played with a lot of fear. I mean, it's UConn. They're probably going to compete for a national championship. They're great players. So when you are at the mid-major level, obviously it's hard to have players like that on your team naturally, but I think that we could have absolutely competed a lot better.

It's our first time ever being here. There's no better teacher than experience. That's what we're going to take from this. We got here, and now we've experienced it. Now you have to take this moment and say, What can I learn from it, especially for the kids that's coming back, and our players that we're going to add to our team next year.

Yeah, they're great players. I think that we have great players as well. We could have competed a lot better. You play in front of a sold-out crowd. They make shots. The crowd roars. You have never been in that environment before, and it definitely affected us today. You could clearly see that.

But we'll be back, and we'll be better.

**Q. When you are playing a team as highly regarded as them with the margins being low, can you talk about the turnover issues in that first half and how it sets you behind the 8-ball early?**

DESTINEE ROGERS: That's fear. There's no other answer for that. That was getting out there and seeing that name across the chest, and they kind of got in those gaps, and they were big. We just threw it right to them. Go watch our film. That's not who we've been the whole year.

I think that the lights just probably were a little too bright for us today, but again, that experience is something you can't take that away from these players. They learned a ton being in this environment, being in this experience. For me as the Head Coach, this is my first time being a head coach playing in the NCAA Tournament, so I learned a lot as well.

Now we know what to expect, and now we're even more hungry to go do what we got to do to get back here. Next time it will look a lot different.

**Q. Very first NCAA Tournament appearance. Can you speak on getting the last points in the game with less than five seconds left on the clock, and what does that mean for your team?**

DESTINEE ROGERS: She just threw it up there. I'm happy to see something go in (laughing). We shot it 70 times. Most of the year if you go back and look at our stats, we get 70 shots up, we make a lot of them.

I thought that they did a great job of they're so big, they were in those gaps really well. It was kind of hard for us to see the kicks I think. We should have made them a little bit sooner. Again, we have not faced a defense like that all year long. We knew it was going to be a challenge.

You know, they're going to compete for a championship. There's no doubt about it. They play like that, they're going to beat anybody in the country. I couldn't be more proud to be here and represent Arkansas State. You would have liked to see a couple more go through the net, but that's not the story today. So in spite of, we're grateful to be here.

**Q. I just wanted to talk about, being that they weren't on the podium today, Shauna Brown Nissa Sam-Grant. I assume they're graduates, so they won't be back next season.**

DESTINEE ROGERS: Right.

**Q. You know this being an athlete, college athlete, the work, sweat, blood, and tears that you put into it. I think they always earn the right to speak about their play and what they put into it and the program and how it got here. But being that they're not here on the podium, I'm pretty sure you can speak to their character and who they are.**

DESTINEE ROGERS: Yeah. So we actually have -- Nae Brown, Anna Griffin, Mimi McCollister, Kyanna Morgan, Kennedie Montue, and Nissa Sam-Grant. We're actually losing six. We have six seniors that have put a lot of blood, sweat, and tears into this program.

I think a story that you guys may not be aware of is that they all transferred here for their last year. When you look at our record last year, we did not have a good year. We only had three players returning. Those six players chose to come here for their last year because they believed in me as a head coach, and they believed in the vision that we had.

The thing that I'm most proud of is, despite this right here, they're walking away as champions. You cannot take that away from them.

I couldn't be more thankful for them taking that risk to come be here for their last year and all of the hard work that they've put in this year to come out on top. They were bet against all year, and they were underdogs all year, and they fought, and they fought, and they fought. I told them numerous times they've done more for me than I could have ever done for them.

So I couldn't be more appreciative of all six of those names that I just named.

**Q. Coach, I know that Dawn Staley passed it forward. She gave you a piece of that net when she won a**

**championship, and I know Carolyn Peck did the same thing before to Dawn. Who do you plan on giving a piece of that net to help the next young black coach in the profession?**

DESTINEE ROGERS: There's one person that I have in mind right now. She's a junior college head coach, and she's someone that I think that I inspire. So her name is Shanae Govan. Well, Shanae Williams now. There will be other coaches that I will reach out to and probably send them a piece too because I'm a big, firm believer that when someone does something for you, you need to pass it down.

I'll be honest with you, I haven't thought much into it, but that the name I'm definitely sending one too. I'm definitely going to play my role in this and this part and that's being a part of that and making sure that I send someone a piece of our net because I'm a small town kid from Arkansas. If I can do this, anybody can do this.

I think the beautiful thing about this story is I'm 35 years old. Does this hurt? Does this sting? Yeah, yeah. I think that we absolutely have a future in this.

So for me what this does for me is it motivates me, and it fuels me to go out and get the players that we need to come back and be better. When I pass this net down to whoever I pass it down to, I want them to understand that when you work hard, you trust God, and you do things the right way, you can do anything you set your mind to.

**Q. I know it's just a few minutes following the game, but just from where this team was at the start of the season, you were really under the radar. Not a whole lot of talk. Then to elevate the program to this level now where you have the whole community behind you and all that support, can you just talk about kind of what it means to elevate the program to this level now? And, following that, kind of how can you continue the momentum going forward?**

DESTINEE ROGERS: We were faced with a giant last year in trying to get a new team. We took a risk putting in a completely new system. Sometimes if you want to do something that's never been done before, which is what we did, you have to be willing to do something you've never done before. So we went out and got a brand new team. We completely changed our system, and we did something that's never been done before at Arkansas State.

Now what we looking forward to now is how can we sustain this? We got to the tournament one time. That's not enough for us. We're hungry. We know that we can do this.

Jonesboro is a special place. When you see the support from where it was at the beginning of the season to where it was at the end of the season, I think that there's going to be a ton of momentum and a lot of people in our city that's excited for the start of our season next year.

So we're excited about what we can build, and we're going to get in this offseason and work our butts off just like we did last spring. Nothing about it's going to change. Our non-negotiables are going to be our non-negotiables. If you want to be a part of something bigger than yourself and be a part of a team that can win, then Arkansas State is your place.

If that's not, then you shouldn't come here. That's going to be the message to all the recruits that we're bringing in, but we're hungry. We want more of this, and we believe that we can build something really special in Jonesboro.

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