

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - Syracuse vs Iowa State

Saturday, March 21, 2026

Storrs, Connecticut, USA

Gampel Pavilion

Syracuse Orange

Felisha Legette-Jack

Olivia Schmitt

Uche Izoje

Media Conference

Syracuse 72, Iowa State 63

THE MODERATOR: At this time, we welcome the Syracuse Orange to the stage. We are joined by head coach Felisha Legette-Jack along with student-athletes Olivia Schmitt and Uche Izoje. We will begin with an opening statement from Coach.

FELISHA LEGETTE-JACK: What a great game, great for women's basketball. We understood, even though we were up by a few points, that that hall of fame coach and his amazing team was never going to let that game get out of hand. We knew that that punch was coming. Credit to Iowa State and the great job Bill has done for over 31 years. He's one of my mentors. He's a gentleman that every other week I'm texting him saying good job. He's texting me telling me what I need to do.

It's kind of a bittersweet situation, but I'm really proud of our young people. Uche is a special young lady who understood the assignment. Take shots that you've trained to take and we did that well today. She shot it with confidence and with poise.

I said to Liv in practice the other day, I didn't say make the shot, I said you have to take the shot. It's time for you to take the shot. Earlier in the season we wanted her to be facilitator. Without Dom being out there, we needed somebody to put that thing in the air and boy did she do a good job.

It's our family versus their team and our goal is to continue to telling our story one possession, one day at a time.



Q. Coach, I was just wondering in the ACC Tournament, I thought you danced around a little bit, you kind of let loose to help stay calm. What was the key to doing that today down the stretch?

FELISHA LEGETTE-JACK: They understood the assignment. There's not a lot of expectation for Syracuse lately, right? And even our family that's in media really speak poorly about what we're trying to do, not me, but us. When there's no expectation, it's great. We think just work in the dark, right?

We decided we were going to continue to know that what our work is supposed to be is going to be. What we're not going to do is get in our own way. I just reminded them they got one shot just like everybody else.

We don't need to be better than anybody for three or four games. We just need to be better for somebody for 40 minutes. What does that look like for you in the four minutes or five minutes you're out there, what will that mirror say when it's all done? They understood that and they went out and represented their mirror well, their families well, this university well, and I'm really proud of them.

Q. The stage didn't seem to bright for you, for all the players on Syracuse. You had a great defensive assignment but you also produced offensively. Can you talk about your preparation for today's game?

UCHE IZOJE: Yeah, my preparation of this game was just shoot at the free-throw line and play defense and I think today, we didn't stop Crooks, but we stopped the team. I'm so glad that having this backup, my teammates backing me up made me concentrate on my shot and, yeah.

Q. Did your family watch this game? Do they know what you just did?

UCHE IZOJE: No, they did not. They're in Nigeria. My family is in Nigeria so they were not able to watch the game. I'm not sure they know about this game.

Q. When will you tell them about this game?



UCHE IZOJE: I was so focused and I was focused on today so I didn't remember to call them and tell them I have a game.

FELISHA LEGETTE-JACK: But you told them you have a great coach, right? (Laughter).

UCHE IZOJE: But if get home today, I'll say I did a great job. Trust me.

Q. What was it like battling with Audi Crooks and what kind of problems did she pose?

FELISHA LEGETTE-JACK: Going against her.

UCHE IZOJE: It was an honor playing against her. She has a strong body and she can -- she's athletic so her body is strong. I'm sorry.

FELISHA LEGETTE-JACK: It was a collective effort. Give a couple of them to Big O.

UCHE IZOJE: So, yeah. I had three fouls and the other center, Big O, she was about to go and I was like no, Coach, please, don't. I have three fouls. Just let her play for me because I don't want to get another foul. My teammate coming to step in for me was a really great thing.

Q. What you guys are doing, what you did this season, you guys are young. What you guys are doing achieving what you're doing, especially with you with the clutch threes that you made, the clutch shots that Burrows made. I don't think people understand how special that is for what you guys did today on the court. Can you just talk about -- I know coach talked about everything you guys are doing but from a player's perspective, what are you guys doing that's taking you to the next level?

OLIVIA SCHMITT: Yeah, I would say all of that started from the moment this season began in June. Coach Jack and I and Sophie, we had conversations last year after our season ended earlier than this year. It was all about just building the chemistry, changing that culture and from the start in June, our captains, our veterans, as you would say, the people that have been in those positions really just set the foundation for a disciplined team. I think we carried that throughout the whole year. It just makes us comfortable in these moments.

Coach Jack mentioned a lot this week there wasn't a lot of us that have played in this tournament so we have to put our trust in the ones that have and we all did that. We really just had each other's back and played for each other

and I think that's where our success began for sure.

Q. Can you take me through that run? You guys were down two and then you decided to make three or four threes in a row and all of a sudden you're up 17. Run me through what what's that felt like for you.

OLIVIA SCHMITT: Yeah, like Coach Jack mentioned, I was definitely -- this whole season I put a lot of trust in my teammates. I wanted to take on that role of facilitating and getting my shooters the open shots, but my coaches have never let my confidence be defeated this year with.

With that being said, they always told me in practice, shoot that shot. In the scout team, I'm the one to be their shooter on the other team. They told me yesterday in shoot around, this is going to be a big game for me. A big game for all our shooters on the team so you have to take the shots and I ended up making them today.

I truly just think that with the talk that this team has and all the confidence that we give each other, even Uche, Big O, they're my O sisses. We have something on the team called an O sis. They are my protecters, I feel like. They are the two that give me that most confidence and I'm just grateful for it and I feel like I just hid a zone and it was fun to shoot it, but, yeah, we had to defend as well.

Q. Even though she didn't play, how much of an impact did Dom have on today from the bench in her leadership role?

UCHE IZOJE: Dom did not play today but hearing her, it means a lot and when we have time-outs, she's like talking like oh, yeah, because she's seen everything. Hearing her from outside the court means a lot.

OLIVIA SCHMITT: For me, Dom is our point guard. She is a veteran. She's been here multiple times. Not one time this whole week, even with surgery, she was texting me back and forth before we got on the plane just telling me what I need to do, got to stay ready. She's just a true leader and she's selfless. She's always proven that to us. We're grateful to have Dom on our team.

Q. When Liv is having a run like she did, what is it like for you on the bench and on the floor watching that?

UCHE IZOJE: It feels so amazing. When she was sticking the shot, we were like (gasping). Yeah, I was not surprised. During practice, she always takes that shot. Today when she took the shot, I was like yeah, continue shooting, you're making it, continue shooting. She listened to that and she made the shot. Yeah, I'm really grateful.

Q. Olivia, since Dom has been out, has your mindset kind of changed going into games knowing that you're going to be a little more ball dominant, maybe need to shoot the ball a little more? What's changed since she's done down that's allowed you to really step up?

OLIVIA SCHMITT: Actually, quite the opposite. I don't think anything really changed for me because Coach Jack always says stay ready so you don't have to get ready. I am ready to shoot it at any time. I just need that chance. Today I got that chance and it showed out and it worked out for me but I definitely would say I have always been ready. I stay ready. I'm shooting in the gym all the time.

My teammates motivate me a lot to do so. Uche, I have never seen her not in the gym, genuinely. Just to see everyone on my team being in the gym as much as they need to be, that motivates me as well and we pretty much all stay ready all the time.

Q. Olivia, I'm curious in that second quarter when you go on that run, going five for five from three, is it after the first three, after a couple? When did you realize this is going to be a legacy quarter, I have to keep shooting it?

OLIVIA SCHMITT: Honestly, I don't know. I just kind of hit a state of mind where I realized this is a moment where I need to take over and feed the hot hand. My teammates did a really good job at getting me the ball in positions as well. But I also knew that Uche was killing it at the free-throw line, almost automatic shots. Getting the ball to her as well and not forcing anything crazy, but shooting the shots that I was hoping to take.

THE MODERATOR: All right, we want to thank the student-athletes for their time and congratulations, again, on the win.

We'll now start questions for Coach.

Q. First off, congratulations, Coach. Usually when players perform at their highest level, it can be attested to the coach and the coaching staff. Can you talk about the work you and your coaching staff put into getting players ready for today's game? Because they played, all of them, on an amazing level.

FELISHA LEGETTE-JACK: We have a great staff and my goal this summer is not to go in the portal and try to find the best players right away. My goal is to try to keep my staff together. I tell you, I got blessed with just, they fill the spaces. They're good in so many things that I'm weak at and one thing they're very strong in is keeping the mindset on who isn't playing and how to continue to develop those

kids.

But also understanding if a kid's in a gym, we have time to go out there and shoot with them, you always find my coaches out there getting shots up, texting, sending clips. It's nonstop from all of them. Danayla, Caleb, our GM, Mykala, Casey, Coach A and Coach Moore. They are the foundation to this program and together we make magic happen. They are the reason for these young people staying ready and not having to get ready.

Q. As I alluded to with Olivia today, a lot of people saw the performance today, great win against a great team and a great player. But nobody saw what it took to get here. The reason I say that is because when you first came to Syracuse, WNIT bid, next year, the lights are on Dyaisha Fair is here, you're in the big dance. All eyes saw you. The next year you had a struggling year.

But then this year, coming in, I know coming off that struggling year there was clearly a conversation you had to have with yourself to how you were going to get better and get back. Your standards are clearly, if you look at your record, are up top. There's nowhere else to go. I'm just wondering what con vertical summation did you have with yourself in the offseason to get to this point right now?

FELISHA LEGETTE-JACK: I had to get healthy. I'm Superwoman in my head. Going and having a brain surgery isn't something I do and next week I'll be ready to practice. It didn't take that. It took that whole year for me to recover from that. The last game of the season, we were up 19 and lose by 3 to Boston College, I made a commitment that I'm going to be involved with every aspect of our program, from the toilet paper we use in my office to the snacks that we -- I am involved with every single aspect of it. I'm a hands-on person. It could be called micromanaging but recruiting became only through me.

We got to a point where the only person who was going to talk to Uche was me and our compliance person because it was that important and we got blessed with getting Dominique and Laila because we never stopped working. We pride ourselves on this and just being locked in and being -- winning doesn't happen on the court.

Winning is easy if you do the work. Thank you for that. We have done the work. I've done the work. My husband has no idea who his would have is most of the time because I'm diligent on that phone or I'm always at the office. I think our coaches are great because they see me around and they can ask questions because I'm right next to them. Thank you.

Q. UConn up next on Monday. What can you tell me about how guys are going to prepare for one of the best teams in the country?

FELISHA LEGETTE-JACK: It's the best team in the country in my opinion. They're very talented and the fan base is going to be ridiculous and Geno is a hall of fame coach as well. They got three All-Americans on their team and it's insatiable, right? What we're going to do is celebrate today. We're going to love the fact that we beat a great Iowa State team. And our kids are going to go and hang out and laugh and be silly and then we're going to get after some things tonight, the coaches.

But we're going to give, in order to respect somebody like a UConn or a South Carolina or LSU, I think that we have to give them our best effort. What does that look like? You already know that the whole world believes that you can't win and they see that the score -- we have done that before. We played Florida State going towards the Sweet 16. They already had the shirts, the T-shirts already designed for Florida State to go and so we shocked the world.

We don't know what God has in store for all of us, right? I know it's going to take a little bit of luck, a lot of luck, but what we're going to do is give them our best effort. Whatever comes after that is just the mirror is going to say job well done.

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