

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: Second Round - Villanova vs Michigan

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Michigan Wolverines

Coach Kim Barnes Arico

Naz Hillmon

Leigha Brown

Maddie Nolan

Media Conference



What have you seen from them, maybe Maddy Siegrist? She gets a lot of credit on the offensive side, but what have you seen on the defensive side of the ball?

NAZ HILLMON: Yeah, we see that they fly around. They're really into their scrambles. They're more of a five-out type playing team, so it'll be interesting to see what it'll look like for our post play. But they're a scrappy team, really flying around, and just trying to do everything that they can to make sure they get loose balls, and they really get in there to rebound, as well.

Q. How do you guys try to limit Maddy Siegrist on the defensive end?

LEIGHA BROWN: I think so far this season we've had the opportunity to play some really great players, so I think having that is an opportunity to kind of get some practice in, get some experience, and it's been huge. Yeah, I think just being able to play defense. Obviously Naz is a great one-on-one defender, but I think we can't rely on her the whole 40 minutes to be able to stop her.

As Naz was saying earlier, just as much as they fly around and help each other out, we're going to have to do the same. So being able to do that and make her make tough shots and then be able to rebound out of it will be huge.

MADDIE NOLAN: Going off that, I think we have a couple kids that are really capable defenders, like Leigha touched on, obviously Naz. And then maybe throwing different looks at her with a post guarding her versus maybe Laila so just giving her different looks throughout the whole game.

NAZ HILLMON: Yep, I'd definitely say our schedule has definitely helped and prepared us for that. The Big Ten has some very elite scorers so we've been able to get a taste of that throughout the year, but like you said, she's a great scorer. It'll be a team effort for sure.

Q. Maddie, first couple years you sort of did a little bit of everything. This year it seems like you've really become much more of a shooter who's supposed to

Q. Short turnaround from game to game, how do you approach the recovery and preparation process differently?

NAZ HILLMON: I think one thing with recovery, it's something we've been practicing all year. We kind of stay in the training room. Our trainer is really good about making sure that everybody has individual plans based off their minutes and just their bodies. We've kind of been doing this all year, just making sure we do all the little things, making sure we're hydrated and everything in between to make sure that we're prepared for tomorrow.

Q. A little different with you guys being at home; what was it like last night after the game? Did you guys go out together with parents and family as opposed to go back to the team hotel and have something to eat afterwards? How was that a little different being the tournament experience here at home after the game yesterday?

LEIGHA BROWN: Yeah, we were able to go hang out with our family. We had a few hours of free time after the game. So yeah, just having that opportunity to kind of relax and just wind down a little bit was definitely nice instead of just having to go right back to the hotel, and yeah, get back to work.

Yeah, definitely got back last night and started watching film and stuff, so nice to kind of move on to the next game for sure.

Q. I was curious what you saw in Villanova's defense.



space things out in the corner. Talk about how your role got defined and how that became to be your spot on the team for this year.

MADDIE NOLAN: Yeah, I think it's definitely something you look into what pieces you have coming back in the next year and where you fit into that and just kind of figuring out I'm capable of knocking down three-point shots. We have Leigha and Naz obviously and a lot of other great players around me who take a lot of attention from other teams. So if I can help them by spreading out the floor, I think I kind of took that in this off-season and worked on that a lot, worked from there.

NAZ HILLMON: Maddie is always in the gym. Of course we have our practices, but I see her every single day doing her own individual stuff. And when she's knocking down shots with her percentage, that's what she comes in there and does and she kills it every time, whether that's in practice or in games. She's definitely earned that just based off of the amount of work that she's put in.

Q. Naz, I read your piece in the Players' Tribune. You mentioned those thoughts that just creep in about, oh, this is the last time of this or that. Has that happened yet knowing that tomorrow night is the last time in Crisler for you? Or are you trying to keep that out of the frame of mind and live in the moment?

NAZ HILLMON: Yeah, it crept in this morning. My mom actually did it to me. She was telling me about all these tickets that she needed, and I was like, I don't know if I can get you tickets for like 20 people. Like this is the tournament; my teammates want their tickets obviously. And she's like, well, this is your last game at Crisler, everybody wants to see you. I kind of thought about that for a little bit.

Definitely a special moment. I'll definitely be soaking it all in, but it does creep in a little bit, and I'm sure it will do that a little bit more tomorrow.

Q. Kim, remembering a former coaching colleague of yours now in South Bend in 2018, when she saw that Villanova was in her quad, she went into a total freak-out back then, blamed her AD for it and everything else after the conference breakup and they went the other way. She tried to play everybody from Philly to keep coming home except Villanova. But you've actually seen Villanova a little bit over the years, and I think you've played them a couple times. What was your reaction when it went up and Denise isn't really all that little Harry since got back there that people accused her of?

KIM BARNES ARICO: Yeah, I mean, Villanova is a great program. They have a great history. Just even having a chance to reflect over my time, 10 years in the Big East, having to play against them, and I had sit-downs with Harry to go over his offense. And I remember back in the day when Pat was still alive and Harry went to Tennessee and tried to teach Pat his offense because he thought it was the greatest thing and everybody should run it.

I mean, it is a unique style. A lot of people freak out when you have to play against it because it's five-out, and everybody shoots, and it's difficult to defend.

But I do think that having an opportunity to play against American which runs a motion, kind of gave us a few days to prepare for a similar style. Obviously Villanova is longer and bigger and shoots the three a little bit more than American did, so it'll be a challenging game. They have a great scorer in Maddy Siegrist, a really unbelievable player. If you're Big East Player of the Year and you're not on the UConn team, you must be really special. So she's had an unbelievable career.

Plus they have a ton of experience. Herlihy played on their team the last time we played against them, which was in the WNIT which was five years ago, so they do have some experience. And since I've been at Michigan, I think it was either my first year or my second year here -- maybe my first year -- we had a chance to play them in the NCAA Tournament and then in the year that we won the WNIT championship, we had a chance to play them.

Since I've been at Michigan, we've played them twice. This will be the third time. So kind of familiar. At least I don't feel like I've never seen them before. I know what they're all about, and I've been getting our team in the right mindset to face a great Villanova team.

Q. As well as you know them from the time when Harry was there, Denise is a different coach. All coaches have their own little flavors that they put on things. So how different -- what little differences do you notice in terms of what they are with her versus what they had been?

KIM BARNES ARICO: Yes, she's definitely different. And even when she was at Drexel prior to and now Jillian is at Drexel -- it's kind of small, the coaching world -- but just I would think a little bit more freedom. Harry used to control every single possession. You would have to come over to the sideline and he would tell you in the course of the possession the number, 41 or whatever it was, that you were going to run and really specifically pick on defenders, really controlled it a lot more, where Denise lets them play a little bit freer, lets them take mid-range shots where

Siegrist takes a ton of mid-range. They used to only take threes or stuff in the paint.

I think she's kind of given them the freedom to really play to go in transition a little bit more to play a little bit more freely.

Q. Yesterday you were talking about how you have kind of folders of material on Villanova and kind of how to play against them. What's in those folders? What's the approach?

KIM BARNES ARICO: Yeah, I read through a lot of those from our NCAA Tournament and from our WNIT this morning. Our key sheet is on the top of our practice plan today.

Obviously I just -- it helps me from a coaching perspective to just revisit those things and what drills did we do in practice when we prepared for them last night, what drills have we done over the years that helped us get ready for them.

So it's just refreshers, because they run a lot of similar stuff. And they actually run some stuff that they went away from in the last couple times that we played them that they ran when Denise was a player that they brought back, so I was able to recognize some of that yesterday.

Just preparation stuff and just some different practice drills that we should use to prepare to guard them.

I think the other thing to realize, too, obviously you know their stuff and them running it every single day. And I remember they used to talk about they didn't even practice defense in practice, they just practiced their offense because their defense would have to go against their offense and it was so hard to defend.

We're not going to be perfect against it. I just think we have to try to pick up on their tendencies, try to give great ball pressure, try to be the team that we are as well, and we think we can be a pretty solid defensive team and give it our best shot to at least control them and not give up easy buckets.

Q. What type of drills?

KIM BARNES ARICO: Jump to the ball drills, head on a swivel drills, catch a cutter drills, switching drills. So different type of stuff to face their movement, their constant movement. They slip screens, they pin down screens, they cut, they back-cut. So they're constantly moving, so it's just jumping to the ball, head on a swivel, catch cutters, different stuff like that.

Q. I asked the kids this, too, and for you this same question. Usually you're at the tournament, you win a game, you get on the bus, you go back to the hotel, you grab something to eat, you dive right in. What was last night like for you? All your kids are here, all the kids' families are here. How was it different celebrating last night's tournament win and getting turned around to get ready for this next game coming up?

KIM BARNES ARICO: Yeah, it definitely was different. Hosting was different, and I know I probably said it at the postgame last night, but just the crowd and the atmosphere and being at home, it was electric. It was really special. Definitely a difference.

But also after, like you said, we always get on the bus, we always go back, we have our postgame meal and then we get right into film or treatment after. And last night afforded us the opportunity for the kids to spend a couple hours with their parents and a chance to go out to eat, and their mom or dad can give them a hug and decompress and spend some time with your family. And for me, as well, my boy is in college and he flew home for the game, and my daughters are here, so my parents are in town.

So I got a chance to -- because I've been at the hotel for a few days, too. I really haven't been home. I got up super early this morning to go have a cup of coffee with my mom, which was nice. But other than that, we're really not spending too much time with our families, so it was nice to have dinner with them last night for all of us. And then we regrouped last night at about 9:00 and just started to go through the Villanova scout and to watch some film on Villanova before we went to bed last night.

Q. Phil has a lot of social ties to the Nova program. Anybody had to remind him from his paycheck is coming from these days if he's at the game tomorrow night?

KIM BARNES ARICO: Yeah, he told me that his phone was ringing like crazy when he found out we were playing Villanova because he has a lot of connections, obviously, in Philly and a lot of people have connections with him. So people were calling him about where can they get tickets or where should they go to eat or what are the best restaurants and where should they go to hang out and where do they go to have a beer. He was handling all those phone calls, and I'm sure he's probably going to get home today pretty excited about the last couple days that they've had.

They were unbelievable last night, and they're moving on

to the Sweet 16, so congratulations to our men's program. It's pretty awesome.

But I would expect unless they head out earlier, I would expect to see most of them tomorrow. We say it's a Michigan family, but they are always at our games, whether that's the players, the coaches, their families. We can always count on them to be there supporting our team.

I would expect the same tomorrow.

Q. Does Maddy remind you or resemble any player or players that you have faced this season?

KIM BARNES ARICO: That's a great question. She's an incredible scorer and really her length and her size is special, and the way she's able to get her shot off and elevate over you is really special.

We have actually a graduate assistant in our program that played at Central Michigan, and she's one of the all-time greats at Central. And she has kind of a jumper like Maddy, and I've been teasing our kids at dinner last night and at the breakfast table this morning that she's like the Reyna Frost of Villanova. You guys probably wouldn't know her. She's no one that we played against, but we have seen her and we know what Reyna is capable of doing.

Her jumper is a little bit like Maddy's, but she's an incredible talent. She's really a special scorer. It was unbelievable yesterday, she let the game come to her. She didn't get flustered when she didn't have a tremendous scoring output in the first half and she was able to score 19 in the second half.

I know that she's a tough matchup for people just because of her size.

Joe Tartamella, my former assistant, now the head coach at St. John's called to congratulate me, and he's like, she's the closest thing to Delle Donne that we've played against, and I was like, oh, my goodness, so he's putting her in that category. So I know she has a tremendous amount of respect from everybody in her conference, but even nationally she's just a great player.

Q. With their offense being what it is, rebounding, how do they rebound the basketball out of that offense, and what do you have to do to get on the back boards on both ends of the floor and try to win that battle again because that's been so important for you all year long.

KIM BARNES ARICO: Yeah, I think that's a really good question, and that's interesting, and you said kind of what's

the difference between Denise and Harry. I think with Harry's team they always covered back. They didn't really care if they got an offensive rebound. They would send five back to cover back, where this team offensive rebounds a little bit more. And I think obviously that's Herlihy, but that's Maddy, that's Siegrist, as well. She's an incredible offensive rebounder. She has a motor to the ball. Similar to Naz, she just has a nose for the ball, so she's always trying to go after it.

We definitely -- that's going to be a key for us is to hold them to one shot because it's a pain in the neck to have to defend their stuff. We don't want to have to do it for two shot clocks. We really want to hold them to one. We really want to do a great job on her on the rebound battle.

On the other side, they're super disciplined and they're going to stay to the inside, they're going to defend from the inside out and they're going to try to get every rebound and really block out on every shot.

We talked about this a little bit yesterday, too. We have to have a motor to the ball, and some of our guards got to get in there and mix it up, and whether that's Maddie or Leigha or Laila, we've got to give ourselves some second-chance opportunities. We know Naz will have a motor and she did yesterday early for us, but that's going to be critical to our success. That's a really good point.

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