

# NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - Montana State vs Ohio State

Thursday, March 20, 2025

Columbus, Ohio, USA

Value City Arena

## Ohio State Buckeyes Head Coach Kevin McGuff Media Conference



THE MODERATOR: We'll open up the floor for questions for Coach Kevin McGuff.

**Q. What specifically stands out to you about Montana State on film? What impresses you, and what do you guys need to specifically key in on in this game?**

KEVIN MCGUFF: Well, one, they've won 30 games, so they're used to winning. They're very well-coached. They play extremely hard. They've got a little bit of a unique defensive system where they pick up full court and try to disrupt in that manner.

They've got an outstanding guard and post player. They play a little bit of small ball, which we don't see a lot of for the most part throughout the year, so it's going to be a little bit of a different matchup for us, but I think the biggest thing is he this play extremely hard and they win a lot.

**Q. Kevin, you talked a lot about the inconsistency game to game of your team.**

KEVIN MCGUFF: More like quarter to quarter.

**Q. The urgency now, how do you infuse that at this time of year?**

KEVIN MCGUFF: Well, we've really tried to emphasize it in between the Big Ten Tournament and heading into tomorrow's matchup. I think that will be the biggest key for us is just being able to get more consistent play and just being the best version of ourselves for closer to 40 minutes than we've had at times this year.

**Q. You mentioned an outstanding guard for Montana State. I'm sure you are meaning Esmeralda Morales.**

KEVIN MCGUFF: Yes.

**Q. Can you describe what threat she brings to your team? Can you take us through kind of what threat maybe she presents to your own team, because you have seen a bunch of good scorers this year. I'm curious what you make of this one.**

KEVIN MCGUFF: Yeah, you said it. I was going to say, she can really score the ball in a variety of ways. She can make threes. She can get to the rim. She gets to the free-throw line. She's really good off of ball screens, and I think they execute really well off of ball screens in general.

She presents a really difficult challenge for us. I think it's going to take a collective effort, team, off the ball screens and all that type of stuff. She's really good. She's competitive. She's feisty.

But just the fact that like you see some kids, they shoot the three really well, but they don't put it on the floor. It kind of gives you some opportunities strategically to stop that, but she's a really well-rounded guard. If you take one thing away, if you take the three away, she'll put the ball on the floor. You try to guard her off the dribble, she'll shoot the three. So I think we have to have a really good game plan against her because she can really get going and make it tough on you.

**Q. You mentioned they're picking up full court defense. You guys, of course, do that too. How much do you think this game will come down to who kind of succeeds more in those...**

KEVIN MCGUFF: I think a big part of the game will be who takes care of the ball, who makes good decisions at the end of breaking pressure, and can you be efficient when you do break the pressure at getting good shots?

They're in the top ten in the country in steals, yeah. I think that's going to be a big thing for us is our ability to handle the ball and make good decision when we do break the pressure.

**Q. Their scheme, their defensive scheme, anything about their kind of man switch heavy scheme that**



**stands out?**

KEVIN MCGUFF: They switch a lot. We don't see that a whole lot throughout the year, but our ability to execute versus their -- once we get in the half court, just to be able to execute and generate good shots will be a big part of it as well.

**Q. Of course, both of you are coming out of conference tournaments and conference season where you are preparing to see a team for a second or a third time. Now that you're in a part of the year where you are preparing to see a team once, what sort of challenges go into that? Is it a lot of on the floor stuff? Is it a lot of film stuff? How do you make the most of this time that you have in between your last game and this one?**

KEVIN MCGUFF: I think a combination of both because you're right. For our players playing somebody in the Big Ten in the Big Ten Tournament, we've already seen them, and they're familiar with the personnel and the scheme and all of that type of stuff. Montana State with definitely a different style that we haven't seen necessarily, we had to show on film because it's hard to recreate that with your practice team to do it exactly the way they do it.

So we watched a lot of film on them, made sure our players were familiar with that, and then tried to do the best we could in practice to kind of give them a feel for what it's going to feel like on the court.

**Q. You mentioned on Sunday Elsa was dealing with something. Is she going to be available for tomorrow?**

KEVIN MCGUFF: Still kind of a game time decision, but it's going to be close.

**Q. If she isn't available, where do you kind of make up for the defense in that rebounding that she brings off the bench?**

KEVIN MCGUFF: You know, we'll play Eboni. She'll get a lot of minutes, and I have a lot of confidence in her. She's experienced, and she's played in games like this before.

**Q. Building off that, do you have any update on Ava, I guess?**

KEVIN MCGUFF: Yeah, Ava is in a good place. She should be good to go.

**Q. Can you talk about what you are going to expect from Ava, being on the sideline for so long and being a freshman in her first tournament? What are you**

**hoping to see from her?**

KEVIN MCGUFF: Yeah, hopefully she can give us good minutes and score the ball from the perimeter. That's what she does, so I think she'll be ready to do that.

**Q. During your time here at Ohio State, you've had nothing but success in the first round. How do you kind of just prepare the team not to look too far ahead and stay in the moment?**

KEVIN MCGUFF: Yeah. As I have told the team all week, Montana State is used to winning. They've won 30 games for a reason. They're well-coached. They play extremely hard, and they're going to show up here and compete to win. So we better have the same mindset if we want to be successful.

**Q. I'm curious if you have any familiarity with Tricia Binford, if you have met in any kind of coaching circle in the past or at all familiar with what her career has been? She played in the WNBA up in Cleveland. Any thoughts on what she has done?**

KEVIN MCGUFF: She's done a great job, and she has a great reputation in our profession. I haven't really crossed paths with her a whole lot. I did spend two years in Seattle, so I was in the West, but I know she's got a really good reputation as a great coach, high-character person, and runs a great program.

**Q. Can you kind of compare and contrast the presses that you have and Montana State has?**

KEVIN MCGUFF: Yeah, they have some similarities in terms of just disrupting the other team. Theirs is usually more a little bit of run and jump, and ours is a little more of a zone press, I guess, is what I would say.

It's the same thing. It's disrupting the other team, wearing on the other team, trying to create turnovers to create easy baskets.

**Q. Then a question kind of outside of the game. Cotie recently posted a message that she got online. Talked to her. She said how often people kind of go after her, attack her online and stuff. Do you have any comments on that? What does the team, program, do to provide resources to help players that, kind of thing?**

KEVIN MCGUFF: It's tough. We live in a day and age where anybody can say anything online, whether it's about the program or about a specific player. It's really unfortunate for the young women in our program and

across the country because we're not unique to this. It happens everywhere.

You know, we try to support them the best we can in terms of we do social media training and always remind them that there are trolls out there that are going to say things that aren't nice and that, in my opinion, the less you react to them or the less you respond, the more it goes away, but sometimes hard to do, and we get it.

They're young people, and they're human beings. Sometimes they do react. The less you can interact, the better is what our philosophy tries to be.

**Q. A lot of your players have said they don't feel like you all have played your best basketball yet this year. Would you agree with that assessment? What do you think it takes to find that here in this tournament?**

KEVIN McGUFF: Yeah, I probably created a self-fulfilling prophecy because I said at the beginning of the year with so many new people, I think it's going to take a while. We've been so reliant on people like Jacy Sheldon for leadership and consistency.

I think at our best this year it's been really good, but we just haven't found a rhythm where we've consistently been close enough to 40 minutes of that to feel like we've played our best. I think that's the key is we're just trying to be the best version of ourselves tomorrow against Montana State.

**Q. What do you think it's going to take here in this tournament for you all to be able to do that across multiple games to be able to make a run in this tournament?**

KEVIN McGUFF: I think that one of the biggest things is play off the bench in terms of our depth to kind of keep our team fresh and be able to sub and get our bench in there and have six or seven or eight or nine people play well. I think that will be a big part of it.

I think Jaloni, Cotie, probably Taylor Thierry really having a great tournament would go a long way in terms of leading the team.

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