

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

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Columbus, Ohio, USA

Value City Arena

## Montana State Bobcats

## Katelynn Martin

## Marah Dykstra

## Esmeralda Morales

### Media Conference



KATELYNN MARTIN: I mean, presses are hard. It's meant to speed you up so at the end of the day, I think we're excited for the challenge and I think we've prepared well enough to know how to attack a press, so it'll be interesting.

MARAH DYKSTRA: Yeah, like KJ said, we've been preparing all week. We know they're going to throw a lot at us. They might change up some looks depending on who they're seeing on the court so we're just practicing a lot of different ways that we can just navigate that press.

ESMERALDA MORALES: Yeah, I think for us we know the spots, we know where we want to trap. So for us on offense, we can't go to those spots, like the hot zones or whatever. So just be smarter and read what they're giving us and just take care of the ball.

**Q. This is kind of a question for all of you but you guys were the top dogs all season long, top of the Big Sky, managing the target on your back. How do you now come in as the underdog, playing on someone's home floor, how are you managing expectations going into the game and trying to pull the upset?**

ESMERALDA MORALES: I'll go. (Laughter) We're just free, yeah, we can play out there, like you said, we were top dogs during the season. Now we're not. We're the underdogs and we love the challenge. We have to go out there and just play us, do us, and just try to get the home streak away. They're 15-0 I think at home. So for us, we love the challenge and we just love the atmosphere and to have this opportunity to go out there and do us, it's amazing.

MARAH DYKSTRA: Yeah, adding on to Esme with that, we've had a target on our backs for the whole back end of last year. We had a really good conference play, but now we have the target on someone else's back and we're the hunters going for that target now. We don't really have that top-dog narrative, we're going with the underdog narrative and we're ready to put up a big fight.

KATELYNN MARTIN: I think our biggest thing is staying composed and level-headed throughout this whole game. I

THE MODERATOR: We are going to open the floor up for questions.

**Q. You all play oppressing style of defense. Ohio State also plays oppressive style of defense. What have you noticed comparing and contrasting how you all play and what you're seen on the tape? For anybody.**

KATELYNN MARTIN: Yeah, Ohio State is really good at pressure defense and I think we are very similar in that way and it's going to be an all-out battle, especially on the defensive end. We're just going to take what they give us, try and be controlled and on the offensive end and then try to speed them up on defense.

MARAH DYKSTRA: Yeah, adding onto that, we know they like to play up-tempo, fast. So do we, like KJ said over there. Just making sure we're not getting sped up offensively by them is going to be something that's super important playing at our own pace and trying to control what we can control on both ends is going to be important.

ESMERALDA MORALES: Yeah, I think just capitalize who's going to capitalize with the turnovers, who's going to have less turnovers. Like you said, both teams, we love to press, so whoever is going to take care of the ball more is going to show out there and just play freely.

**Q. Do you enjoy the opportunity of playing against oppress when you probably practice against one every day when you're practicing? Do you look forward to playing another team who plays a similar style?**



think that's going to be our biggest strength, being able to go in there, pray freely and just enjoy it.

**Q. A question for Esme, I know your first call with Binford, you calm here to win a championship. Now that you've won your regular season and your tournament championship, how have you been able to take in the past 24 hours? I'm sure it's something you've dreamed of your whole life to be on this stage.**

ESMERALDA MORALES: Yeah, for me I haven't really taken it in as in, like, we're in March Madness. I think for me it's just how can we go win this game? How can we stop them? How can we be smarter out there? The small details, so just be out there and be a leader, especially because we're kind of young at the same time, so I can't show my emotions in that way, so just try to stay composed but just blessed at the end of the way. Like at night I'm like wow, I can't believe we're here, but at the end of the day, I have to be out there, be a point guard and be a leader.

**Q. For all you guys, obviously they haven't lost on their home floor this year. How much do you channel that FGCU when the winning streak that you guys ended earlier in the season, how much do you channel that going into this game?**

KATELYNN MARTIN: I think it starts with our mentality of staying focused. I think that game throughout shoot-around, throughout our practice that week, we were really prepared and really locked in and I think that gave us the ability to stay composed during the FGCU win, but I think that goes to the same thing here. We just want to stay locked in, stay with a focused attitude, mentality and at the end of the day, we want to let it come naturally, let the game come to us and whatever the outcome is, we're just going to know we worked our butts off for it.

MARAH DYKSTRA: FGCU was big for us with our mentality being road warriors. That was something we really embodied and that was our goal throughout the season, just making sure we're as practiced, predictable and executing as well on our home floor as we do on the road. So I think FGCU was a good testament to that and we're hoping to bring that energy to our next game.

ESMERALDA MORALES: Yeah, I think it's just hard to win on the road. It showed all season. It's just different. For us, we just love the challenge and out there, we just have to -- the small details, we have to take care of the ball. To have this opportunity, it's going to be fun. We don't have the world on our. We're underdogs and we like that.

**Q. One more followup for all of you, Sunday was a lot**

**of excitement. You talked about how excited you were just to be in this moment but now that you're here, how has the mentality changed now that you're here in Ohio?**

ESMERALDA MORALES: Yeah, we want to go win. It's like 1-0. The same mentality we're going throughout the season, it's just 1-0 and we're underdogs now so it's like let's go. We don't have to have the pressure as in we have to win this, we have to win this, no. We can go out there and just have fun.

**Q. For Esme specifically, their press, their ability to force turnovers, how much have you been focusing on ball control and keeping possession and just as a team, making sure to try to not turn it over too much in this game?**

ESMERALDA MORALES: Yeah, for us I think the biggest thing is just stay composed. A lot of ball face, they're athletic, they're longer than us but at end of the day, I've been the shorter one out there so for me, I just need to go out there and continue to be me, continue to be the point guard my team needs me to be and just be more disciplined and just the details. But at practice, just continue to have fun. I think that's the biggest thing. Once we put pressure on us, that's not us, so just go out there and do us.

**Q. Ultimately ask a question for anyone. Your season has prepared you for this moment, the most wins not only in Montana State history but in Big Sky Conference history. I think a 19-game winning streak. How has that prepared you and boosted your confidence as you're coming into a difficult road game?**

MARAH DYKSTRA: Well, I think we know regardless of our seeding and regardless of the underdog narrative, we know we're meant to be here. We worked super hard this season to be here. Our work has shown throughout the year. We're not coming in scared. We're coming in with a confident mentality that we want to go out there, prove some people wrong and win this thing.

KATELYNN MARTIN: I think it just goes to show we get everyone's best game. I think that has really helped us with our composure piece and just being able to go out there and execute. With everyone giving us their best game, I think we just want to go out there and continue to prove to ourselves, to our coaches, to our team, to our fans just that we are meant to be here at the end of the day. And like Marah said, we put in a lot of work to be here. We're just really grateful and grateful for all the teams that we've played because they know that they've

prepared us for this moment.

THE MODERATOR: Any other questions?

**Q. KJ, you have been with the program for a long time, Marah, a couple years as well but what makes this team special compared to maybe some other years?**

KATELYNN MARTIN: Just the love for we have for each other. I think everyone just really wants the best for each other and just really excited for that to show tomorrow and I think it's shown all season long. We've stayed together through the ups and the downs. So just proud of our team, proud of their commitment to the process, to the ground, and the way we trust each other is unmatched. I haven't been on a team like it, so really proud of these girls.

MARAH DYKSTRA: Yeah, adding onto that, I think just the gratitude that we show as a team for every day that we get to spend together, 1-0 every day is our goal so we're going to win the day, no matter if it's a practice, a lift, just a shoot-around, our goal is to win every day and we're so grateful for each other as well and the opportunity to be here, be on this big stage, representing our state, our community. It's something we don't take for granted at all so that gratitude and selflessness we brought all year, a difference-maker for sure.

**Q. Marah specifically, sorry if this has been asked but now we have a little time from your shot, (Laughter) have you kind of digested -- has this been asked?**

MARAH DYKSTRA: No, it hasn't.

**Q. But, yeah, now that you have had some time to digest it a little bit more, how do you process it? How do you reflect on that moment?**

MARAH DYKSTRA: Well, I just feel like it set under the circumstances up for some hype around the tournament. Obviously the shot went viral which I wasn't really expecting. That was a lot of social media attention for a day or two there, but just to have that moment seal the deal for us to go to March was just such a big deal but honestly, it's in the past for me now. I'm just really looking forward to this next game. That's something I won't ever forget, but until the end of the season, I'll just keep pushing forward and then maybe after I'll look back on it.

THE MODERATOR: Any other questions? All right thank you very much. All the best tomorrow.

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