

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

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Schottenstein Center

Ohio State Buckeyes Coach Kevin McGuff Jaloni Cambridge

Ava Watson

Media Conference



JALONI CAMBRIDGE: I think it's something that just comes with it. I'm not going to say every team is like that, but every team hasn't played in a while. So just what comes with it. But I know we've been here before. Most of our team has been here before so it's nothing new for us.

Q. To the young players on the team, and you don't have many, but some of the freshmen who have never played in a NCAA Tournament, what advice do you give about some of the nerves that can come with March Madness?

AVA WATSON: We were talking about that in the locker room. Coach said just take it in. Don't take this moment for granted. Some of them, it's their first time. Like T, it's her first and last time. Kylee, it's her first time. We're saying take in the moment and don't take anything for granted. Just have fun with it.

Q. Jaloni, you were the seventh Associated Press All-American yesterday. What does that honor mean to you after a really great season?

JALONI CAMBRIDGE: I don't look into that stuff. Blessed and honored to be where I'm at today, but none of that stuff matters to me. I just want to go out and give it all for my team and myself. So whatever the media has to say is what they gotta say. I know what we have to do at the end of the day.

Q. You guys both played in the NCAA Tournament last year. How can you use the experience to your benefit this year?

JALONI CAMBRIDGE: Just going out there and knowing that any chance that we get to step on the court, it's another opportunity that God has given us. So we need to take advantage of every moment that we get.

Honestly, just to go out and have fun because no matter what happens, this doesn't determine what a great season we had.

Q. You guys are both leaders for the team. What are your messages to the team heading into the NCAA

THE MODERATOR: Today, we're joined by Ohio State student-athletes Ava Watson and Jaloni Cambridge.

Welcome, ladies.

Q. For either of you, what has the last week of preparation been like for this game, and how excited are you guys to play in this event?

JALONI CAMBRIDGE: We were just talking about this yesterday with a few of our teammates. It's been weird because we've been off for so long, just not having to play a game the past two weeks.

But we've been in the gym. We've been locked in. We're ready, very excited, especially that we get to host. So another opportunity to go out there and do what we do best.

Q. What have you guys seen from Howard on tape? You've had a few days to prepare for them. What do they do well? What do you need to do to play your best tomorrow?

AVA WATSON: I would say that they're very physical. They're big. They like to get -- yeah, I would just say physical. With us, we just need to stay poised and just do what we do, play OSU basketball, and we'll be perfectly fine.

Q. So much layoff time from that last game to this one. Is rust something you have to prepare for or anything like that, or is that just kind of what comes with this?



Tournament?

AVA WATSON: Like I said before, I would say take in the moment. We have a great opportunity to host. I would say just have fun with it, stay poised. I just want us to go out there and play OSU basketball and do what we do and stay true to ourselves, and I think the rest will take care of itself.

Q. It was Chance, maybe last week after Selection Sunday, she said sometimes there are advantages and disadvantages to playing at home in March Madness. Are there more distractions when you're at home? How do you manage that this weekend?

JALONI CAMBRIDGE: When I'm on the court, I don't really know what's going on outside, except for the stuff on the court. I think it's an honor to play in front of Buckeye Nation again. The last home game, we didn't get to pull it out the way we wanted to. Hopefully, we get the next two opportunities to make it a good one and just go out and have fun.

I don't think there's a disadvantage for it. It's an advantage because we get to play on our home court. At the end of the day, it's just another game.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you very much for your time, ladies.

We are joined by Ohio State Coach Kevin McGuff. Coach, do you have an opening statement?

KEVIN MCGUFF: No. We can just go right to questions.

Q. Coach, long layoff in between last game and this game. What have you done in this week and a half span here to keep the players fresh?

KEVIN MCGUFF: Combination of a little bit of rest and get back on the court. With no opponent, mostly work on ourselves. Try to stay sharp, try to create an environment where we can be the best version of ourselves here tomorrow at 11:30.

Q. What have you seen from Howard on tape or otherwise? I guess what do they do well and what do you have to do well tomorrow to win?

KEVIN MCGUFF: They win. They've won a lot of games this year. They look well organized and well coached. They've got an elite post player who's had a great season. I think we'll have to certainly be ready to put our best foot forward tomorrow.

Q. Obviously, a lot of excitement comes with this tournament and March Madness in general. What has been the message to the players to channel that excitement into the right ways tomorrow?

KEVIN MCGUFF: We have routines like everybody, and we've this week tried to lock into that and make sure, from a preparation standpoint, we're preparing in a way that allows us to continue to be successful.

I know our players are going to be excited to play, and they're going to play hard. We want to make sure we're locked in and focused on the right things.

Q. Jaloni, obviously a sensational season. Maybe struggled a little bit in the Big Ten Championship. Is there anything specifically you want to see from her in this first game against Howard tomorrow?

KEVIN MCGUFF: I think be aggressive. We're at our best when she's creating pace and tempo for our team. When she does that, generally she creates shots for herself but also makes everybody around her better.

Q. You have a lot of prior tournament experience. How do you feel like you can use that to your advantage this year?

KEVIN MCGUFF: Hopefully, that matters. But realistically, every year is a new team, a new tournament, a new path. Just want to make sure we're embracing this group and what they need.

I think specifically what this group has done well is we've gotten better throughout the year. We've seemed to do well with focusing on preparation, and that has been a consistent routine which we try to stick to, because I think that's what has helped this team get where we are.

Q. Coach, 11:30 a.m. start time, really early. Is there anything specific that's challenging about that?

KEVIN MCGUFF: It's early. My point in this stage of my life is I prefer 11:30 rather than a late game at night. The reality is, it is what it is. You play when the game is on the schedule.

We prepare accordingly. Beth Howe, our director of operations, will put together an itinerary. We'll get up, we'll have breakfast, we'll do what we do, and we'll get over here and play. That's kind of our mantra. We show up and play who's on the schedule at the time it's on the schedule. That's what we'll do tomorrow.

Thanks, everybody.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks, Coach.

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