

# NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - Fairfield vs Notre Dame

Friday, March 20, 2026

Columbus, Ohio, USA

Schottenstein Center

**Fairfield Stags**

**Coach Carly**

**Thibault-Dudonis**

**Meghan Anderson**

**Kaety L'Amoreaux**

**Janelle Brown**

Media Conference

THE MODERATOR: We're joined from Fairfield, Janelle Brown, Kaety L'Amoreaux and Meghan Anderson.

**Q. A big part of this season has been the tougher non-conference schedule with the likes of Villanova, North Carolina, Iowa. Now that you guys are back in March Madness for the third straight year, how do you see that tougher non-conference schedule paying dividends in a game like this against Notre Dame?**

MEGHAN ANDERSON: I mean, I think our conference schedule has really helped us play through adversity this year. We faced a lot of it. But I think Coach said it recently, we're built for this. The stuff we faced this year has really built us and our program. And I think it's really going to help us going forward.

JANELLE BROWN: I'd say, to piggyback off that, it gives us experience and some of, like I said, the experience we need to really go up against Notre Dame. With North Carolina and USF and Villanova, I think that it's just good games to have underneath our belt.

KAETY L'AMOREAUX: Going off that as well, every team you listed they're all in March Madness and very high seeds as well. So really good competition preparing us for this.

**Q. Nelly, you've been here all the time since Coach Carly got to Fairfield. March Madness has become the**



**expectation of this team. What's different about this year for you?**

JANELLE BROWN: I'd probably say that I'm playing this year (laughter), knowing that last year I tore my ACL and I had the season-ending injury. Yeah, probably glad I'm just playing this year.

Like you said, it's an expectation for us. Every year, we just come in with high hopes of, yeah, we're championship hunting, but also know that we want to do more when we get to the NCAA Tournament.

So I feel just putting our best foot forward, trying to be where my feet are, knowing that this is my last year. I've been here for so long. So just soaking it in, soaking every moment in.

I don't want tomorrow to be my last game. So just trying to give out max effort and doing what I can.

**Q. Kaety, what makes Fairfield's play style so unique?**

KAETY L'AMOREAUX: I think it's, like you said very unique. Not a lot of people play the way we do. It's up-tempo. And I'd say it's very, like, decision-based. So you can try and scout it, but there's so many different reads that we can make within our sets. So I think it's very difficult to have to scout in that sense.

But, yeah, I'd say very high tempo on both ends of the court. We're trying to disrupt on defense as well. So I think that high-tempo nature makes it difficult and unique.

**Q. What about Fairfield made this the school you wanted to play basketball for all these years?**

JANELLE BROWN: Just the people. I feel like the people made the place. And I don't think I would still be here if not for Coach Carly. She's helped me become a better human, nonetheless a basketball player.

But that was her main focus coming in. She really puts basketball second -- first, just the human aspect of it. And I credit her, respect her so much for that because I wouldn't



be the person I am today without her.

But this basketball team she's making a dynasty. And again kind of like what he said, we're just trying to have the expectation to make it to the NCAA Tournament every year.

KAETY L'AMOREAUX: To add on to that, the Coach Carly aspect I believed in the vision she gave me. A lot of coaches tell you in the recruiting process, we're going to win we're going to have fun doing it. But it was really easy to believe her and the rest of the staff here.

MEGHAN ANDERSON: Not to sound repetitive but honestly, the people here, the coaches, I think I've grown so much as not just a player but as a person just being here under Coach Carly and the whole staff.

And I don't think you get that everywhere. I've learned so much and how to have harder conversations to be more confident, I mean if I was here.

I don't think you get that everywhere. I've learned so much, how to have harder conversations, to be more confident. If I was here like two years ago I wouldn't be having conversations like this right now.

But I just think the connections that I've made here you can't take for granted.

**Q. Meghan, what's the best way to describe the roadrunner position?**

MEGHAN ANDERSON: I think just a very versatile, all-around player, someone who can play both inside and outside, defend 1 through 5. And I think again we're very lucky to have that kind of position here and just the program here like the coaches, the way they develop us. I've never really had that anywhere else.

**Q. Looking ahead to Notre Dame, what's the kind of scout that you're seeing, and how do you prepare to play against somebody like Hannah Hidalgo?**

JANELLE BROWN: Taking care of the ball is number one, just making sure we're taking care of the ball, playing T ball. We know that she leads the nation, the country in steals per game. So that's really just top of our scout sheet right there, take care of the ball. But I'll pass it to my teammates, too.

KAETY L'AMOREAUX: Similar to Nelly, we're trying to take it like another game, obviously big stage, big team. But we're not really switching up much of what we do. We're kind of sticking to our identity and sticking with that.

MEGHAN ANDERSON: I think just not really changing. I mean obviously every game's different; we have to change a little bit every game. But I think overall, sticking to our standards and our principles are going to help us.

**Q. For people that are watching the Stags for the first time this weekend, what is something about Fairfield women's basketball that people may not know now but you hope they know at the end of the weekend?**

KAETY L'AMOREAUX: How fun it is. I think when you watch us we play with a lot of joy. We love each other. We love seeing each other do well. And I think you see a lot of that because it's anyone's game any day. Seeing us celebrate one another is the biggest thing, I'd say.

JANELLE BROWN: I would also say dogfight. You've got a pit bull right here that is just relentless on both sides of the floor. So just a dogfight, really.

**Q. Now that you each have two March Madness games under your belt and now that you are in that upperclassman status and seen as leaders on this team, how has your mindset and mentality shifted and that maturity and being a leader on this team now trying to get this team over the hump and where it wants to go?**

MEGHAN ANDERSON: Personally, I feel a lot calmer coming into the game this year. I think in the past I've had a lot of nerves. And I still do because it's a big game, it's a big stage.

I think just having the experience that I've had now and being with this team and this coaching staff, I just feel a lot more calmer and grounded being here now, so hopefully that helps my team.

KAETY L'AMOREAUX: Yeah, I'd say the same. Third year coming here. Obviously it's a big stage. We're super excited, nerves are high. But knowing that we've been here before is a lot more calming, knowing that we're able to lead the newbies and the younger kids. And that is definitely something that's top of mind.

**Q. Being the top 3-point shooting team in the NCAA, obviously that comes with knowing that every team that you play against is specifically scouting and preparing to try to take that away. How have you guys so far this year not really been able or, I guess, not let other teams take away that shot? How do you guys counter-prepare and make sure you're still getting those looks?**

KAETY L'AMOREAUX: I mean, I think the beauty of that is knowing that if they're going to close out hard or try and take away our 3-point shooters, that we have fantastic drivers, and even better post presence.

If you want to stick to our shooters, great. We have Meg and Cy, so many that can kill inside. And I think our guards do a great job getting downhill and finishing, even over length as well.

**Q. Janelle, you talked about the standards being raised here and how you don't want tomorrow to be your last day. What would it mean to you after everything you've invested into this program to be part of the group that gets the first NCAA Tournament win?**

JANELLE BROWN: I think it would mean everything to me, but just to have in the back of my head that the job isn't done, and we're still head hunting and searching for something else.

It would be a great feeling. Definitely just soak it in. Share that excitement with my teammates, but then getting right back to work and having that nameless, faceless kind of poker face that I need to help my team make a run in the tournament.

CARLY THIBAUT-DUDONIS: I love listening to my student-athletes speak, first and foremost. You heard Meg talk about her growth. But the three of them, I've been really fortunate to see three and four years of growth in both Kaety and Meg for three years and Nelly for four.

It is the pride and joy of what we do as coaches to see human development and then how that translates to basketball.

Meg's exactly right -- two years ago, she may have said two- or three-word answers. But to see how she's articulating herself and gushing about her teammates -- yes, we're here to win basketball games. And that is a really exciting task ahead of us, but really proud of those three and how they represent Fairfield.

**Q. So what is your message going into this third straight year going to March Madness? What is your message to the team in terms of trying to get over the hump and win your first tournament game this year?**

CARLY THIBAUT-DUDONIS: You heard, I think Kaety said it, that we're built for this. The non-conference that we did play this year, we saw a lot of different looks that I think uniquely prepared us for this moment.

We saw some really good point guard play in that

non-conference and in our conference play. But we played on the road at Iowa. We've played at one of the best teams at the ACC in North Carolina. So we have a lot of experience both in this year and the cumulative effect of the experience of a lot of our upperclassmen on this roster.

So that, I think, will all be good for a great start for us as we go. But the championship in Atlantic City this year felt different. It was still very joyful. We celebrated it, but we walked in the locker room with a team that was ready for, what's next? Rather than just an approach of happy to be here and happy to win a championship.

So the message is, be us. You are prepared for this moment. And do it to the best of our ability, because we are here for a reason and we're ready for what's next.

**Q. Nelly just calling Kaety a pit bull. Could you just describe Kaety's play and how impactful she is on both sides of the ball?**

CARLY THIBAUT-DUDONIS: Kaety was player of the year in our league for a reason and was all-defensive team. That right there tells you the respect she gets from our league of how she can impact both sides of the basketball.

She is a tenacious defender. I'm really impressed, even when she came in as a freshman, she made very few defensive mistakes. Her and Nelly defend very differently. Nelly is very much in your face, disruptive. But Kaety doesn't beat herself. She's where she needs to be at all times.

And that then blends and leads into her offense, where she's grown so much. She's always been a great scorer, a dynamic scorer, and can score in a lot of different ways, both from the perimeter and getting to the rim. But I think she's grown the most in being a scoring point guard, which is a very tall task for anybody to be able to discern when does my team need me to score and when does my team need me to distribute and create great shots for everybody else with great scorers around her.

So that maturity has really impacted our team positively in all facets because you have to pick your poison when she's getting her head downhill off a ball screen or in transition. Are you going to help on a great dynamic scorer in the paint? Or kick it out to great shooters all around her. She's been the head of the monster for us all year long, and I'm really proud of her growth.

**Q. Janelle Brown, what work did she do behind the scenes even getting back out on the floor coming into this year? And what has she meant to your program**

## and your tenure at Fairfield?

CARLY THIBAUT-DUDONIS: She is the epitome of what Fairfield is as a university. She has been here now six years, which I think is so unique in college athletics to have someone that is so loyal and dedicated to Fairfield as a whole.

She is so ingrained in our campus community. She's a part of so much of what we do, and I think everybody across campus knows who she is because she walks into any room and is going to bring the energy.

And that is certainly infectious in our space as well, from film, to the weight room, to locker room, to the court. She makes sure everybody around her is ready to compete. And she tackled her rehab for her ACL in the same manner.

Of course, you're going to have ups and downs going through that, but she was a real bright spot for her teammates. When she was struggling on the sideline with leg raises and things and her teammates were watching her, she gave them something to fight for.

So she's a competitor. She attacked her knee rehab the same way she does any drill in practice, and that's to win and to be the best version of herself.

So I've loved being a part of her journey. And we say at Fairfield it's not just for four years -- hers is six -- but it's not just four years, it's 40-plus. And she'll be forever a part of the Fairfield family. And I know she's ready to go make some history.

## **Q. Three back-to-back appearances at the NCAA. Walk me through your thought process, how you prepare for a game at the big stage?**

CARLY THIBAUT-DUDONIS: This year's been unique, and a little bit different than the last two in that our MAAC championship was earlier.

So typically, in the last two years, we would win the championship on a Saturday and then the next day, Selection Sunday. You really have a quick turnaround to find out who you play and plan the next game plan.

This year we won it on a Monday. We actually had the gift of time to take three days in practice last week to focus on ourselves before we knew who our opponent was.

This year it's a little bit unique. There's some things we had slippage in the MAAC Tournament that we needed to focus on offensively and defensively. And we were able to take a couple days to work on that before we now know

that we play Notre Dame.

So I think our foundation is stronger than it's ever been coming into the tournament. And then once you get that opponent Sunday night, you obviously get to work and figure out what you need to do.

So that was kind of a unique aspect of this year, and then obviously once we knew it was Notre Dame starting Monday, you kind of hit the ground running and go from there.

## **Q. You talked about the extended period between the MAAC championship and then the break until Selection Sunday. But now looking ahead to Notre Dame, what has stood out in that film and scout, working amongst all of what you tout as the best staff in the country?**

CARLY THIBAUT-DUDONIS: Yes, I will take that opportunity to give my staff a shout out. You have about 12 hours to crank out a Notre Dame scout from when you get the opponent to having a game plan the next day in practice.

I have the best -- we've stayed together for four years, which is really unique. You look through our entire staff, our support staff to our managers, we have just a completely committed group across the board. So we were able to walk in Monday with a pretty good game plan.

We know right now Notre Dame's playing their best basketball. They've won nine of the last 10, I believe. And, yes, Hannah Hidalgo is the head of the monster. And she's very good on both sides of the ball.

You heard Nelly talk about taking care of the ball. And she leads the country in steals for a reason. But really as a team they're very disruptive. We know we need to be really fundamental offensively and creating great shots.

We know -- I think I heard the question earlier -- we know they're going to try to take away our 3-point shot and being able to continue until we find the one we want without turning it over because those turn into live ball opportunities for them in transition.

Then on the defensive end, I mean, somebody like Hidalgo, you're not going to hold her to 0. She's a great player. You know how much the ball's in her hands. She has one of the highest usage ratings in the country. And she does a little bit of what Kaety does for us, is that she creates great shots for everybody else around her because she garners so much attention.

We had to take a lot of the energy this week to figure out how we can kind of take some things away from them on the defensive end as well.

**Q. How does being here as a group multiple years now help alleviate maybe some of those turnover issues? Because the moment's not oh, my gosh, my first time here anymore.**

CARLY THIBAUT-DUDONIS: No, you certainly do feel you heard them talk about being calm our student-athletes talk about being calm. And you feel that. I've definitely felt that in the locker room and in practice travel. There's an excitement but without it feeling jittery. I think a really good place to be.

One of the things that we focused on at the end of last year is when we do face some adversity whether it's a team making a 6-0 run or we turn the ball over a couple times of not straying from our identity. Not straying from who we are. We faced moments last year where you look at that Kansas State game, they made a run and we started taking shots that were uncharacteristic of us offensively, taking maybe some difficult, we call them, tough 2s rather than continuing to kind of dig in to create a wide-open 3 after ball reversal or drive or kick or inside outside opportunity which is where we're at our best.

When we did face some of that adversity in non-conference this year, we were able to remind them of, like, continue to be us. So we are Shooters U for a reason. We shoot the ball really well, but we do so by creating really high percentage 3s and not forced quick, tough ones because we feel like we need to answer immediately.

**Q. You mentioned earlier that foundation is strong. What makes this team different compared to previous teams that have made appearances at the NCAA?**

CARLY THIBAUT-DUDONIS: We've talked about it a lot already, but the cumulative effect of experience, for sure. Having, if you look at our MAAC Tournament minutes, really, the top seven are all returners from last year's team that played the bulk of the minutes in Atlantic City. They've been here before.

I do think that we have more depth. You add Nelly back into the mix of another dynamic playmaker, size, playing her best basketball. Jill's playing her best basketball, not to mention obviously Kaety and Meg. So I do think our firepower offensively, you look at Lauren Beach and Syd, we have such a dynamic group, people that can score in a lot of different ways.

Every year we tried to expand that offensive firepower. If

you look at that, at our team as a whole, we have a lot of women who are equally as impactful defensively as offensively.

So having those two-way players allow us to be much more consistent against high-level talent like we're going to see at Notre Dame.

**Q. What makes your team a unique match-up assignment? Because you've got the three guards, but you also have the two roadrunners, and just what's been the evolution of that position since you've been at Fairfield?**

CARLY THIBAUT-DUDONIS: We are a unique match-up in that all five on the floor can score, and we have so many weapons, especially from the 3-point line.

So being number one in the country in 3-point makes, and we've evolved from last year to this year of being not only a high-volume in makes and 3s, but we're also very efficient in doing so.

It's something we focused on last year to this year, is, I think, we were top 20 in the country last year in made 3s, but we were top 100 in 3-point percentage. We really honed in how can we close that gap to be high-volume 3s and also very efficient in how we can make them, and so we closed that gap. We did close that gap statistically. You do have to make difficult decisions of where you're going to help from. Then you add somebody like Nelly and Jill as well as, she's playing and Kaety and those three, you have to make difficult decisions of where to help if they're able to get feet in paint and when they're able to get feet in paint.

It makes it a very difficult match-up from the guard perspective. But then you add Meg, who basically plays like a guard and Cy, who is incredibly dynamic off the bounce can guard multiple positions, allows us for a lot of versatility of where your offensive production is coming from.

**Q. You mentioned in preparation, obviously your players said it, you want to take care of the ball. And you said the way to kind of do that is to get a little more fundamental, almost kind of go back to basics in a sense. What does that look like in terms of practicing? What exactly, I guess, are you doing are you saying in practice to get them to buy into that mindset when it comes to taking care of the ball?**

CARLY THIBAUT-DUDONIS: Yeah, I mean, Hidalgo is one of the best that I've seen at picking a spin dribble or timing up your change of direction, timing up when to come

and help on a drive. So much of it is obviously having your handle really tight but knowing that when you do get feet in paint, you're not going to be left one-on-one, and being ready for that being strong with the ball, being solid of getting in vision off the ball, especially if your defender leaves to go and crowd the paint, of being in vision and getting rid of it sooner and understanding kind of where your teammates are going to be when we create opportunities to get feet in the paint.

They're really good at that. That's a lot easier said than done, but it really does go back to the basics of not being lackadaisical with the ball and then being a great teammate of being in vision when a secondary defender comes.

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