

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

Saturday, March 21, 2026

Columbus, Ohio, USA

Schottenstein Center

## Ohio State Buckeyes Coach Kevin McGuff Kennedy Cambridge Jaloni Cambridge

Media Conference

Ohio State 75, Howard 54

**Q. Kennedy and Jaloni, just can you talk about the defense during the second quarter when you guys really blew up in the game? It seemed like turnovers, steals in the transition game really got you guys going.**

KENNEDY CAMBRIDGE: I mean, yeah, our team has thrived off that all year. It's just us being us. I think that we were more aggressive in the second quarter, and throughout the game I think we lost that intensity and I don't think we really found it again.

**Q. Jaloni, Allison said yesterday that you guys' mission is to get out of a shot this year. Now that you advanced to the second round, how big does this next game feel in terms of making progress from where you guys were the last couple years?**

JALONI CAMBRIDGE: Well, I mean, it's just another game. Take every game as it is. Obviously want to win, so we're just thinking about the next game and whatever happens, we're going to do our best to (inaudible,) but the first thing we have to do is get a win.

**Q. Jaloni, back to the defense, I think you had six steals in four minutes. That's when you blew the game open. Do you pride yourself on steals specifically, and what's that do for a team when you're taking the ball away like that?**

JALONI CAMBRIDGE: Well, yeah, we emphasize our press through the whole game, so all year we've been doing that since the beginning. Just making sure that we're



doing the same thing that we were trying to do at the beginning of the year, ball pressure. McGuff emphasizes all the time getting on the ball and getting up the middle. So whether we get the steal or not, our ball pressure slows them down so that's ultimately what we want to do all game.

**Q. Jaloni, last year you were able to get into the flow but you were playing behind a leader, Cotie McMahon. This year you are the unquestioned leader, and you seem to have really found your flow this year. How have you been able to really come into your own this season?**

JALONI CAMBRIDGE: I don't think I was playing behind anybody. Cotie's a great person. I was just anything leaning off of her, just doing everything. Obviously she's been here before, last year. But I think I've always had this leader role. I've been way more vocal this year, but just doing everything I can for my team. Every time I step on the court, same thing whether it's last year or this year.

**Q. Jaloni, I just wonder how long have you had this ability to get into the lane, find your teammates. You kind of have that sense where everybody is, or is that something that had to develop over time in your career, or did you do that when you were 5 years old?**

JALONI CAMBRIDGE: All my life. I'm the smallest player on the court, smallest player and quickest player on the court. I stand by that. So just getting to my spot. If not for me, someone else is open, and I trust my meet mates enough and they trust me. If I don't have a shot, whether they miss or make, I've got a lot of confidence in them.

**Q. When it's close, the game's close and then you start to break it open, can you on your own get together and sort of decide what needs to happen or do you need coach to light a fire under you in terms of defensively?**

KENNEDY CAMBRIDGE: I don't think we necessarily need him. I feel like every player on this team always has like a McGuff quote in their head no matter like what happens on the floor. So like any time -- we know what



we're doing wrong. It's never -- he doesn't have to come over there and get on us. But obviously that's his job, he's going to do that.

Me personally, I love the tech he got today. He was fighting for his players, and the way that he went out there, I loved every single bit of it. My teammates were actually telling me to stop clapping, but I love a coach that's going to fight for me. And the way he did, obviously we weren't getting the calls that we wanted, but that made me want to go harder for him.

**Q. Can you just share what your impressions of Howard and some of the things that they did early to make you all, you know, just -- yeah, what can you share about Howard that made them a solid program?**

JALONI CAMBRIDGE: I think they were getting to their spots, just really taking what we gave them. They were doing a really good job getting to the lane hitting those open shots. We weren't connected defensively in the first quarter. They were easily getting the ball to the middle of the press, kind of breaking our press. We weren't really slowing them down like we wanted to, but they did a good job in the first quarter just playing the game they know how to play.

MODERATOR: At this time, we'll excuse our student-athletes and go to questions for Coach. Thank you.

**Q. Kevin, just the defensive effort. It seemed like from the three-minute mark of the first quarter to the rest of the second half, I think you guys went 13 minutes holding them without a field goal and then the seven, eight steals. Just how much did you like the defense?**

KEVIN MCGUFF: Well, I thought we had a really good stretch there where our intensity in the full court was really disrupting them, and then it kind of -- we married that with the half court and we had something going there for a stretch.

Now, I don't think we sustained that for long enough. I think we had some really good stretches today, but I think we'll have to sustain that for longer stretches on Monday regardless of the opponent if we're going to be successful.

And Howard's good. They did a great job. I think they've got an excellent coaching staff who they were well organized and they played really hard, so I give them credit. Some of our struggles early on were because they played well, so give them credit for that.

**Q. Kevin, obviously this second round has been the hurdle for you guys the last couple of years. So what**

**do you look as the most important things here the next couple days to make sure you're ready to go play your best in the second round?**

KEVIN MCGUFF: Yeah, I think we need -- obviously we'll watch this game, but we need a really good day and a half of preparation, and then we've got to show up on Monday and be the best version of ourselves.

I think we can do that through film and through practice. We looked a little rusty to start the game. We hadn't played in 10 days or so. I think as the game wore on we got a little more comfortable, so I think we'll be ready from that standpoint.

But I think our preparation has to be really good, and then you've got to go play. I told 'em in the locker room, be where your feet are, so let's be really present for everything that we do between now and tipoff on Monday, whatever time it is, and make sure we play as hard as we possibly can, we play together and do it for 40 minutes.

**Q. Kevin, can you kind of walk me through what are some of the things that you're liking that you're seeing from your team, especially since they had such a strong offensive second quarter. How were you liking how the team was making all those opportunities and being able to score those points?**

KEVIN MCGUFF: Yeah, I think our defensive intensity, focus and execution in the second quarter was really at an elite level. What I didn't like was we just didn't sustain it for long enough stretches, and we got really sloppy. And when we got sloppy, we didn't move the ball, make an extra pass. We had some uncharacteristic turnovers, and our defense kind of lacked when the intensity went down a little bit.

So I think for us, and it's really been -- we've gotten a lot better throughout the year, but the thing that we've tried to emphasize of late is just we're really good when we're good. I think today's a great example. When we were really good, we were really good. We have to do that for closer to 40 minutes. And we may not get to 40 exactly, but closer to 40 minutes than we got today is what we need to do if we want to continue to advance.

**Q. How much do you recruit for defense, and quickness specifically?**

KEVIN MCGUFF: Yeah.

**Q. Quick hands.**

KEVIN MCGUFF: Yeah, we certainly pay attention to --



we'll make adjustments and tweaks in the style of play, but we do pay particular attention to people we think will be a good fit with the style, which is speed, quickness, quick hands. Kennedy's a great example, she's got great instincts. Defensively she gets her hands on a lot of basketballs. She makes a lot of plays that I would love to tell you I taught her, but really it's just her instincts. So we do look for that because it's a good fit in our style of play.

MODERATOR: Thank you for your time, Coach.

KEVIN MCGUFF: Thanks, everybody.

