

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - Green Bay vs Alabama

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College Park, Maryland, USA

XFINITY Center

Alabama Crimson Tide

Coach Kristy Curry

Aaliyah Nye

Sarah Ashlee Barker

Media Conference



the tournament, NCAA tournament together. What have those experiences taught you, and do you approach this one any differently with those lessons in mind?

SARAH ASHLEE BARKER: Yeah, obviously being able to come to the NCAA tournament three times together, it means a lot. It also shows our experience. It shows that we are a good enough team to get to the tournament like we have the past three years.

For us it's just being able to hone in on the people that are experienced and be able to show the young guys, hey, this is how it goes. This is the routine of it. You take every day, every second serious.

You have fun, but it's also about coming in and winning because it's do or die pretty much. You lose you go home; you win you keep playing.

No matter the team you face they're going to give it their all just like we're going to give it our all. Having those experiences in the past and knowing you don't want to look back and say, I wish I would've done this or I wish I would've done that.

I think we're really just honing in on just all the exhausting every single bit of energy we have, and that's what we're going to continue to do.

Q. Sarah Ashlee, couple weeks since the Florida game. What are some of the biggest lessons this team has taken from that last game?

SARAH ASHLEE BARKER: Yeah, I think that the little things matter in every single game, so rebounding, the hustle plays, getting stops. In the Florida game we learned we have to be able to do those things, take care of the ball. Take really, really good shots and run our offense the right way.

So I think we had a really good kind of week and a half to just prepare for this tournament and really work on some things that Alabama needed to work on and not just facing an opponent.

So just the defensive aspect of rebounding and knowing that in this tournament it's the little things that win games.

Q. For either of you, what have you seen from Green Bay in your preparation? Obviously got a lot of tournament experience and have been at this stage as a program quite a few times.

AALIYAH NYE: I would say they're just an experienced team. They have a lot older girls who have been playing with each other for a while. They read screens and defenses really well. They cut, they post up, and they're just a smart, high IQ team.

SARAH ASHLEE BARKER: Yeah, she hit that pretty on the spot, so...

Q. I think this is the third time you guys are playing in

Q. This is for both of you. I just wanted to ask you about your NIL deals. I see you both posted a little bit about that on your social. Aaliyah you what the pants, right?

AALIYAH NYE: Yeah.

Q. What companies do you have and how has that changed your experience on campus and on the team?

AALIYAH NYE: Yeah, so sometimes we do team NIL deals and sometimes we get them individually. Those people reach out to us or Yea Alabama, like they're our NIL group who gets us deals.



Yeah, it's fun to be able to do that and just promote people's products. I know The Pants Store is what you're talking about. They gave us outfits to wear to the games and we just promoted their store. It's nice to get free stuff, so.

SARAH ASHLEE BARKER: Yeah, it's been a lot of fun. As everyone knows the NIL era and all that stuff and being able to rep companies, we have a great Yea Alabama with Alabama and what they do for us from an NIL standpoint. They do a great job being able to bring deals to our attention and say that companies want to work with us.

We are just very blessed and understanding that we're just -- like I said, we're very blessed and thankful to be had this position. Like she said The Pants Store it was a lot of fun. We got to do a photoshoot walking into the game with our outfits on. It brings a lot of fun to the game and not just worrying about the game all the time. You get to have a little bit of fun, too.

Q. I wanted to ask you about that. Are you guys wearing anything tomorrow special from The Pants Store?

AALIYAH NYE: No, we're not.

Q. What other team type NIL deals do you guys have that you do as a team?

AALIYAH NYE: Athletes Thread. We actually wore those on the plane here. They make T-shirts for us. So we'll do that.

We got Crocs.

SARAH ASHLEE BARKER: Crocs, yeah.

AALIYAH NYE: Some cool Crocs.

SARAH ASHLEE BARKER: Was the company yesterday Swag?

AALIYAH NYE: Yeah, Swag. They print T-shirts. They're based in Tuscaloosa. They got us some T-shirts. There is a place called Fruit Lovely and they get us fruit bowls, acai bowls.

Q. I wanted to ask, you guys have the No. 5 seed for the first time since 1999. This entire season you guys have found a way to pretty much make history. What has been so special about this season?

SARAH ASHLEE BARKER: Yeah, I think just who we are. Our motto, grit, love, and gratitude, that's what we're about.

You want to be the grittiest player on the floor, be tough, you want to love one another with everything you have.

And then you want to be grateful. You want to have so much gratitude for the game of basketball and how lucky we are to be able to play Division I basketball and step on the floor. Some people don't get to do that.

So just very blessed, and so I think that's just our chemistry and connection that we've had all year; just staying together when things do get tough. We've done a really good job staying together and keeping our team composed and in those tight games and in those moments.

So I think for us, we're a very experienced team also. We've got some older guys, and we are able to lead our young are guys. We just have a really, really good core of leaders and we have so many good people on this team and just great people in general.

Our coaching staff does an amazing job. Got to give credit to Coach Kristy and everything she does. We wouldn't be able to do it without them. And we're all a team together, even our managers. Every single person that's a part of Alabama women's basketball, not just a coach or a player, it's everybody involved does so much for this program and that's why we've had the season that we have.

Q. I want to ask you all about Zaay Green. This time last year you did not have her on your team. Now you get to play an NCAA tournament with her. Coach Curry has talked about how she brings at that third dimension of scoring to your team. Talk about what it's like and how valuable it will be to have her this tournament.

AALIYAH NYE: Yeah, Zaay has done a lot for us this season. I know I always say it's hard to come in as a point guard just with one year with us and make an impact, but she has done that. She's a really good teammate and person on and off the court, so we're just grateful to have her. She works hard. She sees us, gets us the ball. She also looks for hers, too, which is helpful for us.

Yeah, she's just a great teammate to have and I'm grateful that we have her this year.

SARAH ASHLEE BARKER: Yeah, to echo off what she said, she's someone who we just trust, someone who came to Alabama and was solely focused on the team and wanted our team to win and didn't care -- she doesn't care anything about stats, anything about any of that type of stuff. So being able to play with somebody like that is just so much fun.



We all just want one another to be able to win and succeed as a team. She's such a team player. Like I could go on and on about her and just how much she's done for this team. Like Aaliyah was saying, it's hard coming into a team being a point guard with only one year.

The way she's accepted it and accepted her role and done everything that the coaches have asked her to do, I mean, I couldn't be more proud of her and everything she's done this year.

Q. I just want to ask, what has the preparation process for tomorrow's game been like?

SARAH ASHLEE BARKER: Yeah, so I mean, obviously focused on Green Bay. That's the team we'll play tomorrow. They're a great team, so the past week and a half we have been able to first off work on some Alabama things we needed to do, which is working on our transition defense, rebounding, and taking care of the ball.

So cleaning up some things offensively.

Obviously the past couple days we've been doing some scout with Green Bay and understanding that they're really, really good team. They've won 22 games straight, so you've got to respect that and know they're experienced and they have older guys and they been playing together for so long.

They play the right way. They play hard. You know they're going to come in and play as hard as they can. They post people up. So been working on kind of being able to guard those actions and really just focusing on the little things of what wins games.

Q. ... three point record a few weeks ago. Did that take some of the pressure off you?

AALIYAH NYE: I try not to think about those things. I just go out there and play. I'm just grateful and blessed that I have coaches and teammates that get me the ball to be able to make history or break records like that.

So, yeah, I try not to focus on those things though. Just focus on winning.

Q. You guys, after every win, get ice cream. You guys been here for a long time. You're almost my age now.

AALIYAH NYE: Oh, my gosh. I'm not that old.

Q. What has been your favorite place to get ice cream and favorite flavors?

SARAH ASHLEE BARKER: Andy's custard or ice cream. I think everybody on our team would agree to that. That's the best place. Really, really good.

AALIYAH NYE: Yeah.

KRISTY CURRY: I usually get the -- all I know is it has chocolate and brownie and cookie dough in it. I'm a chocolate girl. I love anything chocolate.

AALIYAH NYE: Yeah, I like Andy's. Normally if we go to a different ice cream place I like to get sherbet ice cream, but Andy's doesn't have that, so I get vanilla with strawberries and carmel mixed together. I like fruity things, so, yeah.

SARAH ASHLEE BARKER: Thanks, Nick, for your perfect question.

Q. Just want to piggyback off that. What would you say a Final Four of ice cream flavors would be for you to go with the March Madness theme?

AALIYAH NYE: I'm going to have to go with the rainbow sorbet.

SARAH ASHLEE BARKER: Okay. Chocolate for sure is in the Final Four.

AALIYAH NYE: McDonald's ice cream cone. (Laughter.)

SARAH ASHLEE BARKER: I'm going to say Chik-fil-A's ice cream cone. That's where it's at.

AALIYAH NYE: Someone is going to have to make a decision.

SARAH ASHLEE BARKER: I would say --

AALIYAH NYE: That's already four.

SARAH ASHLEE BARKER: Yeah, so perfect.

Q. Your players spoke about their team motto is grit, love, and gratitude. I think I caught that right.

KRISTY CURRY: Yes, that's something every day in our program we talk about those three. Those are the foundations of our culture and what we're about.

When we talk about grit we want to be the hardest worker in the room. That's the community, the classroom, and the court. Grit is the separator.

Love, we want to love the front of our chest, respect love each other. We don't want to judge. We want to make

sure we do everything we can to give back to a community that gives a lot to us.

And you know, gratitude, just thankful for the opportunity to be at a place like the University of Alabama and to play a game we have been blessed with a talent to coach and play with.

So those three are our foundations of what we are about as a program. I think that's a lot of reason where we are and how we've been consistent being in the NCAA tournament.

Q. Coach, looking back to the first round last year in the NCAA tournament, that was such a good game for Essence Cody. How have you seen her game take a step forward? How important is she tomorrow?

KRISTY CURRY: I think she's going to always be. Your inside presence in SEC is always so important. To see her elevate her game, game, I think it all started with her conditioning. She's in the best condition and has really done a great job with her pace. That's much improved from a year ago. Time and effort she's put in the gym.

Pauline Love, our assistant has done a really great job with her. Her versatility we've worked hard on. Learning how to be a stretch five, stretch four. Excited about her future on the perimeter as much as inside out.

She's really grown her game.

Q. Coach, one thing you mentioned the other day is that you guys and Green Bay had a similar opponent in Norfolk State. Ironically they're there with you in Maryland. When you have a common opponent, is there anything you take from that or are you just focusing on the later games that Green Bay has played?

KRISTY CURRY: I mean, you're watching so much film. I watched that game. It was in Puerto Rico. It was a great game. It went down to the wire. Norfolk has some great wins in the SEC, at Missouri, at Auburn. It was a great game for us. Larry does a phenomenal job.

So two similar systems and style of play with the pace they both like to play, so it was a lot of fun to watch that game because it does -- you know, I think you have to watch Green Bay against a lot of different type of opponents and we've done that. I know we've watched double digit games. Recent.

Obviously they're a little different than earlier in the year, but their system and style of play is similar to Norfolk in

that they love to minimize possessions. We're going to have to do a really good job. I think it's good for our kids to see that we have played a common opponent.

Q. Just to change the topic a little bit, given the proposed House settlement and the NCAA what those payouts and also the rollback of guidance that Title IX should be -- I'm sorry, that NIL should be subject to Title IX. What level of concern do you have about how this might impact female athletes and sports at universities?

KRISTY CURRY: You know, honestly, just we have just -- I've been focused on our season. I'll see snippets but 99% of my time is put every day on how I can put this team in a position to be successful.

I think we all have to wait and see how it's going to play out. I feel good about the support of our administration at Alabama. I know we will be on the cutting edge and have the highest level of support moving forward. Most of my energy and time has been spent on my team.

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