

# NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - Norfolk State vs Maryland

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College Park, Maryland, USA

XFINITY Center

## Maryland Terrapins Coach Brenda Frese Sarah Te-Biasu Kaylene Smikle

Media Conference

Maryland - 82, Norfolk State - 69

THE MODERATOR: We're joined now by Maryland head coach Brenda Frese, along with student-athletes Sarah Te-Biasu and Kaylene Smikle. Coach, opening remarks.

BRENDA FRESE: Tremendous win, especially the second half. We knew Norfolk State was going to come out and be fearless. They had won 19 straight and hadn't lost a game. We knew Diamond Johnson is a really, really good player. She showed that throughout the entire game.

Anticipated the press early. I just thought we came out really tight. You saw that in the first half. We had to work through those jitters on both ends of the floor, stop turning the basketball over, which helped us in the second half.

I thought at halftime we were able to reset, take a deep breath, and allow a lot of these kids, first time on the big stage, to settle in.

And I thought our defense controlled things. We were able to get more shots. And I thought Sarah carried us for a while, then we were able to get KK and Shy involved.

That's what we have to have from our guard play if we're going to continue to move through this tournament. Our guards have to show up, and we've got to -- we're fortunate, we found a way to win. But we're going to have to play a much better game come Monday.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Kaylene and/or Sarah.

**Q. Sarah, can you share a little bit of what your**



mindset was going into that second half? I saw after you got done shooting, kind of took a breath for a second and then came out and knocked down those two threes right away. So how did you want to approach that second half?

SARAH TE-BIASU: I would say I was just confident. I saw at the half, I hit one, and I was like, okay, shoot the next one. I was just confident. And my teammates were like, keep shooting, keep shooting, we need you to shoot.

That gave me confidence, and I kept shooting. Yeah.

**Q. Johnson had 16 in the first half, you held her to 2 in the second half. Was there a defensive adjustment you made that was effective or just were able to play better defense?**

KAYLENE SMIKLE: I think we were able to play better defense. I think we were letting them do what they wanted to do in the first half, and I think we came out in the second half, we dictated what they were doing. So I felt like that had a big part.

**Q. Sarah, was there a moment this year where you kind of felt a mind shift, like a shift in your mindset or in your game?**

SARAH TE-BIASU: I would say probably like the Oregon game. That game I felt like I was confident. And I was confident, and it just kind of clicked. And sometimes you just got to make adjustments. I came to Big Ten, it's different. But my teammate was there to give me confidence and then also the coaches. Coach Brenda believed in me, and I was just like okay. Just adjust and just play basketball.

**Q. Looked like you guys came out in the second half with so much more juice than the first half. How much do you attribute that to resetting, schematics, or anything that was said in particular that helped reset you guys at the half?**

KAYLENE SMIKLE: I think one thing we focused on was calming down. I think we started the first half, and a lot of



our shots were rushed or we weren't moving. We just weren't playing our basketball.

So I felt like coming out, we know what they were going to come out in, so we adjusted and just played freely.

**Q. Can you just describe the game. Obviously it's typical NCAA Tournament game, lots of physicality, lots of talking back and forth, just two teams just battling. Can you describe playing in this type of game.**

KAYLENE SMIKLE: I know every possession mattered. We had to come out and play 40 minutes hard. We started off slow, but we ticked it up. And I feel like we did much better in the second half, and I think we played more together. We were more aggressive, and I think that had a big part in it.

**Q. Kaylene, when you were subbing back in late in the first, Coach Frese came over, said something to you. What did she say to you, and what has it meant to you to play under her?**

KAYLENE SMIKLE: She told me to play my game. This first half I was a little nervous. This is my first March game. I feel like that's normal. She told me to play my game, play free and just do what I do.

Playing under her means a lot. She pushes me every day, instills confidence in me, and wants to see me better. And I feel like having a head coach who wants you better and who's able to help me get to the next level is just -- I'm blessed.

**Q. KK, was there a moment where you did kind of calm down and kind of start to feel it, where you could kind of be a little bit more aggressive? At what point did you kind of feel that like, all right, you're back to the way that you were playing, that you usually play?**

KAYLENE SMIKLE: I think start of the second half. The first half I was playing tight, and I was rushing a little, not taking the best shots. And I think after I relaxed and calmed down, it just flowed.

THE MODERATOR: I'll let Kaylene and Sarah get going, and congratulations on a great win.

KAYLENE SMIKLE: Thank you.

SARAH TE-BIASU: Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for head Coach Brenda Frese.

**Q. When Norfolk was coming back in the 4th quarter, they cut the lead to four points, you called time out. What was your message in the huddle?**

BRENDA FRESE: Just, again, trying to settle us down with just great poise and confidence. Just understanding that we wanted great shot selection there. And then we needed to do a better job guarding. So just the one-on-one defense, being more aggressive.

**Q. Coach, this Norfolk State team has a reputation for being a crafty defensive team. They have an intense motor. Anytime they see the ball, they're swarming. What were the challenges that they presented to your team, and what were the adjustments that you felt like your team needed to make to give yourself a chance to win?**

BRENDA FRESE: Yeah, I mean, they're all winners. You can tell the experience that they have with a roster like that. They weren't going to be afraid of the moment. We knew that. They've played in the NCAA Tournament. They played with a chip on their shoulder.

I thought they had the pace going where they needed it in the first half, a game in the 30s and keeping it low scoring. So I thought we had to really make an adjustment in the second half to be able to pick up our pace. Especially defensively, once we were able to get going, that led to a lot great things on the offensive end.

Like you saw, they're a tough out. That's really well-coached team, a team that plays really, really hard and gave us a lot of problems.

**Q. You were kind of talking a little bit about making some of those adjustments, and I'm wondering if you can expound on that a little bit. 30 points in that third quarter, had 30 in the entire first half. Is that shots just falling? Or did you do something to kind of create better looks?**

BRENDA FRESE: Well, we stopped turning the basketball over. So that was helpful. I think we only had two or three turnovers in that second half. So when we get shots at the basket, some pretty good things happen for us.

So, again, we just kind of stressed, one, just the reset we needed at halftime, the pace that we needed to pick up on both ends of the floor.

And I'd love to say it was some elite-level play calling, which we were able to get some good things out of the zone when we went back to back with Sarah's threes, and

then we got KK going. Again, our guard play has to -- in the tournament, everyone has to show up in order for you to be successful.

**Q. Maybe a simple question, but you talked about how tight you guys played in that first half. How comforting is it as a coach to watch those two combine for eight threes, to shoot the lights out the way they did and tilt the game in that way?**

BRENDA FRESE: Yeah, really comforting. They put a lot of time in. And they should have that kind of confidence because they put the work in.

And I thought the two of them, the inside presence we had with Allie Kubek, I thought that was one of her better games. She gave us a great presence all night. I thought she was really confident and really strong. And you need to kind of have that inside-outside presence within your team.

**Q. As Kaylene was saying and as you were saying, first time for some players. Were you kind of expecting some tightness at the start?**

BRENDA FRESE: I was in the first quarter. I didn't think it would lead to the second. So took a little longer than what I anticipated. But it took a full 20 minutes and the halftime to be able to reset. So I'm hopeful as we move forward we can get back to playing the way we're used to playing.

**Q. I wonder what this might say about women's basketball and the parity you're seeing now. You saw two 12 and 13 seeds play very good basketball. What are your thoughts on that?**

BRENDA FRESE: Yeah, I've watched it over the course of the last four to five years. Your first round games used to be -- you knew more than likely would be easy wins. And that's not the case. Like you're talking about, the parity of the game, the transfer portal has changed things where different players can impact, as well as players that stay in the program like Norfolk State that stay with each other and give you all the -- you go down the list of grad seniors and seniors that have experienced rosters, power four players within it.

So this is how it is. Every round you go is going to be extremely difficult, and you've got to come out and play the right way.

**Q. What's been Sarah's biggest growth moment or area this year for your program? And how did you see that reflected out on the floor this afternoon?**

BRENDA FRESE: Gosh. Where do I begin? I think everywhere. When you first talk about like off -- you know, her running the team and knowing what we want and she understands the system, then when we needed her offense. And that's taken off. She's an elite-level scorer.

And then she's become, quite honestly, like one of our best defenders. She's really -- coming from VCU, when she first got her, she wasn't that. I mean, she's taken great pride on both ends of the floor.

And you see when we have to take her off the floor, it's very impactful. We're missing a massive piece. So both ends of the floor she's been huge.

**Q. You have one day prep for Alabama now. I know you got to watch them earlier. Do you have any preliminary thoughts on what's going to be key to that game?**

BRENDA FRESE: A really, really strong SEC opponent. Another roster that has nothing but grad seniors and seniors that are experienced and can shoot the three, they're tough, there's a lot of size, both with their four guards that they play with as well as the inside presence that they have.

So it's definitely going to take a more connected effort on both ends of the floor.

THE MODERATOR: Coach Frese, congrats on the win.

BRENDA FRESE: Thank you.

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