

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - Colorado vs Illinois

Saturday, March 21, 2026

Nashville, Tennessee, USA

Memorial Gymnasium

Illinois Fighting Illini

Coach Shauna Green

Berry Wallace

Cearah Parchment

Media Conference

Illinois 66, Colorado 57

SHAUNA GREEN: Just really proud of how we came out. There were some times they went and made a couple runs there, a few runs actually, but I always thought we came back and got that key stop, got that key rebound, or made that key basket.

They're a really good team. They present a lot of different problems with their length and how they guard, so we knew it was probably going to be a lower scoring game.

I said to these guys the biggest thing was the rebounding coming into this, the battle of the boards. We were right there. We only lost by two, and I thought if you were right there or won it you would have a chance to win this game.

That held true, so I thought that was one of the biggest factors.

So, again, resiliency down the stretch. We've been in a lot of close games where this group has had to make those key plays. I thought that kind of came through today, that our league prepared us for a lot of those tight ones and close ones against really tough teams.

Q. Cearah, just I know you were looking forward to this NCAA tournament debut, but to have the success that you did tonight, how cool was it to have the moment live up to the hype for you?

CEARAH PARCHMENT: Yeah, it was really cool. I think tonight was just one of those nights where everything was going in, especially in the first half. So it was nice to kind



of just get used to it, especially after not playing for a couple weeks.

So I'm looking forward to playing on Monday.

Q. For both of you, did you ask Destiny to share any of the rebounds with you after the game? What is it like playing with a point guard who rebounds like that?

BERRY WALLACE: I was actually thinking that during the game. I know she -- I looked up and saw she had a double double which is really exciting. I think both of them do a great job. They always do rebounding.

It's great for us especially when a point guard is rebounding. It can start our break much easier and quicker and she is obviously very quick, so I think she does a great job with that, just pushing our pace.

She did a good job handling their pressure as well. As a freshmen point guard that's really hard. They were pressuring her all night full court, so I think she did a great job.

Just to see her taking care of the ball and also rebounding and scoring was really big for us.

Q. Just for either player, coach referenced it, but those moments being in the close games, how much did that prepare you for the situation?

CEARAH PARCHMENT: Yeah, we've had a lot of close games this season, and some of them we may not have closed out earlier in the season. That experience helped us now. We didn't make these mistakes we were making a month ago.

So I think we did a really good job taking care of the ball down the stretch and making plays and executing well.

Q. With such a young roster, how do you establish such a sense of leadership with so many freshmen and sophomore leaders on this team?

BERRY WALLACE: I think we all just have a really big like



competitive spirit and everyone wants to win. At the end of the day if you want to win and you use your effort, you know, I think you're going to come out with big wins.

I think that's what we did today and I think everyone steps up in different ways and leads in different ways. Some people by example or talking. I think being so young everyone is figuring out how they lead, and I think we've just done a good job over the year like coming together in different ways.

Q. Just for either of the players, Destiny Jackson to have 11 of her 16 points if the fourth quarter, what allows her to have -- be so big in such clutch moments for your team?

CEARAH PARCHMENT: Yeah, I think she just has such great composure. She just really reliable. She got fouled and she -- I think she knocked down every single free throw. So I think that's something we can rely on her for. She is really consistent.

Q. Just thinking about Jasmine, she took two shots but felt like her impact on the game was tremendous. What's it like playing with her? I know I asked you both this recently. After a game like tonight where she really gutted it out, what do you think about that teammate of yours?

BERRY WALLACE: I think she's huge. I mean, she's one of our most impactful leaders on the team and she's always talking to us, and it makes a difference when she's not on the court with us practice.

She guarded No. 3 who is obviously a great player and is taking a lot of shots. For her to go out there and even she got hurt a little bit and then she went out and came right back in, I think we all felt her as soon as she came back in.

She just shut her down. She does whatever she has to do to get a stop on defense. Defense fuels our team, so I think she is huge for us and she was really impactful today.

Q. Cearah, feels like the accolades just keep coming. I don't know if you knew if you were close to the freshmen scoring record, but you got it.

CEARAH PARCHMENT: Oh.

Q. What does it mean to you to do it on this stage?

CEARAH PARCHMENT: That's really cool. I didn't know that. Yeah, I mean, it's even cooler that I guess it was the first round of March Madness, my first game in March Madness. So that's actually really cool. I didn't know that.

(Smiling.)

Q. That face mask really brings out your eyes. Does it affect your play at all? Do you notice it on the court?

BERRY WALLACE: Thank you. I think over time I've just gotten more and more used to it. It doesn't really bother me anymore. I don't really mind it. I feel like at first it was obviously an adjustment, but now I think it's cool.

SHAUNA GREEN: Now she has it on in media. Can't get her to take it off.

BERRY WALLACE: Yeah. (Smiling.)

Q. For your team to be as patient as you had to be offensively knowing how this game was maybe going to go, just what does that say about your young group and how they're able to handle those situations?

SHAUNA GREEN: Yeah, I mean, again, just with how they really much it up, you know, defensively so they make things really, really hard, but just someone always made a play. That's why I thought we've done a great job of that last couple weeks in season and kind of the Michigan State game, too. Going back to that where we just made plays on both ends of the floor.

That kind of resembled tonight's game. Obviously everyone had their moment and that's the one nice thing about it. I've said all year about this team, okay, you're going to try to take away Berry or C or -- and now Destiny comes in and makes just big time plays.

So then we got the stops, so you got to string possessions together on both ends. We were able to do that in that fourth quarter and final few minutes.

Q. A lot of skin screeching on the floor tonight. What did you think about the competitive stamina of your team?

SHAUNA GREEN: That's what you got to do if you want to win in March, right? It's the NCAA tournament. You lose, you go home. I tell them that all the time. I say that all the time. How tough are you going to be? How bad do you want it? Every 50/50 has to be yours if you're going to continue to move on.

I loved it. That's what I want this program to be about is tough, gritty, blue collar, hard nosed, whatever you want to call it. I told them that in pregame, that ball is on the floor, we better see five white jerseys diving. I thought we showed a lot of toughness tonight.

Couple of those jump balls where we just never gave up. More people kept diving in and we got that. And then obviously Jas, you know, the toughness she showed tonight with playing through ankle sprain, that's what you want. You want those type of competitors on your team. You want that toughness on your team. You have that, you got a chance.

Q. Coach, Colorado guards in the first half were getting into the paint, to the rim a lot. Felt like that dried up a little bit in the second half. What was the difference there?

SHAUNA GREEN: We practiced a week of working on helping in, mucking it up, keeping out of the paint. You know, that's one of our core values defensively.

The first quarter, that's probably one thing with young team, just like just not really applying our game plan. Gave up 20 pins or 18 points in the first quarter; then in the second quarter we held them to 11. They had 20 paint points at the half but only four in the second quarter. So we started executing what we wanted to do.

And even down the stretch Wooten is going to shoot it, so we switched some, we hedged some -- we don't normally do that -- just trying to get the ball out of her hands and just trying to make someone else beat us besides Wooten or Masogayo.

And I thought down the stretch we were able to execute a game plan a little bit better of just trying to really take away that paint.

Q. Obviously we've talked about how young this team is.

SHAUNA GREEN: Uh-huh.

Q. For you as a coach, what excites you about having this young team of girls that you're able to train and teach almost from the ground up as they begin college? What were you excited about for the season or just in general?

SHAUNA GREEN: Yeah, I mean, this group, it's so night and day from last year. I said we had 23 year olds and super veteran, and now we have 18, 19 year olds.

But it's fun. Like they're just so competitive. I've said this all year: They're so coachable. I can coach them. I can coach them hard because they want to be elite. They want it.

And they're just -- they continue to improve. It's just fun as

a coach. That's why we do it, to be able to see them grow in real time. There has been moments multiple games where you literally see them get stuff and figure some stuff out in real time game situations.

So they've been great. I think they played well beyond their years. We're the youngest team in the NCAA tournament. We were the youngest team in the in the Big10 all year. At first I was like, we're not going talk about youth, like whatever.

Then I'm like, well, we are what we are. So then I'm like whatever. Let's use it as more fuel. So now it's just about keeping this group together and that's something that we pride ourself in our program is the culture and the relationships and retention.

So if we can keep this group together, you know, big picture it's going to be really fun to see what we can do. But right now we're worried about Monday.

Q. Shauna, big picture kind of question. We're about through this first round and 23 mid-major teams in this tournament for the first time since the women's tournament expanded in '94 to 64 teams. No mid-majors make it to the second round.

SHAUNA GREEN: Wow.

Q. Might it be an impact of NIL? Maybe talent floating up? No one can pull off a victory -- the closest was Colorado State lost by three to Michigan State.

SHAUNA GREEN: Yeah.

Q. I know it's a little bit of a fast ball after a game, but --

SHAUNA GREEN: No.

Q. Any rhyme or reason?

SHAUNA GREEN: I think there is probably a lot. This one hits home for me because obviously I was at Dayton in a mid-major where it was hard. Your season comes down to are you going to win that three-day tournament, then do you get an at-large.

We won the regular season how many times at Dayton and you're sweating it out. A10 this year got a few teams in.

So I think there are a lot of things that go into that, but really if you look across the board I think it's -- you can't really say NIL or any of that stuff because it hasn't -- how many times really in the past have mid-major teams won

those, right?

I mean, we made an Elite 8 when I was at Dayton as an assistant in 2015. I don't know if that will ever happen again really, right? Will a mid-major ever get to that -- get that far? I don't know, especially now in the women's game.

It's hard. You got to beat someone on their home court. That year we were a seven seed. Beat Iowa State and had to beat Kentucky on their home floor to get to the Sweet 16.

So I just think as long as you have those -- I think if neutral sites like the men have, I think you would maybe see a little bit more. But I know you're talking even the round of 32, so I'm all about getting mid-majors in.

I think it's good for the game. We got to get some of them to win some of those games, too. So, yeah, that one, good question because that one, obviously spent a lot of time at Dayton as an assistant and head coach, and those are the battles we faced every single day.

Scheduling is a whole 'nother topic on that. Who will play you, right? That's a big topic on the men's side right now.

Q. I was just thinking back to the game at Iowa and you're playing a two seed on Monday night on their home floor. How can you draw from that experience to help your team on Monday night?

SHAUNA GREEN: You know, it's funny. I think I probably said this to you guys in media at some point. After that Iowa game I told our team, in the NCAA tournament we're going to have to beat someone in an environment like this in order to get to the Sweet 16.

And what better way to prepare you than one of the best places and toughest places to play in the country is at Carvery.

As you guys know we had multiple chances to win that game. So the nice thing about the Big10 is you have been in really hostile environments on the road, and the next step in our program and our evolution in a program is to host, right? But right now it is, you got to go and you got to beat that.

Hopefully I'm going to talk about the Iowa game, reference that again. I'm going to give them my story about us at Dayton and how the seven -- and I looked up. There is only six seven seeds I think -- you can check that -- that have ever made the Sweet 16 or the elite 8, because we made the Elite 8 that year.

So it's hard. It's really, really hard. Vanderbilt is really, really good. We forgot mention that.

Q. Coach, Vanderbilt has some very highly skilled offensive players specifically obviously Blakes. How does the preparation process look like tomorrow for your team?

SHAUNA GREEN: Yeah, I got -- I'll dive into that tonight. It's late. I mean, shoot, it's almost -- it's late so we're going to be up all night watching film on Vandy. Obviously Blakes is Blakes. She's elite. We're going to have our hands full. They can really score it. They're a really good team. I've watched them some but I'll be defensive in tonight and-one day prep.

Not ideal, right but it's the NCAA tournament. We'll figure it out and we'll be ready to go. Put a game plan together.

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