

# NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Four - Washington vs Columbia

Wednesday, March 19, 2025

Chapel Hill, Maryland, USA

Carmichael Arena

**Columbia Lions**

**Peri Page**

**Kitty Henderson**

**Cecelia Collins**

Media Conference

THE MODERATOR: Today, joining us from Columbia, we have Cecelia Collins, Kitty Henderson, and Peri Page.

Is there anyone in the room who would like to ask a question?

**Q. (No microphone).**

KITTY HENDERSON: We know much more what to expect. I think we're much more ready this year. We know, like, what everything is about. We know what it takes. So I think just like bringing that to our team and making sure that we're not, like, too excited. I think last year, we were just so excited about it. But this year, we're much more locked in. We're ready to go. We're very grateful to be here. But, like I said, ready to go.

CECELIA COLLINS: Like Kitty said, we're ready to go. It's great to have our first year under our belt playing in this tournament. There are so many good teams. Yeah, I think we're ready to go.

PERRI PAGE: Yeah, absolutely. It's a business trip. Like Kitty said, we've been here before. Last year, we were just kind of happy to be here. Now we know what we need to do in order to execute and adjust, in order to survive and advance.

**Q. Hi, everybody. Couple things for you. Meg mentioned on Sunday that you guys gathered your teammates to rewatch the Harvard loss. Just curious what you were hoping to get out of it when you decided to do that and what your takeaways were that you can apply going forward?**



CECELIA COLLINS: I think we all acknowledge that it wasn't close to our best. We definitely all had to take ownership for things that we could do better. But at the same time, we needed to reset, turn the page, especially going into postseason. You know, all of these teams in the tournament are going to be very, very good.

So, yeah, obviously learn from those mistakes that we learned in that game. At the same time, move forward and prepare for Washington.

THE MODERATOR: Do either of you want to address it?

PERRI PAGE: She kind of hit it on the head there. The best thing is you can learn from your mistakes in the Harvard game. We need to accept it, acknowledge it, and move on. This is a new season. We're ready to attack it.

**Q. You guys have talked about the strength of your nonconference schedule several times this season. Just curious, as you look back now on that tough schedule, are there any games in particular where you kind of think back and you're like, wow, I'm really glad we had that experience and that's going to help us a lot here?**

KITTY HENDERSON: I wouldn't say, like, a specific game. I think, honestly, everything just adds up to where you come. I feel like everything that you experienced throughout the season, like, makes you grow and all the adversity you go through really gets you where you are. I think we're just grateful for every experience we've had this season so far because it really has gotten us to where we are and why we feel so ready right now.

Like you said, our nonconference was a great schedule, and I think that really helped us be prepared for both our conference season but also this new season in the postseason.

**Q. What do you learn in the quick turnaround about Washington, and what it's going to take to advance to the next round?**

CECELIA COLLINS: Like you said, we've been preparing a lot these last two days. They're a very good team. Like I said before, anyone who makes this tournament is a very good team. They shoot the 3-ball well. They move the ball. They're skilled at every position.

We just want to make sure we're honing in on our game plan and making sure we execute that tomorrow. That starts in practice today and, obviously, moving forward these next 24 hours.

KITTY HENDERSON: We have, by far, the best coaching staff in the country. They're going to get us prepared for any game. So I think we're the more prepared team going into this game.

**Q. First, I want to direct to Kitty. Washington's a really good shooting team, especially from 3. As the leader of one of the country's top defenses, what is the key to neutralizing a strong 3-point shooting team like the Huskies?**

KITTY HENDERSON: I think you said it well. It's knowing their tendencies. When they're closing out, you know they want to shoot it. It's an adjustment we've got to make. We've been practicing for the last two days and will continue to do that today. I think knowing that is a big advantage in making them shoot the shots they don't want to shoot.

**Q. Cece and Perri, Kitty alluded to having the best coaching staff in the country, but you have one of the strongest fan bases in the country. Do you expect them to be traveling well to Chapel Hill? And talk about how you've been a unifying force for the campus.**

CECELIA COLLINS: Yes, we do. We expect a lot of people to have our back here in Chapel Hill. The community has just been amazing all season, and I know a ton of us have family coming. But even alums, you know, of our team, alums of the program in general, they're traveling out, and we're super grateful for that.

We want to make sure we get this win under our belt. Like we said, got to have a good day of preparation today. We're super grateful for this community and how they've had our back this season.

PERRI PAGE: Piggybacking on that, Kitty and I have a huge fan base coming. The alums and donors who have helped pave the way make this possible for us. It's good to give back, and we can't thank our community enough for being here.

**Q. Obviously, a record three Ivy teams in the tournament this year, two playing in these First Four games. Do you guys feel any additional pressure to represent the conference, to show that the three bids were merited with two teams playing in the First Four?**

CECELIA COLLINS: I don't think there's additional pressure. I think we're all super grateful that our league is getting so much recognition. I think it's just time that we show what we're made of. Obviously, we got the at-large bid last year. Now with three teams in the tournament, we want to prove ourselves. We're a Mid-Major league, but that doesn't mean anything to us. We can compete with these Power 5 teams. At this point, it's just showing that.

**Q. Thank you, Cece. Quick follow-up. When people are going to get to watch Columbia basketball for the first time, a lot of people nationally, what do you want them to take away? I know edge is the brand, but what do you want people to see and take away as what Columbia basketball is?**

KITTY HENDERSON: I think that our culture is what I want them to take away. Watching us should be like watching a force that just like plays together the entire time and, like, any adversity that hits, it doesn't matter. We still look the same team. We're consistent throughout. I'd love them to be able to see what a winning culture can do.

PERRI PAGE: So things like the connectedness piece, the way we share the ball, the way we celebrate each other. Like Kitty said, our culture bleeds into Columbia basketball, and it's amazing to watch.

**Q. Last year was such a crazy turnaround for you guys, maybe a bit more unexpected to get the bid in the end. Now having the extra day and being a bit more calm going into it, how is that helping your preparations?**

KITTY HENDERSON: I think it's helped hugely. Like you said, last year was definitely much more unexpected. I think this year we were confident in our work coming in that we would get a bid. And now, like, we've been able to keep our emotions much more consistent and be prepared for what's going on. We feel much more confident going into this game.

Like I said, last year was a roller coaster. I think this year we knew we were going to get in so I think that's more consistent and we're able to just focus on the job ahead and get it done.

**Q. I wanted to ask you guys about the potential board, how that tracker just helps you guys throughout the**

**season. I see some smiles and laughter. I'm curious about how that's helped you this season kind of track you, and where are you guys at right now?**

CECELIA COLLINS: Yeah, I mean, the potential board has been, like, a huge thing for us. We actually did it last year at the end of the year as well. But this year, we've kind of done it once every week just to kind of, like, track our progress and how much we've grown throughout the season. I think it's been a great marker for us to see, like, it's not always about wins and losses but how are you responding to certain things. How are you responding to adversity in practice, not just games.

So I think we're at, like, 83 right now. 83 percent of 100. So we've talked a lot about, like, getting that last 17 percent, and that's the hardest to get, obviously. We're in postseason, all these teams are very skilled, very good. So we've been working every single day to attain that, but still more work to do.

**Q. The NCAA Tournament schedule, one day between games if you guys advance, how has the uniqueness of the Ivy League schedule and playing in the Bahamas three straight days helped do you prepare for this week?**

KITTY HENDERSON: I think, like I said before, the Bahamas was a really good experience for us for sure because that was three back-to-back games. Obviously, in the Ivy League tournament, we see also in the regular season the back-to-back. So I definitely think we're prepared for this. Having that game in between -- I mean, sorry, the day in between is great. I think our schedule, everything that leads up to this prepares us really well so we just have to trust the work that we've put in.

**Q. Quick question on Selection Sunday. Can you take me through what the scout was for the couch? It looked like some of you guys had a little bit of a hard time getting out of there celebrating. Take me through the whole night, the whole selection show.**

CECELIA COLLINS: As far as the couch, I didn't have any trouble getting up, but these two definitely did.

PERRI PAGE: Susie was right next to me. I'm glad it wasn't just me who couldn't get off the couch. I was also thinking to myself, there's no way I'm getting off this couch right now. The rug was also slipping. So, like, it happens.

KITTY HENDERSON: Susie did not read the scout. She was struggling, pulling other people down with her. But it was a funny thing to watch back for sure. It was just a great night. Like we said, we were more confident going

into that night than last year so our emotions weren't as on edge. Yeah, it was a great night.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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