

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

Wednesday, March 19, 2025

Chapel Hill, Maryland, USA

Carmichael Arena

## Columbia Lions

## Megan Griffith

### Media Conference



It's exciting because they're approaching it as we not only get another chance, but we deserve the right to be here and we can win games. This team has greater goals, and I know we'll have players ready to step up.

**Q. How is Mia Broom feeling about this against her home state school, and how do you prepare the first years for the stuff your upperclassmen know from last year?**

MEGAN GRIFFITH: Mia was so excited, and that was no shocker. We could have played anybody and she'd have been excited. I think there's definitely a little bit of pride for her in this because she wasn't recruited by a school like Washington, honestly.

So Mia is just such an underdog mentality person. I love that about her. She's a go-getter. She's really elevated in the last couple weeks her basketball play, her IQ. I'm excited for her to get the first chance to play in front of her parents here tomorrow.

For the rest of our team, we're a young team. We have four upperclassmen, eight underclassmen. To have this experience in your first and second year and now to have a team of players that all they know is March Madness, all they know is postseason and winning championships in the Ivy League, it's important to get these moments and make the most of them.

Even just like walking into the locker room today, our players were, like, we've been here. They knew what to expect. It was exciting, of course, and we're super grateful. But I just think there's an overwhelming sense of confidence in our preparation right now. That's the thing that's going to carry us forward and what I want our young players to remember most.

**Q. Coach, two evenly matched teams. What do you see as an advantage for Columbia?**

MEGAN GRIFFITH: Physicality and playing inside-out and fast. Playing fast. This is a team, Washington, I have a lot of respect for Tina Langle. We've known each other for a

THE MODERATOR: We're here with Columbia Coach Megan Griffith.

**Q. Coach, second time here. Same question that I asked Kitty and Cece. Second time going through, talk about thoughts, feelings, experience with this not being the first time.**

MEGAN GRIFFITH: One, I want say thank you to the Carolina staff for hosting us. It does feel very familiar. That's what I love about. Going into the selection show post-Saturday, just knew what to expect. Felt very confident and having another night of sleeping in your own bed really helped us. It helped us reset, helped us move forward. Honestly, I woke up this morning and I was ready to play, so that tells you something.

I think there's an overall calmness right now amongst our staff and our players because we've been here. So looking forward to tomorrow.

**Q. Meg, I've got two questions for you. First of all, you've talked about how your team got better despite losing Abby throughout the season because you have so many different weapons on this year's team. How important or how much of an advantage do you think that is in this setting specifically, where Washington has to prepare for that many weapons on short notice?**

MEGAN GRIFFITH: Major advantage, not having one person you have to key in on. It's March. We'll see people step up into different roles like we did last year for this First Four game against Vanderbilt. I think, honestly, Abby's presence, that shows what a four-year player can do in a program. She was able to show everybody what it took to get here. Now you have Kitty Henderson leading that charge, Cecelia Collins and even Perri Page as a junior captain.



while. I know she respects me too and what we do and how we work. I don't think we'll be catching this team by surprise. They also have a Yale graduate student on their team right now. So we've got some history there.

I also have recruited a lot of the players that are there. I know that team really well. Two super skilled teams that I think Washington is more methodical, surgical in how they attack you. For us, we want to speed them up, especially on our offensive end. I think that's an area of the game that we can really lean into.

And then our guards are really physical. That's a major difference between the two teams. We can all really shoot it, we can all pass, but we're going to try to lean into the physicality.

**Q. When I look at the past year's schedule, I'm drawn to Richmond as a little bit of an analogous team. If you see it that way also, but what did you learn from that game or maybe it was Indiana or Duke that's going to help for tomorrow night?**

MEGAN GRIFFITH: All three, Rob. Honestly, one, I think Indiana, having played them in a close game as well, being a Big Ten opponent, Indiana is in the tournament as well, right. So that was a really helpful early game for us to know what it felt like to play against a Big Ten team.

Richmond definitely earned their at-large. Super talented. They can score at all five positions. The thing that's different between Richmond and Washington is they have a 5 that can shoot. This is a team that will play their 5 more as a passer and facilitator and an athlete that can rebound.

Coming down to play Duke at Duke, the basketball that exists between Tobacco Road and here, between these two programs, I think we've had this experience already. This is not new. Getting off the airport and seeing -- now we're in UNC land and seeing "Duke sucks" shirts, I saw that this morning. I was laughing. Same thing when we were at Duke. This is basketball country, and I'm excited that we get to represent the great university of Columbia down here and show everybody what we can do.

**Q. A lot of attention, understandably, to your players, to you. Could you talk about your staff and how they've helped build this program from the ground up?**

MEGAN GRIFFITH: Absolutely. I have a phenomenal group of people that, one, have been super loyal but also just totally bought in to everything that we've been preaching, teaching from day one.

I'll start, my associate head coach, Tyler Cordell. We've been working together for 13 years now. Super rare in this business. Our athletic director took a chance on me when I was 30 years old. She's been with me since day one. Super grateful for Peter for that. I've been able to retain her and elevate her.

Then to have two other really strong females in Allie Bassetti and Cy Lippold that are great role models but do it the same way. By being an Ivy league alum, who I've known since she was high school. Allie has been in New York City. I have respect for her knowledge of her game and the way she coaches and teaches.

I love working with these women. Honestly, I'm really grateful because they elevate me every day. That's what this business is about is winning with people, and that's something I know I'm really confident I've won with this staff.

**Q. Coach, two quick ones from me. One is back in the tournament, but again as a First Four team with another Ivy as a First Four team. Any additional pressure to show that the Ivy deserves these spots?**

MEGAN GRIFFITH: No pressure, honestly. I think it's funny. I was on a text thread with Carrie and Carla, the other two head coaches in the Ivy Leagues. I said I was grateful for them being great competitors and coaches in our league. Thank you for elevating. As an alum, how proud I am.

We all deserve to be here. They're two great coaches. I'm very confident in myself and my coaching staff's ability. But no pressure. I think we're just ready to show everybody what we can do. It's great that tonight Princeton gets to play. We have tomorrow, and Harvard is obviously this weekend. We're all just really focused on the task at hand now.

**Q. Thank you, Coach. As we look at a 3-bid Ivy, as we look at the impact four-year players can have and we see a transfer student from Yale playing for Washington and we see Chen playing for UConn, is it time for Ivy to revisit their grad players rules?**

MEGAN GRIFFITH: No, I think the integrity of the league and what it's about, that's a decision for the presidents who are going to make those decisions. Honestly, I'm just focused on us trying to do what we do with our four-year players and it's something that I know has been a hallmark of Ivy athletics.

So, again, that's something I don't have any comments on. But, you know, I think our presidents will be able to make

those decisions with our athletic directors.

**Q. My first question, just what does the next 30 hours of preparation look like for you guys? Is it rewatching film and getting prepared but also taking time to just relax and enjoy the moment?**

MEGAN GRIFFITH: It's definitely a balance. For our team, we're good when we're loose, and right now they're prepared. I think our staff's done a great job. We have our practice segment on Carmichael floor which is going to be important for us to lock in, going to get shots up with some of our seniors later today.

Just get back into our routine. This is what we'd do on a normal week and we're going to approach it. That's the thing about the Ivy League, we do have some back-to-back weekend so I feel confident we know how to turn this around and be ready for the second game.

The day before is really just about being in your zone and making sure you feel confident. You know what the game plan is, and at the same time we're not obsessing on anything too much. So really important we get a good night's sleep. Got a 7 p.m. tip tomorrow. Make sure that we go through the motions and do our visualization tomorrow as well.

**Q. My follow-up, this is not Columbia related, but Stephanie Gaitley is the head coach at Farleigh Dickinson. She said she recruited you when she was at LIU. What would you say about her impact on women's college basketball? She's been at it for a long time, especially in the New York, New Jersey area.**

MEGAN GRIFFITH: Yeah. Stephanie Gaitley is absolutely a mentor of mine. She -- so Stephanie Gaitley, so context, I'm from outside Philadelphia. When I knew her, she was at St. Joseph's coaching. Between her coaching her job, she coached my AAU team for a month. It was one of the best experiences I had as a basketball player because she pushed me. She believed in me. I was the first player she offered a scholarship to when she took the job at LIU. I didn't have any scholarship or Division I offers at the time.

Talk about somebody the power of believing in something. That's what she does. She wins everywhere she goes. I have tremendous respect for Stephanie Gaitley. I still text her often. I text her sister often. That's family to me. I'm proud of her and excited for her she got to show everybody what she can do at Farleigh Dickinson.

**Q. Coach, I know I asked you this Sunday. Could you talk about the fan base and how everyone's going to be there to support you tomorrow night?**

MEGAN GRIFFITH: That's something I'm so proud of, maybe. One of the most important parts of being at Columbia and being back home is building the community we have and just grateful that these fans feel like they've done this with us. I think that when you get people to travel and you get people to be in it with you, I think you can accomplish great things because that's what college athletics is about. That's the power of college athletics.

On our campus, Columbia University, being a unifying force on campus is special and an honor that we don't take lightly. I'm glad they can share the experience with us and we can do this thing together. I know they'll be here tomorrow in force. Looking forward to that.

THE MODERATOR: Coach Griffith, good luck.

MEGAN GRIFFITH: Thanks so much.

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