

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

Friday, March 20, 2026

Chapel Hill, North Carolina, USA

Carmichael Arena

**Murray State Racers**

**Rechelle Turner**

**Halli Poock**

**Haven Ford**

Media Conference



took them on pretty good for the first three quarters obviously. What were you all doing to be able to score on them like that?

HALLI POOCK: Obviously they're a really well coached team, a really good team. We knew that their height was going to be a problem for us going into the game. Obviously with any P4 school that's going to be a problem. I think we knew we were kind of expecting it. They rebounded very, very well, and that's where they hurt us.

HAVEN FORD: I think offensively we just had to take what they were giving us, don't back down from the size. I know there was a few times we drove in there and let their size alter our shots and stuff like that.

Again, that's what the Big Ten is about. We knew coming in they were going to be big and physical and stuff like that. It's just coming in and adjusting to that. When you adjust, you've got to keep it consistently throughout the whole game. Kudos to them for making it hard, but we just had to find a way to adjust to it.

**Q. This is for Halli. One of the biggest, most physical teams you've come up against this season. What went to being able to get downhill for you for 27 points?**

HALLI POOCK: We knew they were a big team coming in. Trying to get to the free-throw line especially was a focus for me. We had some good ghost actions that we knew they'd struggle with a little bit. So we were coming off those. Some of their bigs stepped up, and I kind of attacked them a little bit.

Really proud of this group. We had an unbelievable year. I'm disappointed it had to end like this, but we have a lot to be proud of.

**Q. For both of you, second straight year you guys have been in the NCAA Tournament. Obviously two really impressive squads you guys had to play. How did the preparation change this year from last year?**

HALLI POOCK: I think the preparation was a lot the same. I think this year there was a difference because we had

Maryland - 99, Murray State - 67

THE MODERATOR: We have with us here on stage head coach Rechelle Turner, student-athletes Halli Poock and Haven Ford.

RECHELLE TURNER: Just want to start off by saying how much respect we have for Maryland. Man, they were relentless on the glass. I thought our first stop defense was pretty good, but it's hard to defend 33 second chance points, 24 offensive rebounds. It's a credit to them because they obviously saw where they could attack us and they did.

Such a well-coached team, such a storied program. We have a ton of respect for them.

But I can't say enough about our team, 31-4, Warriors. From day one throughout this season, playing through injuries, playing through the grind of what it takes to be successful. These two young women next to me is where it starts.

Just thankful and blessed. God truly has blessed our program this year. I just want to thank Dr. Patterson and our athletic director Nico Yantko for the investment they've made in women's basketball. It's allowed us to get to this point, and it's going to help us continue to get back.

Just very thankful and grateful for everybody at Murray State, especially the young women beside me and in the locker room for giving me everything they had all year.

**Q. I know their size was tough, but it looked like y'all**



just been here last year. So there was less nerves, I think, especially like personally I just felt a lot more comfortable, not so tight. I think confidence of the team was a lot higher. We knew a little bit more what to expect.

I think the preparation didn't change, but we've been here before.

HAVEN FORD: As she said, it was about confidence and knowing that some of us, this was another opportunity to kind of go make a name for ourselves. Even though we fell short, I felt like we competed as best as we could. We just played hard and just sitting back down. We've been fighting all season. That was our motto going into each huddle, to keep playing, keep fighting, keep trying to chip away. You can't win them all.

I feel like we fought well. Again, it was just coming in here, enjoying the experience, understanding that this is a dream for all of us. Just knowing the opportunity that we had and just trying to enjoy that and keep playing like we have been.

**Q. You ended up outscoring them in the third quarter and made a run to cut the lead down towards the end. Kind of what went well in that time frame specifically?**

HAVEN FORD: Just kind of finding the flow. I felt like we got a few stops there and started hitting shots. We went in trying to stop them as much as we can, but with the offensive rebounds kind of kept us -- like it made it hard for us to get a run like we wanted to.

I feel like in that third quarter we started scoring more and our energy started picking up and stuff like that and just trying to chip away. We left the third quarter with confidence. Again, it was just an up-and-down game, but the fact that we just kept fighting and kept fighting is what it was about.

HALLI POOCK: In the third quarter obviously went on a run. We got some key stops that allowed us to go into transition, like Haven said. I think we got a little confidence in the third quarter and went on a run. They kept preaching don't give up and keep playing hard.

**Q. When Keslyn hit that shot at the end of the third quarter, did you think maybe y'all had a chance to get a snowball going and maybe catch them?**

RECHELLE TURNER: I thought the way we played the entire third quarter gave us a chance. When she made that shot, and we were able to cut it to 14, we've been in worse predicaments like that. Not against a powerful team like Maryland, but I just think it just showed the fight in this

team and that they don't quit. We bend but we don't break.

Their relentlessness on the glass was something we couldn't overcome. Their size was going to be an issue going into it, but as hard as they went after the glass, it felt like there was ten of them we were trying to block out.

Credit to them for being that relentless. I would love a rebounding team like that. We're going to work on that for us for next year. Again, holding them to 8 points in the third quarter and us scoring 26 was pretty special. It's just something we've got to learn from and take from them and continue to grow this program.

**Q. Coach, back-to-back NCAA Tournament appearances. What's the biggest thing you've learned from these two appearances? First time in school history that's been done.**

RECHELLE TURNER: We've got to get better. We've got great players, but we've got to get more. We've got a little size, maybe a little athleticism. We are pumped about our freshman class that's coming in. We'll see what else we can bring in because we've got a great nucleus.

If we can get them all back and keep them together, I feel good about our chances. We obviously need to get some depth. That's something that as a staff we've got to focus in on and help our kids not to have to play 39, 40 minutes a game.

**Q. The word all season that you guys have stuck with has been grit. Was that on display tonight?**

RECHELLE TURNER: Yeah, it's grind, but grit. Grit and grind. I felt like that it was. It's something that -- they punched us in the mouth pretty hard a couple times, but we kept standing back up, and we kept fighting. That's what it's about.

A special group of young women in that locker room. They represent the name on the front of their jersey exceptionally on and off the court. They're amazing student-athletes. I'm just proud of where this program is and where this program can go, but it starts with great people, and I've got great people in my locker room with jerseys on, and I've got an amazing staff. We've got great support from our administration that wants our women's basketball team to succeed, and they are behind us every step of the way.

**Q. You had to be happy today when you looked out and saw how much blue and gold was in the stands as compared to what Maryland had. Tell me what it means to you to have Racer Nation fan support with a**



**ten-plus hour drive to get here.**

RECHELLE TURNER: That's a great question. Racer Nation is second to none in their support of Murray State athletics as a whole, but they've really gotten behind our team this year. Our attendance has grown every single game.

When we went to Iowa for the Missouri Valley Tournament, we had a great fan base. Then the people that made the drive here today, it just shows our kids that they see them and they believe in them and that they are appreciated.

As a coach, I just can't say enough about racer nation and how much we appreciate their support.

**Q. The lone senior on this team, Briley Pena, just a little bit on her. What has she meant to this program?**

RECHELLE TURNER: She will be irreplaceable. The young lady has come so far. She won't mind me saying her freshman year was rough on and off the floor the first semester, and we had to get things right.

She comes from a single parent home, and her dad is amazing. Through the grace of God and everybody coming together to get that young lady on the right path, she is one of the main reasons that we've been successful the last two years.

She came in, and she started as a sophomore. We asked her as a junior to come off the bench. She never wavered. Then she was a star in her role again this year.

Those are the glue pieces, and those are the type of people that you need in your locker room to be successful. Not everybody can score the most points. Not everybody can get the most rebounds, not everybody can be Player of the Year, not everybody can be All Conference. It takes every single one of our young women to be successful.

If there's a better star in their role in the nation, I'd like to see it because she's definitely been our star in her role all year.

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