

Big Ten Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Thursday, March 6, 2025

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Gainbridge Fieldhouse

Michigan Wolverines

Kim Barnes Arico

Olivia Olson

Syla Swords

Postgame Press Conference



Michigan - 66, Washington - 58

THE MODERATOR: Welcome Michigan to the press conference. Here with us is head coach Kim Barnes Arico, Olivia Olson, and Syla Swords.

At this time we'll ask Coach to make an opening statement.

KIM BARNES ARICO: That was a great basketball game. Washington is a team that has been kind of on fire lately. I think they won five in a row coming into this game. They shoot the ball exceptionally well. They play a chin offense, which makes you have to move and never relax on the defensive end.

So for our kids to come out and be successful and lock in and defend and hold them to 58 points, I thought we did an amazing, outstanding job.

Obviously we have Olivia Olson and Syla Swords here, two of the best freshmen in the country, really stepped up on this big stage in their first Big Ten Tournament, and they were both outstanding.

Obviously Liv was bucket after bucket when we needed them, and Syla was locking up on the defensive end on every possession and then scored some big buckets when we needed them as well. A great balanced attack by us, but these two are really special.

Q. How much was taking away the three-point shot an emphasis tonight, and what do you think made you guys so effective in doing that?

KIM BARNES ARICO: That was a big point of emphasis for us. Oh, they're first? I'm sorry.

SYLA SWORDS: Even watching yesterday, they're a 3-point shooting team, 24-0, they're known for their three-point shot, some of the best shooters in the league right now. So we knew, if we locked into that 3-point line, it was going to be a little easier for us to be successful.

OLIVIA OLSON: We knew we had to scramble on their actions. We worked on their actions a lot, so just working on communication and getting over those screens.

Q. You guys were a lot better offensively in that second half. What do you think changed for you guys? Was it something Kim told you at halftime, or did you feel you guys were just executing your stuff better?

OLIVIA OLSON: I think we just try and let the game come to us and do whatever the team needs to win, so just taking the right shots, getting people open, playing defense. Just kind of letting the game come to us, I think, and doing whatever the team needs.

SYLA SWORDS: Coach kept saying the shots are going to come. We're getting good looks. They're going to drop. I know Liv and I try to find each other's eyes. Then if we're having a tough shooting night, instilling confidence in each other. That's something we've grown with a lot, even with having a young group, is having confidence even though we're not hitting great shots right off that bat and staying true to for a 40-minute game.

Q. Olivia, you had 21 points tonight, 15 of which being in the second half. How are you feeling, and what do you think allowed you to catch fire in the second half of the game?

OLIVIA OLSON: I think just seeing a couple go in helped, but it's a credit to my teammates, and playing with Syla, it's easy to be able to get people open, get shots. Anyone can go off on any given night. Yeah, it was just a whole team effort.

Q. For both of you, this is your first Big Ten Tournament as freshmen with a young group. What



has the past few days been like for you guys coming into this environment?

SYLA SWORDS: The practices have been very scout heavy but also focusing on locking in on what we struggled with throughout the year. Lots of film session, especially now that we're in the hotel with nowhere to go, so lots of hours of film. And just locking on what we are as a team and what Michigan basketball is.

Q. It took you guys a little while to get going in the second quarter. What eventually broke you out of that and then helped the offense just function on high level the rest of the game?

OLIVIA OLSON: I think our defensive intensity and having Brooke come in and be that spark. We say it every game, but she is a game changer for us. She helps us lift energy. So that translates to the offensive end.

SYLA SWORDS: Yulia also played really great minutes for us, plus 12 in, what, less than ten minutes of play. That's really huge for us. She's a big presence. The more she can be active off the ball, the more she can be active defensively, it really helps us.

Q. After you guys were a little bit slow offensively in that first half, what did you tell your team at halftime to give them a spark in the second?

KIM BARNES ARICO: I think the first time we played them as well, when we were able to get out in transition, when we were able to change the pace of the game, that opened things up for us a lot. We talked a lot about pace, advancing the ball, trying to get paint touches, and filling behind.

We missed a bunch of shots early. That second quarter felt like we didn't score for six minutes, because we didn't score for six minutes. But we finished that quarter strong, and I just thought we really pushed pace off of their misses in the third quarter, which caused us to get some easier buckets.

Q. Coach, as your players talked about, Brooke coming off the bench, four of your players playing 34, 35 minutes apiece. Brooke, the spark she gave your team today?

KIM BARNES ARICO: She's been unbelievable for us all season long. She's just an energy giver. She changes the defense. She changes the momentum. She just gives us fire.

She affects the game on the defensive, the toughness, the

rebounding.

That's what we pride our program on. So when she comes in the game, it's just an immediate lift, and she's been sensational. Tonight was another example of that.

Q. On taking away the 3-point shooting, in the first half, you didn't just limit their makes, you really limited their looks. They only had six. What do you think was working so well, and how active were you guys, how much of that was an emphasis?

KIM BARNES ARICO: I think what was really important in this game is they didn't force us into scrambles. What they try to do is they try to get you to help, and that's why 14 had such a big night. They force you to help on her, and they kick it out for extra pass, extra pass and unfortunately the scrambles.

We worked really hard on one-one-one defense to not be forced on scrambles and to let their post player play one-on-one so we took away the three.

It was a gamble, but that's what drives them. That's what gets them going offensively. So we really stuck to that game plan.

Q. You mentioned Brooke just being a spark today, like she has all season. When you put her in the game in that second quarter, was there a specific player you were hoping she would shut down? What was kind of inside the spark?

KIM BARNES ARICO: The first time we played, Sylva did a tremendous job on Ladine, and Sylva did a great job on her this time. The first time we played them Sellers had 27 or 30. So we were really concerned about her. Mila is another freshman that has that role and also the role of handling the pressure and being our point guard and all the other things that are on her plate.

I think sometimes, when we bring Brooke in and we can move Mila off that defensive assignment, it gives Mila a little bit of a rest and a little bit of a break and not have to defend the other team's best player as well as handle pressure and be our point guard.

So Brooke had that assignment on Sellers, and she was awesome.

Q. What was it like, the change this year, playing in a league with so many elite teams, but yet also teams that were fighting just to be able to get in this tournament, so you knew that you were going to get somebody's best effort regardless of where they were



in the standings because they wanted so badly maybe to be able to get here?

KIM BARNES ARICO: And to get to the NCAA Tournament. That's a great question, and I'm glad you asked about the league.

Prior to this year, I thought we were arguably the best league in the country. I know all the time with the media we hear about the SEC and the ACC and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. But we have some incredible, incredible teams in our league and incredible players in our league and incredible coaches.

Then you add the new teams, and obviously the level just took another step up. The middle of our pack this season was insane. So everyone that's here in the middle of the pack is fighting. They're fighting for an NCAA Tournament bid. They're fighting for what seed they're going to be because we kind of beat the heck out of each other all season long.

I think for us we did a tremendous job, our players did a tremendous job of winning a lot of those games in the middle of the pack and put ourselves in a great position to be where we are today. But there have been projections of possibly 13 teams in our league going to the NCAA Tournament. That's absolutely incredible.

So every given night, every single night, you are going to face a great team, and it's going to be a battle, and we've seen that all season long.

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THE MODERATOR: Coach, welcome back. Let's start off with an opening statement from you, and we'll open it up for questions for Dalayah Daniels and Elle Ladine. Coach Tina Langley, if you would go ahead and make an opening statement, that would be great.

TINA LANGLEY: First of all, just really proud of our team. We've obviously finished the season in the regular season and coming into the tournament very strong. I thought we've been really connected, working really hard in practices and extra work and film. So proud of the work they have put in.

I thought we had a great game today. I thought there was a battle on the floor. There's obviously some things we could have done better, but Michigan is a great team, and they were able to pull out the win, but very proud of this team.

Q. Michigan held you guys to six three-point looks in the first half. What was so effective in their defense, and how did you guys approach that?

DALAYAH DANIELS: I think Michigan's a good team. I think they scouted us well. I feel like their switching made it hard, I think, to get the threes off that we normally do get.

Usually in saggy defenses, we're able to capitalize on that, but they were definitely applying more aggressive pressure, so it was hard to get shots off like normal.

Q. Michigan was a lot better offensively in that second half. What do you think changed in that first half, whether it was something they were doing on the

offensive end or something you guys were doing on defense?

TINA LANGLEY: Michigan obviously went in at halftime, and they did a nice job adjusting, made some good set calls, I thought, and we struggled with some two-man actions. So just had some miscommunications.

I thought the offensive end of the floor, when we struggled a little bit, we let the transition D get us. So they came out running off of our decisions on offense.

Q. You were in this game to win it today. What went well for you today? It looked like from the box score everything went well for you today.

TINA LANGLEY: Thank you for asking that. I thought there were some great moments. We did have such a battle. I appreciate you saying that.

Again, just really proud of them. It was a quick turnaround and scout, they stayed up late, got up early, and tried to prepare. I thought we did a good job with that.

After timeouts, baseline on out of bounds, those were some things that got us. In the end, I think that, when we needed to execute, we were able to execute on the offensive end of the floor, understand the pressure and the denial reads, and that's what was really hard. They're a physical team that gets up and denies and switches aggressively. So you've got to go to your second set of reads. I thought once we got comfortable with that, we made good reads.

On the defensive end of the floor, I think when we just communicated well in their screening actions, we were a lot more effective.

Q. Michigan's Olivia Olson had 21 points tonight. What was the defensive game plan going to guard her, or what made her hard to guard?

DALAYAH DANIELS: I think we always pride ourselves just not putting each other on islands. I think just being good gaps but bringing the aggression first. We know that



they're a very physical team, so we just wanted to show them that we're physical too.

At the end of the day, I think we could have done a better job of keeping her out of the paint, but you've just got to learn from that.

Q. Yesterday we talked about turnovers, and we talked about how well you shot the ball. Today is kind of like reversed.

TINA LANGLEY: It is.

Q. Talk a little bit about that and then that 13-0 run in the third quarter when you guys cut it down to like three points.

TINA LANGLEY: We knew Michigan was -- obviously we played them earlier in the season. We had a different lineup at the time. Because of being able to have four guards on the floor, I thought it helps us spread the floor out a little bit.

I had a feeling we would need to drive it and make driving decisions, so we made some decisions that were difficult to start the game, turned it over a little bit. I thought we settled in and understood that the actions can give us a good read. I think that was part of our run.

When we saw the ball go through the basket, I think that also helped our defense a little bit, which we hope that doesn't happen, but continue to improve in that area.

Q. Just your thoughts and opinions on Washington in the Big Ten Conference?

TINA LANGLEY: It's such an honor to be in this conference. The competitiveness is unreal, and it's fun. If you love to play at the highest level basketball-wise, you want to be in the Big Ten, and every night is a battle.

I think Washington, obviously they put us in a great position to have success at Washington, so we've been able to recruit some incredible young ladies. Everything is built around our young women. Our young women are special. I'm so proud of the culture of their locker room. They're so accountable and thoughtful. They're honestly a really, really kind group.

So the way they approached even this game as we sat in the locker room, and everyone is saying, I need to have done this, I needed to do this. That's when we were really able to take a rise this year is accountability in the locker room and the work ethic. Really proud of them.

Q. Michigan's Coach Kim Barnes Arico mentioned that isolating No. 14, Dalayah Daniels, putting her in one-on-one scenarios really helped them in guarding the three. Is that something you noticed during the game? How did you attack that as it went on?

TINA LANGLEY: You're asking if them putting Dalayah in a one-on-one situation helped them with the three?

Q. Just how you saw that impact your offense.

TINA LANGLEY: No, it usually helps us a lot. Dalayah was pretty efficient tonight. She was 10 for 13 from the floor, so one-on-one I thought went well for her.

Did it impact the 3-point shooting? I think some of the things that they did from the way they physically deny and try to blow up things definitely hurt us from the 3-point line.

Q. Michigan subbed in Brooke Quarles Daniels halfway through the second quarter when they were in that drought that you put them in defensively. It seemed like she provided a defensive spark for them. Did you see her defense impact the game particularly around the 3-point line?

TINA LANGLEY: Yeah, she does a great job. I also thought her four O-boards hurt us. That's probably what hurt us the most.

Usually when she comes in the game, sometimes you'll provide some heavy help, and that gives her a chance to get O-boards. On the defensive end of the floor, I think she does a great job, defends well.

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