

Big Ten Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Friday, March 7, 2025

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Gainbridge Fieldhouse

Michigan Wolverines

Kim Barnes Arico

Olivia Olson

Syla Swords

Jordan Hobbs

Postgame Press Conference

Michigan - 98, Maryland - 71

THE MODERATOR: We welcome Michigan to the dais. Coach Kim Barnes Arico, Olivia Olson, Syla Swords, and Jordan Hobbs.

KIM BARNES ARICO: I thought our team played exceptionally well today. The first half was a tale of two quarters. We came out of the gates, really defended, and we were able to get the ball in transition. Then the second quarter, Maryland did a great job of scoring on us, and it kind of flipped.

So at halftime, we just talked about getting back to defending and trying to push the pace. Mila Holloway is such a great point guard for us. She was in foul trouble, so that kind of took us a minute to adjust without having her out there. But Syla picked up that role for her and really started to push the pace again in the third quarter.

We just shared the basketball, and we made shots, and then we were able to get stops on the defensive end.

So it was just a great game for us. We're happy to be moving forward.

Q. Jordan, last time you played Maryland a couple weeks ago, you don't get to the foul line once. Today you're fouled more than any other player on the court. What changed about your focus playing Maryland today from a couple weeks ago?

JORDAN HOBBS: I think we just came in a lot more aggressive. I think we attacked the rebounding battle and



the defensive boards and that allowed us to push in transition. Ultimately our mindset was a lot more aggressive -- getting paint touches, getting downhill, and not settling.

Q. Was there something specifically defensively that you guys took from last game's film and how are you so effective on that end?

OLIVIA OLSON: I think we got beat a lot in transition last time we played them, so that was our emphasis going into the game is we need to communicate and know who our matchups are on the way down the court, and I think we did a way better job today.

SYLA SWORDS: Then we got outrebounded a lot in the last game, and Coach just pointed out we won the rebounding battle in this one, which is huge because we're undersized on a lot of teams we play. So that just shows people like Yulia coming in and Brooke coming in and getting big rebounds for us is huge.

Q. What worked so well offensively, because you guys were creating a lot of good looks? And just what was the feel as you guys were going on that 25-point run early in the game?

JORDAN HOBBS: I think it starts with getting stops. We pride ourselves this year a lot in transition offense, and the first game we weren't really able to do that because they kept getting second-chance points, kept getting rebounds, and kept getting fouled and getting sent to the free-throw line.

I thought we did a better job of not fouling and pushing the ball. I thought also reversing sides. We would get a paint touch and kick it back out and skip it. We got a lot of wide open 3s, and we were really able to convert on those today.

OLIVIA OLSON: We had 28 assists. That kind of just shows how unselfish our team is and how we want to get whoever's open the shot, and we hit a lot of shots today. So that was good too.



Q. You guys were a lot better against the press in the third quarter. What changes did you make at halftime to help adjust to the press?

SYLA SWORDS: I think we really just needed to take a breath. Nothing specific that was a change. It was just responding to their run and not letting that get into our motions too much and not let that get into each other too much.

So really just a breather for everyone to know that we can still break that press even though Mila Holloway wasn't in as much as she was. Everyone took that extra slack and was able to handle the ball.

Q. Some other teams have mentioned that it takes a day or a game to adjust to shooting in this arena. Is that something you guys have noticed, and how much easier was it today?

JORDAN HOBBS: I think we just got our feet under us yesterday. There's some nerves coming into the Big Ten Tournament, and everyone is so excited to play. Yesterday we went on, I don't even know, like a six-minute scoring drought in the first half.

Today we were able to come out of the gates a lot stronger. I do think it just helps to get a game under your belt and get some confidence and grow that confidence in the gym.

Q. Just overall you guys riding a lot of momentum right now, won some tough games against some tough teams. With such a tight turnaround, how are you able to turn that win from yesterday into one today?

SYLA SWORDS: That's what you need going into big games like teams that are the top in our conference. This conference, in my opinion, is the best in the country. So keeping that confidence.

That being said, we're young, so we're going to make mistakes. But it's really great to ride on what we've done so far, ride on the little streak that we've created for ourselves.

Again, looking back at the film and not getting too high or too low, but really just focusing on knowing that, if we do what we do, we can win a lot of games.

Q. Jordan, as one of the leaders on this team, what's your message to your teammates in that second quarter when things are going downhill and especially when they're causing chaos with the press?

JORDAN HOBBS: My message probably wasn't the best that it could have been. I was freaking out a little bit myself (laughter).

Going into halftime, though, they were like, all right, Jordan. We're good, chill. They honestly helped me, which was really special.

We came out in the third quarter, and I was just like, you know what, you're right. It's an even ballgame now at this point. We know how good we are. We know how we can beat them. We showed it in the first quarter. And they responded really well to the craziness of that second quarter.

Q. What did you guys do to kind of keep Sellers and Smikle from ever really finding their groove? I think they combined for 12, and those are their two leading scorers.

KIM BARNES ARICO: We both were fortunate this year to pick up some fouls on Smikle. I don't think she ever got into her rhythm. She was never really able to get going.

Part of the reason we were able to do that is we really talked about loading. She's super aggressive getting downhill. She's really tough to guard one-on-one getting downhill. So we just wanted to make sure we loaded to her and put multiple bodies protecting the paint when she was driving, and I thought we did a pretty good job of that.

Sellers really hurt us last time too. She's always one that takes over games late in games in the second half. I don't know, we tried to change different bodies on her. We tried to put some length on her. We just rotated different people to try to wear her out a little bit.

Q. You guys opened the game on a run, and then Maryland retaliated the next quarter with a run of their own. What do you tell your team to kind of help get the momentum back heading into the next quarter?

KIM BARNES ARICO: At halftime, we just said take a deep breath. We talk about this a lot, and we've talked about it a lot through the course of the season where we've had either big leads or where we've been down a bunch. The game is not over. The game is 40 minutes. The other team is a really good team. Maryland is a really good team. They're going to make a run.

We really talked about that at halftime, and as Jordan alluded to, like everyone was like, okay, take a deep breath. If we would have said at the beginning of the game that we're coming in here at halftime with a four-point lead, we would have thought we're in pretty good shape. So

let's not pay attention to what happened in the first quarter, what happened in the second quarter. We have a four-point lead heading back out. Let's defend and play Michigan basketball.

Q. This is the second time this season where you've lost to a team once, and then the second time you make adjustments and your team just grows from it. What does that say about your team's ability to grow, and what have you seen from them in terms of taking your feedback and changing?

KIM BARNES ARICO: I think that was actually, that's a great point, and that's something that we talked about heading into this game.

Michigan State, we lost a really tough one where we kind of crumbled in the second half. We had to play them again a week later.

We just talked about that heading into this game, how we have to bring toughness, we have to bring rebounding, we have to get into the fight, but we grow as a team. We think that we're in a position where we're still getting better every single day, and we're excited about that and our team's excited about that.

We felt we saw it happen at Michigan State. So I think that raised our level of confidence coming into today knowing, hey, we've already done this against State, like we're going to do it again tonight.

Q. One of those ways, it seemed like you guys improved from the first game against Maryland today was getting more open looks from three. What helped with that?

KIM BARNES ARICO: Our pace is just really, really, really good. I think, when you get stops, we could play at that pace. Maryland in the second quarter, we didn't get stops, so we didn't really get a chance to push, and they were able to press us because we didn't get stops.

Mila Holloway, I know we talk a lot about Syla Swords and Olivia Olson, and they are exceptional, they're game-changers for sure, but Mila Holloway is really special. She was out in the second quarter. When she's back in the game, our pace changes, and she can handle pressure really well.

We played, we ran, and we made shots. Obviously that certainly helped, but we have capable shooters, and I just think we had open, good shots. They weren't tough contested shots. That was really great.

Q. Obviously with you guys having such a young team, when Maryland starts pressing like they do in the second quarter and starts causing chaos, does it make it harder for you guys to adjust in the moment?

KIM BARNES ARICO: Yeah, and it did. You guys watched it. You were all there. We had our point guard out, and Maryland started pressing. We are really good at breaking the press. We worked on it a lot. We're very efficient on it all year long. You guys have watched us.

We got sped up. We got shaky, and Maryland made a heck of a comeback.

Once we settled, we handled it a lot better in the second half when Mila was in and when Mila was out. I think we can handle it better. We have a lot of good ball handlers. We have a lot of playmakers. So once we settled down, we were better.

Thankfully we had a whole second half. Kind of like Michigan State, we didn't have that much time. It happened in the fourth quarter. So we had time to compose ourselves and regroup, and we're growing as a team.

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Maryland Terrapins

Brenda Frese

Sarah Te-Biasu

Christina Dalce

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THE MODERATOR: Want to welcome Maryland to the press conference, Coach Brenda Frese, players Sarah Te-Biasu and Christina Dalce.

Coach, if you could make an opening statement.

BRENDA FRESE: Just disappointed we came out as flat as we did. Can't happen in March. I felt like we couldn't buy a bucket to start that first quarter, but I loved our response in the second quarter. I thought we got back to playing and being who we are, getting everyone involved and getting on the glass.

Credit Michigan. I thought they came out red hot. They were more aggressive. They're a really hard matchup because they play so hard, and every single one of their players can score.

Proud of the first half, that we stuck together, chose to fight. I thought Sarah did everything she could to bring us back, being the warrior that she is. Chris battled inside. I thought our bench was really, really good with Ava and Mir, got some great effort out of the bench tonight.

March is different. Everyone comes ready to play, and we've got to be able to look inside and be able to reevaluate after this game and be ready for the NCAA Tournament.

Q. Sarah, what was the challenge defensively today? It seemed like they were able to create a lot of good looks, a lot of good open looks, particularly in that first and third quarters.



SARAH TE-BIASU: Like them on defense?

Q. The challenge for you guys defensively because they were able to get a lot of good looks, they were able to create a lot of good looks offensively.

SARAH TE-BIASU: I would say I think we were a little bit sloppy on defense. We should have come back on defense when they were in transition. We should have come back and matched up, and they just capitalized on that. I would say they were really aggressive from the start.

Q. You guys seemed to get the energy level up in that second quarter, but it didn't quite translate across halftime. Coming out in the third quarter, what was the issue with trying to keep that momentum that you guys gained when you came back in that second quarter?

CHRISTINA DALCE: Honestly, I don't know. I feel like in the locker room we were 100 percent motivated, like we cut the lead down by a great amount in the second quarter to make it into a single-point deficit.

I guess when you have that momentum in the second quarter and it's still going and going and going, you can build off of that. Once we like settled, I think we got too comfortable in the third quarter, to start the third quarter. We thought, hey, like we got this.

I think we took our opponent for granted a little bit, I can't lie, but we tried what we could do. We tried our best at the end of the day. I think everybody on the floor gave exactly what they needed to give -- Mir, Sarah, Ava -- like Ava did a great job today.

Despite everything, I'd say our bench really showed up and showed out and did everything that they could, especially on the big stage. Even though this is the quarterfinals, every team in the Big Ten is really good. So the fact that they came in the second half and gave everything that they could, that's all you can ask for at the end of the day.

They tried their best. We tried our best. And we can only look up from here. We have one more.



Q. You just played Michigan a couple weeks ago. What did you see differently on the court playing against them today that you didn't see maybe a few weeks back?

SARAH TE-BIASU: I would say they came out ready, and I learned they had a little bit of edge because they played yesterday. They just came out with more energy. They just capitalized on everything. They were open, hitting shots. They were playing together.

I would say they just came with more energy.

CHRISTINA DALCE: I think they just had a lot more open looks to start off. I think transition-wise, that compared to the first time and second time, by the time we looked up getting ready for defense, they had three people already down, and all of them were shooters.

I think that their pace was different than ours. We just wasn't able to match it, and I ended up getting my first foul really early in the first quarter. I just felt like the energy was just -- after that, just kind of shifted defensively. I think just that.

Q. You guys mentioned playing against that pace. Can you talk really about how hard it is to play against a team that really pushed the pace and plays fast, especially in those third and fourth quarters?

CHRISTINA DALCE: Yeah, it's really tough. I think, even when me and Sarah ended up playing the most minutes -- I played 30, and she ended up playing a full 40 -- that a team that does nothing but run, even playing defense full court, like from the viewer's eye, it looks easy. "Oh, I can do it." It's not. It's really not. It is nonstop.

Even in shootaround, Coach Fratz was saying that as soon as you make an error, they're already down the floor. That's exactly what happened. Even though they had errors, but when we had errors, they really did capitalize. They pushed it. They sliced through our press, what we had.

It's just to try to keep that momentum even when things aren't going our way, that's really tough at that too. It's more -- it's not even a physical thing. I feel like this season we really have proof that we can really run up and down the floor and that we can keep up with our opponents, but I think it's also just a mental, there's a very big mental piece to it.

Q. Your press seemed really effective in that second quarter, especially it helped create a big run for you

guys. What was working well in the second quarter for your press? Then what did Michigan change to break it later on?

SARAH TE-BIASU: I think it's just mentality. We knew we were down, and we just wanted to create momentum and get some steals and try to come back in the game. I think we were really aggressive on defense and just trying to get back in as soon as we can.

CHRISTINA DALCE: I feel like not being able to play in the first quarter, sitting out like the whole quarter, that coming into the second quarter, I wanted to make sure to motivate the team.

Like, all right, I was out, and I know I'm a big source of energy for the team. So I tried my best to motivate the team. Even me being at the head, just starting it off, and everybody just playing off that, I think really pushed us through to cause those turnovers and to even score effectively in the second quarter. I feel like we kind of went a little soft on our press, like we were going full hard.

We had a mission in the second quarter to cut down the deficit, but I felt like we didn't really have that same mentality, just like what Sarah said, mentally that we were just trying to -- I think we were just tired, to be honest. Some of us was tired. There's only so much you can do. We have a couple injured players, key players too.

Like I said, we tried our best at the end of the day. We tried to do everything that we could, but they had fresh legs off the bench.

Q. Christina, you had mentioned that you think you might have taken your opponent for granted. What needs to happen over the next two weeks so that something like that doesn't happen in the NCAA Tournament?

CHRISTINA DALCE: I feel like we need to have the mentality of this is the last one. I feel like the mentality today was, oh, we still have one more, but it needs to be like this is really the last one until next year. So we have to make a statement. Us losing by 27 to a team that we beat in season is unacceptable.

Every team moving forward that we play against in March Madness is going to think they can compete with us. We have to have the mentality that nobody can compete with us and we have to elevate forward, and we have to play as if this was our very last game ever playing basketball.

Q. Two things. What did you think about your offense today? Seemed like you didn't get a whole lot out of



sets. There was a lot of when Sarah was taking over and doing her thing and some individual efforts, but it didn't seem like you created a lot when you were running the offense. Secondly, what was the struggle with Shyanne today? I don't know if the knee was bothering her, but even when she's not scoring, she usually affects the game in different ways, and it didn't seem to happen as we're used to today.

BRENDA FRESE: I thought offensively we were very stagnant. We didn't move for each other, very one-on-one. I think with good intentions, wanting to score the basketball, but that's not our best offense. I thought our pace at times was really slow.

Then just they did a great job of doubling down low in the post, which we knew was going to happen, collapsing any time you drove, which we knew there were going to be drives, to kicks, to being able to move. We just really got out of rhythm.

I guess what I would say with Shy, I think you saw the game. She had a tough night on both ends of the floor. Defensively had a lot of baskets that were scored on her, and the knee obviously, not being able to move as effectively. Then offensively I thought she got really frustrated. I thought after that last offensive intentional, she was losing her poise and her composure.

Just wanted to go with the energy, the defense, what we had. When you see a game like this and you see what they brought back in the second quarter, just trying to find our best lineup.

Q. One of your players just mentioned the mental aspect of running down the court as well as the physical. What do you tell your team when the other team's offense is flowing so well? What's the message to them in that moment?

BRENDA FRESE: Just staying the course. I think we showed that in the second quarter. I thought it took a lot of fight to be able to come back, but I think you saw the tougher team mentally and physically wear us out in the second half.

You see their big three, their freshmen. Michigan's freshmen are really, really good. They make you pay for any mistake, any fatigue play. They never got tired. So you've got to be more resilient.

Q. Despite the struggles, can you talk about some of the sparks you saw from that bench play throughout the second quarter run.

BRENDA FRESE: Yeah, I loved it. I thought that's who they've been here as of late. They've really been putting the work in and left everything out there. You can have no regretted when you know that you've come out and you've battled like that.

They were a big factor for us to be able to get us back in the game in the second quarter.

Q. What was behind the decision to go to the press in the second quarter, and how do you think they adjusted to that in the third?

BRENDA FRESE: The score, what was it? We were down and knew we had to figure out a way and be able to get our energy and effort back on the defensive end. Loved what it was able to spark and the pride, but, again, I think it took a lot out of us. I thought Michigan made some really good adjustments. They were able to settle in after halftime with great poise and confidence.

Out of break in the press in the third quarter, I thought they were able to get a lot of easy looks. When you give up 12 3s and the shooting percentages they had in this game, our defense clearly wasn't very good.

Q. What's your message at halftime having cut the deficit to just four, and what sort of went wrong on the defensive end in the second half?

BRENDA FRESE: We talked about that intensity that we needed to continue to have with our ball pressure and aggressiveness. We saw we were able to be able to speed them up. Then we were hoping on the offensive end we could get back to our pace and get playing for one another, but clearly Michigan was the better team in the second half.

Q. It seemed like today Michigan got a lot more open looks from three than last time you played them. Last time every shot, it seemed like, was contested. What made it more challenging to guard the 3-pointers today?

BRENDA FRESE: Rotations. I thought their spacing and their movement was really, really good. We gave up five in that first quarter. Then I thought we were really good in that second quarter and we only gave up one there right before halftime.

Then the other six after the second half got away, when we started pressing again. I thought they did a much better job of breaking that to be able to get easier looks. So all areas we've got to be able to go back and fix.

Q. 21 turnovers, I do believe, a lot of them kind of popped up in that first quarter. Did you feel like those were kind of unforced errors, or were they doing something to kind of create those?

BRENDA FRESE: No, everything we expected. I think we were just surprised -- the double in the post, doubling off the bounce. Those were all things we were aware and knew that they did, but we didn't handle it well.

Again, I don't know if the big stage for a lot of these guys for the first time impacted that, but I know we can learn and get better out of it.

Q. Just played against Michigan a few weeks ago. Could you talk about kind of the job Kim Barnes Arico is doing with three freshmen, being able to turn around like that after a couple weeks and kind of play a completely different game?

BRENDA FRESE: Yeah, Kim's done an incredible job with her team and with those freshmen and especially as we've talked in our off-season, just to watch this team grow -- again, that's a sign of a great team.

We knew, like we had off of Ohio State coming into our game, the last game, we knew they were going to be a prideful team and be ready to be motivated against us. I think that's the disappointing thing to be able to hear that we took them lightly because we were prepared. We knew what kind of fearless freshmen and what kind of team.

Credit to Kim and her staff. Phenomenal job to be able to have her team ready to play against us.

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