

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - Grand Canyon vs Baylor

Thursday, March 20, 2025

Waco, Texas, USA

Foster Pavilion

Baylor Bears

Bella Fontleroy

Aaronette Vonleh

Media Conference



and be able to stay at home. I got to go to my 8:00 a.m. this morning, which was nice.

Just knowing that we're here, we're going to have our family in Foster. We're going to have people that are here to support us. It's really an awesome opportunity.

Q. For the both of you, the team learning to play without Buggs and winning without her and now having her back, what has that been like?

AARONETTE VONLEH: I feel like the biggest thing we learned or already knew is that we need to rebound because Buggs is very elite at that. I think on the flip side we also learned that we have people that can contribute and step up if somebody goes down. I mean, I'm grateful that she's finally back and able to make our job a little bit easier.

Q. Do you feel like you're playing some of your best basketball right now, specifically against Grand Canyon? Do you feel like you can maybe continue that dominance?

AARONETTE VONLEH: Yeah, I feel like the tournament was definitely a confidence boost for me. Just grateful for the way I was able to play. I hope I can keep building off that for Grand Canyon. They aren't the tallest, but they are very scrappy, and they're very aggressive. I hope I can just keep that momentum going.

Q. Bella, what have you seen from Grand Canyon?

BELLA FONTLEROY: They are a really, really scrappy and just defensive-minded team. They have a lot of people who can score in different ways. They have one really, really elite shooter, and they run a lot of actions for her so just knowing where she is at all times, getting our matchups in transition.

They have a couple of guards who are good coming off the ball screen when they get to their spots and hit pull-up jumpers, but at the end of the day we just have to come out and play our basketball. We have to utilize our size advantage and our pace and just play Baylor basketball,

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. First time with Baylor. What's the experience like for you and particularly being able to play at home?

AARONETTE VONLEH: Yeah, I think this is probably the first time that I've hosted with the team, so it's really just new to me kind of. It's just been great that we've put ourselves in the position at this time of the year to be able to host. We're definitely going to take advantage of that and just having the home court advantage.

Q. Bella, you have been in the NCAA Tournament every year you have been here. What are the motivations this year and are they different this year now that you are hosting?

BELLA FONTLEROY: I don't think the motivation is any different. I think each year that I've been able to be a part of this program we've had the same want to be successful in March, but I feel like at least for me personally this year my understanding of what Coach Nicki expects and wants and what this team expects from me is something that I really understand. I understand my role very well, but I think we're all very much ready to put our best foot forward.

Q. Bella, when we talked with Buggs, she said when you came as freshmen, you told Coach Collen that you wanted to host. Now you have that opportunity? What is that like, and how has this week been for you?

BELLA FONTLEROY: It's been really cool so far just to see all of the March Madness stuff everywhere. It is literally everywhere. I mean, our locker room is different than what it looked like previously. Just knowing that we put ourselves in the position to be one of the top 16 teams



and we should be all right.

Q. Bella, you all have used different line-ups because of being out. You had two post line-ups. You played some four. Nicki has always said you're more comfortable at the four, but have you gotten comfortable at playing all the different spots that you get to play?

BELLA FONTLEROY: Yeah, I haven't really had a choice. I think at the end of the day as long as I'm doing my job defensively, wherever I am on offense, things are going to come, whether that's for me offensive rebounding or getting tip-outs to my teammates. I know whenever I'm in my spots, my teammates are going to find me. Whenever Coach Nicki puts me in action, I'll be able to create for myself.

The most important job that I bring to our team is defense.

Q. Bella, over the course of your career, Baylor has had some good winning streaks, even this year in February. Grand Canyon has won a lot of games in a row. What does that do for a confidence of the team? They're going play free because they're winning a lot of games? Does that make any sense?

BELLA FONTLEROY: Yeah, it absolutely makes sense. It's March. It's a clean slate, so even though they've been on a win streak, they won their conference tournament. At the same time this is a new season, and this being their first time being in the NCAA Tournament, this is different. Anything can happen in March.

You just have to be prepared. We also, like you said, went undefeated in February, but just knowing that you can go on those stretches and execute what your coach wants you to do is really important in building that confidence and that synergy on the court.

They've felt it. We have felt it. We're going to bring our best to March.

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