



**2015 NCAA  
WOMEN'S  
CHAMPIONSHIP**

**DIVISION I  
BASKETBALL**

First Round · Ohio vs. Arizona State  
Wells Fargo Arena · Tempe, Arizona  
Saturday, March 21

**FRIDAY PRESS CONFERENCE QUOTES – Ohio**

**COACH BOLDEN:** This is an opportunity that kids dream of from the first time you pick up a basketball, just to be here and play in this tournament. We're just very excited about that opportunity and looking forward to the challenge ahead.

**Q. For either player, what have you guys learned about ASU and how are you game planning around them?**

**KIYANNA BLACK:** We know they're a physical team. They like to get out and pressure the ball. I think our game plan is just to stick to our principles and take care of the ball.

**MARIAH BYARD:** I would agree with KB. I think that we've really been working on taking care of the ball, which is what we've been working on all year. So I think that'll be key for us in tomorrow's game.

**Q. You have a time differential. This is the first time you've had it this season. Has that affected you at all, and do you have that going against you? You also have to play at a home court. They've got the Curtain of Distraction, if you've heard of that, during your free throws, stuff like that going on. How is this different than playing like in Cleveland last weekend?**

**KIYANNA BLACK:** Personally the time difference hasn't affected me. I mean, we just did the same thing we would do in Ohio, going about our day, eat, sleep, practice. I wouldn't say it has affected me personally, but I don't know about the team.

I have heard about the Curtain of Distraction. I've seen it on SportsCenter. I think I'll just stick to my principles shooting free throws, just do what I do.

**MARIAH BYARD:** And once again, I agree. I think that, first, with the Curtain of Distraction, I've seen that on SportsCenter, as well. But I'll just stick to my routine and shoot my free throws the way I normally do. The time difference for me, we got out here Thursday morning, so I've already got back on track and am ready to go.

**Q. Can you talk about how good you guys are at shooting the three-pointer and how difficult that is for a match-up for another team?**

**KIYANNA BLACK:** I think that's one of our strengths. We like to shoot the ball. We find each other, get open, easy shots.

**MARIAH BYARD:** I think that that's what we practice every day, and so yes, it is one of our strengths. And we will continue to practice that until game time. I think when you have a strength like that, you should use it, and that's what we plan on doing. Our team doesn't just shoot the three-pointers. We can also drive and you'll probably see a lot of both in tomorrow's game.

**Q. These are two quality teams that hold other teams to 55 points. How much of a chance do you think this could be a low-scoring, defensive type of game?**

KIYANNA BLACK: There may be a big chance. Defense wins games, so in order for us to have a chance to win tomorrow, I think we need to get stops.

MARIAH BYARD: I agree, and I think that that's -- another one of our huge strengths is keeping teams in low-scoring numbers. From what I've seen and what I've heard, they do the same thing, so I'm interested to see how tomorrow's game works out.

**Q. Mariah, you mentioned it a little bit, but what do you guys rely on when your three-point shot isn't falling, and do you think you could beat Arizona State if you guys aren't hitting tomorrow?**

KIYANNA BLACK: Certainly if we don't make shots, it's going to be a tougher game, but I think if the three is not working, we've got to look for lay-ups and then maybe that'll open up the three-point shot.

MARIAH BYARD: Yeah, we've also had a lot of games this year where our three-point shots have not been falling. We've been in that situation, and we've relied on driving and getting to the free-throw line and everything like that.

**Q. Arizona State hasn't played for two weeks. Going into this game are you worried at all about them being fresh, having a lot of energy? I know you technically haven't played for a week, but does that come into your mind at all?**

KIYANNA BLACK: No, I don't think that's a problem. Coming into the MAC tournament, we hadn't played and other teams played, and we figured that was their advantage and it was our disadvantage. It's just -- at the end of the day, it's who's ready to play when the ball tips.

MARIAH BYARD: I agree, and I think that the way we execute in practice, it's just like a game, so really we're ready to play any day.

**Q. You guys have been the favorite in the MAC for the past two months, now you're the 14 seed. How do you adjust to being the favorite all this time and now you're kind of the underdog?**

KIYANNA BLACK: I don't really buy into favorites and stuff like that. At the end of the day, I feel like whatever team comes out ready to compete is the team that's the favorite. So tomorrow my mindset and the team's mindset is just to come out and compete, not worry about seeds or numbers or things of that sort.

MARIAH BYARD: I agree, and I think that from my own personal experience, I enjoy being the underdog more than I enjoy trying to stay on top. I'm excited for tomorrow's game.

**Q. I'm not sure if either of you know, you have a couple players from Illinois on your team, and ASU does, too. Do you know if there's any connection? Do they know each other at all?**

KIYANNA BLACK: I have no idea. I've heard nothing about it.

MARIAH BYARD: I think one of them just knew that they were from Illinois, but that's really all the further that conversation went. I don't know.

**Q. Do you think your team has developed a chip on its shoulder being a 14 seed?**

COACH BOLDEN: You should have asked them. They were just here. Why didn't you ask them? I don't have any idea. I think they're a team that will come out and play basketball. Whether they're a 1 seed in the conference or a 14 seed in this tournament, I don't think it makes any difference to them. I think they'll come out and play as best they can.

**Q. Arizona State doesn't really have a go-to person, they're all kind of a bunch of equals. What kind of challenge does that present defensively?**

COACH BOLDEN: Well, they present all kinds of challenges offensively and defensively. Their balanced scoring is right at the top of that list of challenges. You've got to guard everybody every possession. We talked about it when we were getting ready for the tournament, that there weren't going to be any bad teams in this tournament. That's just not the way this tournament works. Good teams are made up of good players and they've got a bunch of them and they're very balanced and do a tremendous job of sharing the basketball. I think it's crux, it's the challenge of guarding them. That's why they've had the kind of season they've had. They are incredibly balanced.

**Q. This is the first time in 20 years that you've made it to the tournament and had such a record-setting season. What's different about this team that's allowed them to make it this far and have that kind of season?**

COACH BOLDEN: A lot of trust. They really are a group that really trusts each other. Offensively they share the basketball and look to get each other open, and defensively they do a pretty good job with their rotations and really count on one another to help through the tough times, whether it's the lull of the season or a tough couple possessions or maybe we have a couple possessions where we don't shoot it. There's a lot of trust that they'll make the next shot, and there's a lot of trust that they'll be in the right spot with their defensive rotations.

**Q. Mariah talked about how she enjoys being the underdog. Is that kind of a philosophy that you like, too, just being kind of the -- kind of have nothing to lose out there?**

COACH BOLDEN: I really like it when we're favored by about 25. That's when I'm the most comfortable. But it's a challenge. It's what you get by being here. And then I think it's something that we'll accept and we'll try to do the best we can with it. I don't think anybody is necessarily intimidated by the idea of this being a 14 seed or whatever number you happen to have beside your name, but it certainly is a challenge.

**Q. You guys are third in the country in field goal percentage defense. What do you think accounts for just such a dominant effort during the course of the season?**

COACH BOLDEN: Coaching. (Laughter).

I don't know. We have kids that play hard. And as I mentioned earlier, they have a lot of trust in each other. They guard within our system, and whether we're switching screens or not switching screens, they trust that their teammate is going to do the right thing. And they have a lot of pride in doing their job and trying to do their job as best they can, whether it's guarding the ball and helping or guarding the post or guarding the screen or whatever their job happens to be that possession, there's a lot of pride in doing that job correctly.

**Q. I asked your players if they thought this might turn into a defensive type of game. Could you see that happening, too? And also, I'm interested in just what you think of watching Promise Amukamara as you've been preparing for this.**

COACH BOLDEN: Yeah, if we can stop them it'll turn into a defensive game. That is going to be the challenge. They're tremendous on defense, and really enjoy watching them, until I realize we've got to play them. They do a lot of things well. They've been solid throughout the year guarding different actions, and they guard it well, move very well as a team. So I think if

we can hold up our end of the bargain, I think it could turn into a good defensive match-up, but I know they'll come out and put a good defense.

**Q. And Promise?**

COACH BOLDEN: She's good. She's really good. She's a complete basketball player. You know, she's what you would expect out of a wing in this tournament.

**Q. Two years in you already have an NCAA berth, a new record in school wins, and now a new five-year extension for you. What does that mean for you as a coach, to see the success happen so quickly?**

COACH BOLDEN: I think it's tremendous. You know, I'm fortunate to be in a good place. I've got tremendous support from our administration. It's a beautiful school. It's just a wonderful place to be. Hopefully this is a step in the right direction -- surely it's a step in the right direction, but hopefully it's something that we can continue to build on and make sure it's not 20 years before we come back to this thing, and that's the challenge, and hopefully that challenge is a couple weeks away. But that's the next step for our program. But it's really an exciting time right now to be a part of it.

**Q. There are three veteran coaches here that you're coaching against. You're kind of the rookie. I'm kind of interested in what your thoughts are on the other three coaches that are here in this sub-regional.**

COACH BOLDEN: Oh, I mean, I hope I can coach as long as they have. It's a tough gig. It's something that, just because you're good one year doesn't mean you'll be any good the next year, and all three of the other coaches have been able to sustain winning throughout the longevity of their career, and I think it's an amazing feat. You see people get -- people's patience, whether it's the administration or the general public, is getting shorter and shorter it seems every season, where people are -- coaches aren't making it through their contracts, sometimes coaches aren't making it through a season. Years ago that was unheard of, and it wouldn't be outrageous for that to happen now. I think for -- I guess it's something I would aspire to. It's hard to think about it when you're competing against them, but if you ask me in two weeks when I have time to reflect on it, I think I would say that that would be something I hope that I could do, and hopefully return to this tournament, and hopefully some day be the old guy of the tournament. But I'm not that old yet. Don't let the gray hairs fool you.

**Q. Coming off of Arizona State's bench, how do you approach attacking a shot blocker like Quinn Dornstauder and then, on the other end, are you guys planning on fronting the post and just trying to stop them from getting the ball inside?**

COACH BOLDEN: Those are two really good questions. I guess everybody is a shot blocker. We don't have anybody over six foot on the roster, so there's a lot of shot blockers in our conference in every single game we play. So yeah, I mean, that's obviously an issue. We're going to have to, as I said, take care of the basketball. We're going to have to move the basketball, we're going to have to move their defense, going to have to be patient. There's a lot of things we're going to have to try to do to score on them. It's one of the reasons why they're so good defensively. At the other end obviously their size is an issue, and they're really efficient around the rim. Their shooting percentage around the rim is incredible, and they've done it against people that are much bigger than us, so we've got to be really solid down there.

**Q. Arizona State's coach said that they can put out a short roster on the floor, they still have players that are 6'4". What do you think in terms of Lexie, Jasmine, players like Mariah Harris, down low. How important will they be at the start of the game to ensure your players can go down low and don't have to work around the outside perimeter?**

COACH BOLDEN: Yeah, at this point everything is important. We're a 14 seed playing a 3 seed in their gym. Taking care of the ball is going to be important, shooting the ball is going to be important, getting three-point shoots is going to be important. You're going to have to play a pretty good basketball game tomorrow to win, and we understand that. There's a lot of things on that list of what's important, and it's something you've got to take seriously. Everything you can control you've got to do your best to control.

**Q. ASU rotates a lot of players in and out, they play nine, ten players, and execute freely and all that. They tend to wear people down. Is that a concern for you, and your players were asked about the Curtain of Distraction. Does that matter to you that they're allowing that?**

COACH BOLDEN: No. I mean, yeah, the fact that they're skilled enough to play that many players, again, they're a really good basketball team that did some really good things this year, and your questions are solid because that's why they're good, because they can play a lot of people. They can sustain winning because if they get in a little bit of foul trouble early, they've got people they can go to and they play incredibly hard. And when you play eight, nine people, your kids can play hard, when they know they can take a break and come sit down for a few minutes. There are a lot of things that contribute to them being who they are, which is a really good basketball team. I think I'm the only person in the room that's never seen the Curtain of Distraction, so I can't really comment on it. I hear it's pretty cool, so I'm looking forward to seeing it.