

# Big Ten Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Friday March 2, 2018

## Kim Barnes Arico Hallie Thome Katelynn Flaherty

Michigan Wolverines

Nebraska 61, Michigan - 54

COACH BARNES ARICO: I thought it was a really good basketball game. Nebraska came out of the gates super physical with us and took away a lot of our options early on.

I thought we adjusted in the second half and made some great runs, and then down the stretch, we made a couple of bad decisions and they made plays down the stretch when they needed to make them.

They're a really solid team, and it's a credit to their players for making the plays they had to make down the stretch to be successful.

**Q. Hallie, I noticed in the fourth quarter you had the ball and you would do a couple of spin moves and got a couple buckets to go and you had a game high 21 points. What was working for you down low late in the game?**

HALLIE THOME: Just my teammates giving me the confidence. I know when they give me the ball they're putting me in position to score. Knowing we needed a basket, I knew what I had to do, and I kind of felt like I had an advantage with some quick moves to get around them, so I took advantage of it.

**Q. After one of them, it was the and-one that you got, and everybody was excited, and your team said we have to get back because it was right after a Nebraska lay-up in transition. How much of an effect was the transition defense for you guys in that game?**

HALLIE THOME: I think that was what ended up hurting us the most in the end. We had to be able to close the gap, and then little plays like that would happen, and that kind of wavers us, and at times you just needed to be able to lock down on defense.

So I think the huddles are a big thing and showing our



unity and telling us little reminders to get us back and locked in.

**Q. Katelynn, obviously your opponents key on you throughout the year always. Good game tonight, but almost all of your scoring came from three-point range. Can you talk about Nebraska's defense?**

KATELYNN FLAHERTY: Yeah, I think they got to the screens great on me. They worked hard on me the whole game. They really made me uncomfortable coming off screens. I think down the end Hallie set me some good screens and I got open for the three and I started to get into my rhythm.

But I had someone on me the whole time and they crowded the paint a lot, and their big is pretty big, especially compared to me, and I didn't get some foul calls I usually get, so it kind of threw me off a little bit.

**Q. When there is the defense on you a lot and you kind of struggle with your shot but then you're still not hesitant whatsoever in the fourth quarter to take those big shots, talk about your mentality to never be kind of down on yourself even though you were struggling early on.**

KATELYNN FLAHERTY: Yeah, I mean, that comes from my teammates and my coaches. I can miss the first 10 shots and they keep telling me to shoot. They have all the confidence in me.

Being a senior I have been doing this for four years now, and I know I can make those shots. I think every shot I shoot is going in. But, I mean, I especially credit my teammates, and they put me in great positions to shoot, so I always listen to them.

**Q. Coach, the game kind of started off, it was kind of a defensive battle, 15-11 at the end of the first, and you guys were even, even the entire way. What can you say about the flow of this game? There were times it was slow, then it really picked up and got frantic, then slowed down again. How do you think your team handled that up-and-down play?**

COACH BARNES ARICO: I think Nebraska is a team that kind of forces you to play that way, as physical as they were with us. Hallie came into the game banged up a little bit after yesterday, and we were really unsure

how she was going to be today.

So I think it kind of got her a couple minutes to get warm and to get going. And then in the second half, she really took over the game, and we were able to get her the ball, and she made some great moves, and she brought us back when we were down, and then we were able to find Katelynn.

We would rather play at a pace like that, but then we got it going and then we weren't able to change from that pace to back taking care of the ball, and that's where we had a chance to tie the game, and we turned the basketball over.

So that's the challenge of being able to play at that pace where you can get it going and then be able to say, okay, it's a one-possession game here, let's take care of the basketball right now and get a good execution.

So I think part of that is Nebraska; they really defend really well. I think their experience on the defensive end and they're physical and they're big, and that kind of disrupted their lanes, disrupted us, and took us a little bit of time to get into a flow where we were better at that in the second half.

**Q. I talked to Katelynn earlier on, and she told me that early on she thought that her team was letting the refs kind of dictate the game. Is that something you noticed, and, if so, what were you telling them?**

COACH BARNES ARICO: Well, we just talked about our toughness, and there were a couple plays that were 50/50 balls that were toughness plays that we let the ref make the call instead of us making the call.

We said we've got to turn it up, we've got to play a lot tougher than we were playing, and we can't pay attention to the refs. If we want it to happen, we've got to make it happen for us because it felt like there were a lot of touch fouls being called away from the ball, but then the fouls on the shooting weren't there, and just too much attention to that, really, and we just talked about at halftime just play through the refs.

We were letting the physical nature of the game bother us instead of being the aggressor, and we just talked about at halftime how we still had to be aggressive and not pay attention to that but just be aggressive.

**Q. And obviously Nebraska on offense, they got Katie Cain down low, and then Whitish who can knock down shots outside. How do you go in preparing for something like that?**

COACH BARNES ARICO: I thought tremendous job on Cain. We really did a good job. I think she only

finished with six points tonight. We did a decent job on Whitish, but then we lost her late, and she hit that big three late on us, which really was kind of the dagger. So that was a big play for them.

I thought it was their other kids that actually helped them be successful tonight. No. 5 made a lot of big plays, as did Cincore. She made the big and-one late in the fourth quarter. So I think it was other kids that really stepped up for them, where some of our other kids had a little bit of an off-night tonight in Nicole Munger, Kayla Robbins or even a Akienreh Johnson.

**Q. Going forward, what can you say about your team's resume for a possible NCAA Tournament berth?**

COACH BARNES ARICO: You know, last year we were kind of in this position, in the position similar to Nebraska where we had finished third in the league and had a decent RPI, a top-50 RPI, but they said we didn't have enough top-50 wins.

This year we have a bunch of top-25 wins. We have three top-25 wins and we have a 38 RPI. Our conference is significantly better. Our double opponents were pretty good.

So we think we've done what we needed to do. But now it's up to seeing what the committee thinks, and I think we can't count on that until next Monday night when we see what happens.