Kim Barnes Arico, Michigan Head Coach

Q. Coach, Kim said you're one of her favorite coaches in the business. When you were at St. John's, you got to know each other a little bit?

KIM BARNES ARICO: Yeah, I was just telling the story outside. I remember quite some time now, probably 10, 12 years ago, Emma had just been born, I was on the All-American committee. It might have been Sophia Young. I introduced myself to coach after the announcement of the All-Americans.

She said, Girl (laughter). Being from New York, I wasn't accustomed to that. I know who you are, girl. I've watched your team play.

She actually had watched our team, spoke very highly. I think that was the first time we met. I think in our business, a lot of times trying to juggle having this career and having a family is difficult at times. It's a balance and finding that balance.

When you find someone that's kind of going through it, you have a little bit of a connection. She had seen me at that time a number of times on the road with one of my three who I probably had to bring on the road because they were babies, I was nursing. She was like, I've been there. I think Makenzie was playing at the time. It kind of was an immediate connection.

I think it's really important for my own children, but for the players in our program, to have role models and mentors. For me watching her and being able to see what she's done here for this program, or Muffet McGraw, Pat Summitt, those are such great role models and inspiration to women and young girls.

So we connected right away. I've been a fan of her and her program and just watching her children blossom. But the players in her program really blossom. My middle one Emma is a big basketball fan. She had a big tournament in Indianapolis this weekend. She's their point guard. She doesn't miss any tournaments. When Baylor showed up on the screen, Kristy Wallace is No. 4, she's No. 4, that's her favorite
player obviously next to Katelynn Flaherty and the likes of our team. She’s like, Mom, we’re going to Baylor. She was really excited to come down here.

Just to watch what Kim has done, the program she created down here, it's pretty special and incredible. I'm a fan of hers as well.

Then she went and got these guys some Easter baskets this morning. I'm like, You can't cheer for them tomorrow. I let you wear green one day of the year. You got your green on today. Tomorrow they will be back maize and blue, through and through.

Q. You don't see size like you're going to see from Baylor, I don't know if you've seen it at all this year. It's one thing to have one player Hallie's size, but two of them, what kind of matchup problem is that? How do you want to try to neutralize some of that?

KIM BARNES ARICO: We went back, I was talking outside trying to think if we faced any teams this year with that size. We had a great non-conference schedule. We played two No. 1 seeds in the tournament in Notre Dame and Louisville. We’ve played against some of the top teams in the country and really tested ourselves against the top teams.

But neither one of them had two players like Baylor has. That's why they're so good. I mean, they are incredible. Lauren Cox, Kalani, a monster inside, but Lauren is a monster inside, point guard mentality outside where she's such a great passer, shoots the jumper so well. Incredibly difficult matchup.

Jillian Dunston was being humble before. We look to her to do so much for us. She has to guard the other team's best player, whether that's their point guard or their five player on any given night. Tomorrow she will have that matchup of Lauren Cox.

I think Jilly's advantage in that matchup will hopefully be her speed and maybe the ability to keep the ball out of her hands. When the ball is in her hands, she makes such good decisions with it, whether that's passing to Kalani, shooting it, distributing it elsewhere. She's such a great player.

It's a difficult matchup. I think that's the reason probably they have lost only one game this year. Lauren didn't play in that one game that they lost. So they're an incredible basketball team. We know that will be a difficult matchup.

We have to somehow try to exploit that on the offensive end for us, try to make them maybe have to come out of the paint and defend some screening action and some ball screening action.

Q. You don't have a lot of NCAA experience on this team, but you have a lot of post-season experience. Do you think that helped them get over the nerves yesterday, and will it help them tomorrow?

KIM BARNES ARICO: I think we saw a lot of nerves with some of our younger kids, for sure. Akienreh Johnson, her first time. Deja Church, the first time in this environment, was a little bit timid and nervous yesterday. Katelynn Flaherty, Jillian Dunston and Hallie Thome, last year when we didn't get selected, we made that run in the WNIT. We played in a championship game atmosphere. We had to come back from being down. Those kids are experienced playing in our league, they're experienced with our non-conference schedule, with the likes of Notre Dame and Louisville. They have tested themselves, whether that's been at USA or during the season against some of the toughest competition and have been in post-season play.
I thought yesterday we came out composed. I thought Katelynn was a little non-aggressive. We really tried to go to Hallie early because we saw the matchup. Katelynn then started to be aggressive, and Jilly was aggressive from the tip, which I liked. When you're a senior fighting for your last opportunity to play, I think you sometimes put those nerves aside because you don't want to stop playing.

Jillian and Katelynn have done that throughout their career. They have meant so much to our program. I'm not ready as their coach to have them finish playing just yet. I know that they feel the same way. So they're just going out and trying to be as loose and composed as possible.

Q. Is playing on Baylor's home floor something that you talk about to the team? Do you prepare as if you're playing at a neutral site?

KIM BARNES ARICO: I definitely think it's obviously an advantage any time you get to play on your home floor and you have your crowd here, your support, your normal environment, normal game day routine. It's an advantage. We are fortunate this year we had an opportunity to go to Ohio State after losing a tough one to them in overtime at home and beating them on their home court in front of a crazy crowd in a big rivalry game.

Our kids know that it's possible. We don't really talk about it being here and the advantage it is for Baylor because I don't think that's really going to help us too much. We just talk about how great it would be to have an opportunity to beat a team on their home court in the NCAA tournament. That probably doesn't happen very, very often, if ever. So what a wonderful opportunity that would be.

So just focused on that matchup and just focusing on Baylor and what we have to do to stop them.

Q. Talk about Katelynn's game, what she brings, what she's meant to the program.

KIM BARNES ARICO: I first heard about Katelynn when she was in the third grade because I lived in New Jersey, she lived in New Jersey. My husband was a football coach, came home, said, I heard about this great player down the Shore, she's in third grade.

I rolled my eyes, I'm sure she's great. I'm sure her parents think she is wonderful, probably a really great player.

There we were three years later, I had my first opportunity to watch her play in middle school. Golly, this kid really does have an opportunity to be pretty special. I knew of her at St. John's. But at that time she was looking at high, high academic schools. She's a great student. She was looking at some Ivy League schools. When I first got to Michigan, she was one of the first calls I made because I knew that Michigan education was going to be a priority for her.

I was very fearful of her leaving that area. She's the only child. Her dad has trained her his whole entire life. He was a college basketball player at Seton Hall, her mother was a college basketball player and softball player. They spent every waking moment she wasn't in school with a ball in her hands from the time she was three years old. I wasn't sure they would allow her to go this far from home.

But I have a tremendous relationship with her parents and her father. I think he trusted she would be taken care of, she would be in a great place, she would have an opportunity to thrive both academically and on the basketball court, really an opportunity to grow up, her first time being away from them.
Her mother always told me when they went to McDonald's, she would have to place Katelyn's order. She didn't speak, she was quiet. Can you imagine this kid packing up and leaving for the University of Michigan? It's just an incredible story. The more I talk about it, I'll get emotional. Holly cow, it's incredible.

It's incredible the amount of success she's achieved being away from everything that she knew. But really if you think about it, it's really special. Her parents, we've been fortunate that they've been able to come out a lot, so they have been a part of it as well.

From the minute she got on campus till now, she's getting ready to leave, the amount she's grown, more as a woman than even on the basketball court. The amount she's grown on the basketball court has been truly incredible. She came in as a freshman. Every time she touched the ball, like most freshmen, she shot the ball, whether it was a good shot or bad shot. Didn't matter, she saw the hoop.

Katelynn, you don't have to shoot the ball every time you touch the ball. But that's all she knew. Now she's recognized as one of the best point guards in the country.

It broke my heart last year when we didn't make the NCAA tournament because I wanted so much for that team, especially for Katelynn, to be showcased on the national scene because of the player that she is, what she can do for our team, what she can do with the basketball in her hands, her ability to score as a 5'7" guard. You see Baylor, what we're going to be matched up with. For this young lady to get her shot off, is really incredible.

So what she's meant to our program, it's just been tremendous. How much she's grown, how much our program has grown. She's humble. She's not that kid that wants to be up here. I brought her to talk to Cici's elementary school this year, she was more nervous than Cici to get up in front of the kids and talk. But when she does, she just lights up a room because she's so articulate, she has a smile, she's so down-to-earth.

I can't even tell you guys, my children have watched it, hopefully they can take a piece of it, that she's worked on her craft to get where she is, it's incredible. I've never seen anything like it in my 40 plus years of living. I like to tell them I'm 25. I've never seen anything like her work ethic. She is deserving of all of it. Just meant so much to our program. I hope soon we're going to see that Katelynn Flaherty banner hanging in Chrysler Arena because she is deserving it. Glen Rice came back to honor her when she passed his scoring margin. She's an incredibly special kid.

**Jillian Dunston, Michigan Forward**

Q. Jillian, yesterday you were on a 5'6" point guard, tomorrow likely on a 6'4" forward who can do a little bit of everything. How do you adjust to that?

JILLIAN DUNSTON: I think I got a lot of experience with that throughout the Big Ten from guarding Kelsey Mitchell to Kaila Charles, very elite players. I mean, the height doesn't really make a difference to me as long as I give it my all.

Q. Coach talked after the game yesterday about how it was time to play and have fun in the tournament now that you finally made it in. Were you able to do that yesterday? Is that the approach you're taking going into this next one?
JILLIAN DUNSTON: I think, yeah, I was more tense in shootaround than I was in the actual game. I had a moment of like, Oh, my gosh, we're here. Then when we got to the game, it all felt loose, felt good to be out there.

**Katelynn Flaherty, Michigan Guard**

Q. Katelynn, just in terms of the March Madness vibe, everything going on around the country, playing a No. 2 seed on their home floor, do you take anything from that? Do you prepare like it's X opponent?

KATELYNN FLAHERTY: We just prepare like it's another game. We definitely scout them. They're a great team. I think we've done a good job at scouting them from yesterday. I think we did a good job executing in practice today.

But at the end of the day I think it comes down to us having confidence within ourselves, within our abilities.

Q. Coach talked after the game yesterday about how it was time to play and have fun in the tournament now that you finally made it in. Were you able to do that yesterday? Is that the approach you're taking going into this next one?

KATELYNN FLAHERTY: Yeah, knowing this is the end of our career, some of the last games, just to have fun with it. We've worked our whole lives just to play basketball.

I think yesterday we both came out pretty loose, weren't really nervous. I think that's why we did so well.

**Hallie Thome, Michigan Center**

Q. Hallie, with Kalani, she actually enjoys facing size. You had to go against smaller players yesterday. Do you enjoy that challenge of going up against a player of your size?

HALLIE THOME: Yeah, I had the opportunity to play against her this summer in USA. It's a fun battle when you're playing someone your size and ability. To go head-to-head with somebody who is known as one of the top post players, it will be an honor to go and do tomorrow.