

March 30, 2014



An interview with:

**COACH VanDERVEER
CHINEY OGWUMIKE
LILI THOMPSON
AMBER ORRANGE**

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Tara VanDerveer, Chiney Ogwumike, Amber Orrange and Lili Thompson. Coach, can we get an opening statement?

COACH VANDERVEER: I'm really excited for our team. I thought we played really smart. We worked really hard, and I want to compliment Penn State. First, I think Coquese and her staff do a fabulous job. They're really talented. They're really big, and we had to work really hard to win. I especially think that the defense that Lili played on Maggie Lucas was a real positive reason why we won. But we had great contributions from a lot of people, and we're really excited to be playing on Tuesday night.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the student-athletes.

Q. Lili, can you talk a little about what your plan was against Maggie, and how it worked during the course of the game?

LILI THOMPSON: Coach provided me with a lot of film to watch on her, and I kind of studied her game and just decided that I wanted to shut her down and make other people score for them, and that would be the best way I could contribute to the win. So just playing hard and trying not to let her get as many touches as she usually does was pretty much my number one plan.

Q. Chiney, can you talk about that run that you guys had in the first half? You were down by 4. They had scored 7 in a row, I think, and then you guys went up on a 14-0 run. What changed there for you guys? Was it a scheme thing or was it just sort of an energy?

CHINEY OGWUMIKE: I don't think our team is really conscious about runs. We just go out there and try to do our jobs. If that amounts in them not being able to -- us bringing the defensive energy and us scoring, that's what we expect. I think we have high expectations and that starts with Coach Tara. She pushes us every day, and sets huge goals. Like Lili will really work hard and Mikaela and I to O-board and rebound, and those goals are what we try to attain as many possessions in the game as possible. So we're not really conscious of runs, so it sort of surprises us when people tell us the stats after games like that.

Q. Amber and Chiney and Lili, what did Mikaela show you on both ends of the floor early on, just making plays and with the energy she brought? Also, just the balance you guys were able to produce today?

AMBER ORRANGE: I think defensively Mikaela's rebounding was really essential for us. Like in the beginning of the game they were getting a lot of offensive rebounds, but as we focused on it and Mikaela just boxed out and got more rebounds, and I think that made the difference, like you said, in the run that we had.

CHINEY OGWUMIKE: In some ways Mikaela's our rock out there. She sees the game so well, and she knows what defense the other you team is running and she usually calls out and echos what Amber says for our offense. She's our rock and she does a lot of the grunt work, like getting rebounds, blocking out every time and making the extra pass and things like that, finding the open person. So we're just so fortunate to have someone and she's so passionate. I don't know if you can tell, but she wants to win. This is her fifth year. Playing at home, playing in general

means a lot to her, so she just brings that and it's contagious to our team.

Q. Lili, you guys got off to a good start today instead of the slow start you guys had gotten off to in the first games in this tournament. What was the difference between today and maybe the first two games?

LILI THOMPSON: I just remember Chiney telling us before the game if we took care of the energy, the start would take care of itself. We wouldn't have to focus on not so much the scoreboard telling us how we were playing, but how we felt out there. We came out, the energy was there on both offense and defense, so I think that contributed to the better start that we had today.

Q. Chiney, I'll let you look at the stats. Tell me when you're ready.

CHINEY OGWUMIKE: Oh, we're good.

Q. All season you've been trying to act like you don't really do much and you've talked so much about all your other teammates. Was the game today -- I mean, really, everybody that came in contributed something important. I'm wondering if that is what you envisioned when we talked back in October and November about what you saw?

CHINEY OGWUMIKE: Yeah, I completely agree. I think today was an ideal day for Stanford basketball. I think we had so many contributions. I'm looking at defense, looking at offense, and I told my team, you guys, we are great players collectively and individually. I want to be an afterthought. I want people to be aggressive, and I think that's what we saw. There was a point where Amber drove into the paint and it was basically 1 on 5, and she shot it over one of their big posts. I was just like, wow, this is the kind of energy and intensity we want. Lili was ferocious on the defensive end. Mikaela's always doing the grunt work, and Sara James is a huge leader for us. Having that aggressive mindset, and that's what Coach Tara said, one of our big goals for the game was have the aggressive mindset. We know they have the size advantage, but we want to have the heart advantage.

Q. Amber, talk about your third year and how you've controlled the offense and just the patience you guys have within your offense and don't panic and the shot clock situations?

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What kind of drills Tara has taught you along the way?

AMBER ORRANGE: I would say we've done a lot of triangle offense drills. But for me personally, it's just focusing on being vocal and making sure we have everyone's attention, so when we run a play, everyone knows what we're running and everyone's in the right position so that we can run it smoothly.

Q. Chiney, can you just talk about four years ago I remember seeing you play San Francisco in the summer league, and it was obvious that you were just going to be the type of player that was going to offensive rebound. Now here it is four years later, and I've got a half a page of list of different places on the floor where you hit the ball, and plays were being run. Just talk about that transition of being a player who is kind of floating around and now you're an integral part of the offense with all these different plays being run for you and through you?

CHINEY OGWUMIKE: I think first of all, it's the utmost honor of being the recipient of so many passes on my team. And the way I approach everything is I don't want to let my teammates down. If Mikaela gives me a great pass, I want to finish for her. If I'm open on the perimeter, I want to make the best play. I need to find the shooters if I'm double teamed. I think it's cool to see how far we've come, but at the same time whatever I do it's for my team, and I'm just so fortunate to have such unselfish teammates that pass it to me all the time. But I just try to make the best play for everyone, and if it's kicking it out to get our shooters going and being aggressive and not being afraid to get blocks like I was multiple times today.

Q. Chiney, what happened when you landed on your face in that rebound there?

CHINEY OGWUMIKE: In the last minutes? I'm just old. Takes me a while to get up. Yeah, I was sort of undercut, but it happens. I don't know. It just takes me a while to get up. I'm fine.

Q. Chiney, do you think this was on both ends of the floor as well as you guys have played in a while? It looked that way.

CHINEY OGWUMIKE: I think it feels

good. I think as a team, like Coach said, the past month or two months we've sort of been stagnant and we were just fighting to get out of that. We want to play with energy and confidence, and that's the number one thing, confidence. I think our team is so deep. It's understated how many people come into the game. Coach says it's by committee. Someone has to guard Lucas. Just happens to be the person that started on her, which is Lili, was great.

We have so much faith that someone else can come in and do like for one play or two plays, make that play. So I think we just want to play where we feel good about how we're playing. I think today was a great moment for us. I think this tournament has been building that for us as well.

Q. You guys are one win away from making the Final Four. What's it going to take for this team to get there?

CHINEY OGWUMIKE: Just aggressiveness. That is the number one thing we talk about, aggressiveness. It doesn't matter who we play, we just want to play Stanford basketball. Coach says that all the time. So I think it's just coming out, being assertive and leaving it all on the court. It's weird, we talk a lot about intangibles and, I think that helps us.

Q. Chiney, there was talk from Penn State about playing here. The band even did a neutral site, neutral site chant late in the game when they were down by 20. Could you having been exiled to Iowa for the first two rounds, could you talk about the environment today and what that meant to you in terms of the energy?

CHINEY OGWUMIKE: I think we had to earn the right to play at home, and that started in the first and second round. We had two tough games, South Dakota was great and Florida State was great. So I think we had to earn the right to play at home. The crowd was great. We love nerd nation, but it comes down to doing our jobs on the court. The energy was great, but people in the stands can't make the plays. So I think that's what we focused on, just controlling what we can control. It's nice to have cheers behind us, but I think it just comes down to just playing basketball.

LILI THOMPSON: I think Chiney's right. We had to go to Iowa first and fight through those two really good teams to come back here. It makes it more special, but if we're not doing what we need to do, our fans are going to be quiet

anyway. So allowing us to get off to a good start and keeping the energy high is something that we have to bring as a team.

AMBER ORRANGE: I agree with them both. I would say the energy helps us more. The energy from the crowd gave us energy. I think we just fed off of it, and it really helped us.

Q. Amber, Lili, where was it when Chiney told you guys today that she wanted to be an after thought? Was that your final hug, team group meeting before you hit the floor or?

AMBER ORRANGE: This whole season Chiney has been really unselfish. Even though she's the most dominant player on the court, it's never about Chiney. She always puts us first. Tells us to be aggressive and score and shoot the ball and she'll get the rebound for us. So she's really unselfish.

LILI THOMPSON: Yeah, the same. It wasn't something that was just said once, but we know that Chiney's going to get doubled. So if we're being aggressive, it kind of hurts the other team when they double her. So it's kind of something that she's advised us about all season, just unselfishness.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, ladies. Congratulations. Questions for Coach VanDerveer.

Q. Tara, can you talk about the game in terms of you guys being down a little bit, and then they were playing the zone, you guys hit a couple of threes in transition. But what was the key to that today?

COACH VANDERVEER: You know, we switched things up offensively a little bit. We went kind of more of a 1-4 high and tried to spread out a little bit more. We never really know exactly how teams are going to play us, so kind of in the beginning it's kind of just like figuring out what they're trying to do. Penn State came out and they were really extended defensively on us, getting out, getting in passing lanes. I think that's why we had some really nice backdoor plays.

Amber had a really nice play where she got a lay-up, and I think that was in that run. Bonnie hit some shots. Taylor got her three-point shooting going. But Mikaela had some great plays in the beginning of the game. She led her team in D-boards, and I thought she rebounded really well. She had five assists. She played really well in the

beginning of the game.

We got some stuff -- we're not like a big kind of turn the ball over team, but we did get some turnovers and we were able to push it in transition, and Amber, I thought had a great game.

Q. Tara, has Lili Thompson taken over the defensive back court job that Toni Kokeni used to have? Can you talk a little bit about exactly how she did this in today's game?

COACH VANDERVEER: You know, I think one of the things is that we have played against great teams during the year. She played against Meighan Simmons who is really super athletic and quick. Crook at USC, very tough match-up, Boyd at Cal. I could go through kind of the list of guarding Fields. I kind of had to take Lili out a couple times like you're not guarding that girl. So I think that Lili really understood that this was her job, and for us to be successful, she had to do it. And I thought she did a fabulous job. Maggie Lucas hasn't had six points since third grade. That girl can flat out score. We've seen her light up teams. She's in a great league and she's a great player.

We had to not only have Lili, but other people had to help on her and make them have someone else score besides her.

Q. Tara, can you talk a little bit more about your back court? You only had one turnover in that first half, and certainly that helped get the runs going too.

COACH VANDERVEER: You know, they talk about the tournament having good guard play. We have some guards that are really stepping up. I thought Amber had a fabulous game. She scored well for us, and Amber is a great defender. We can put her on somebody if we need to work hard on them. But Lili and Amber have really good communication out on the court. They play really well together. They're very unselfish. None of them care about their own points. They just want to do whatever the situation is dictating. If they're open, they'll take shots.

I thought Amber had a big three. She had a nice pull-up, she went to the basket very well. I thought this was one of her very best games of her career at Stanford.

Q. Tara, was this the most complete game you guys have played maybe this season, but in a while? Do you feel like maybe the team is hitting the stride at the right time?

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COACH VANDERVEER: Yeah, I think people -- I think different things happened in the season. For us probably come back to the Pac-12 tournament where we stunk it up, and we got sent home. I think that got everybody's attention. You know, if you want to play, you've got to do the right thing. Our team really focused a lot in practice, and to have -- I thought everyone did something valuable for our team to be successful. Mikaela played well, Chiney played well, Amber, Lili. Sara James started us out but then Bonnie came in and did a good job, and Taylor did a good job.

We're going to need more to be successful Tuesday night. We'll need more from more people.

Q. (Indiscernible)?

COACH VANDERVEER: I'm not sure where that ever came in. You could hear them say well, Coach Tara says this. I've never said that. You know, Chiney is a star, and she is -- she does amazing things for us. I thought that she was up against some really big, physical kids. It's not going to get any easier. But I think that sometimes she needs other people to make plays so she doesn't have to feel like she has to do it all. And other people made plays today, and that was great.

Q. Along that line, Chiney said this felt really good today. Did it feel good to you? Is it important that it feels good to them at this point in the season?

COACH VANDERVEER: Definitely, it was a very happy locker room. I didn't recognize the dance moves, but they were really happy. This is a team that, through even not winning, they don't turn on themselves at all. They are really a tight group. I think that's because there is great leadership with Chiney and Sara and Mikaela Ruff. Kids are very unselfish.

But they have fun, and they know they've played well. I mean, like one turnover, nine turnovers, I thought we did a really nice job. We did things that we needed to do.

Q. Coach, can you just talk about do you run more sets for Chiney than you did with Jane when Jane was here? And second part of that would be if not maybe was that one set that you ran in the first half where Chiney got a full run at the basket from the top of the key,

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got Bonnie on the left.

COACH VANDERVEER: Yeah, we were not running anything for Chiney. We don't really run anything for Chiney because she gets so much out of just our transition and our regular offense. So basically all the sets, there might be an occasional one, but we don't run stuff for her. We want other people kind of to -- we don't want to come down and think about going into Chiney. In fact, I say other people have to touch the ball, other people need to do things.

Q. In the first half you had a nine-minute run of only allowing two field goals. Can you comment on that?

COACH VANDERVEER: Well, I think that our team, one thing they do is I think actually one of my favorites, Charles Barkley talked about this yesterday and I told our team this. You know, we had a week to get ready, and our team can really absorb. There is no finals, there is no studying. They're watching video and they're absorbing what we're asking them to do. I think they were really able to absorb the scouting report. Now it's easier when we have a week and we obviously have only a day. But they were really able to take the scouting report and really focus on what we were planning to do. Take away people's favorite moves. Not have the key people beat you. Make other people. I thought Ariel Edwards did a nice job in the first half of the game for them, but that wasn't Maggie Lucas.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you very much.

COACH VANDERVEER: I think we had a great crowd, and I hope everybody will come back on Tuesday.

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