



2014 NCAA DIVISION I WOMEN'S BASKETBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

Stanford Regional · Stanford vs. Penn State

Maples Pavilion · Stanford, Calif.

Saturday, March 31, 2014

PRESS CONFERENCE QUOTES – Penn State

Coquese Washington, Penn State Head Coach:

(During your summer sitdowns with Tara, did you get any insights into Stanford?)

I wouldn't say it gave us any specific insights into the Cardinal. It really was an opportunity for me and my assistant coach to really pick the mind and pick the brain of one of the legends in our game. Edification for us on how we can continue to improve our program, and tweak some things offensively and continue to become a better team and a better program. I was just really appreciative that she gave her time to me, and was really an open book. And there was nothing that was really off-limits. It was a great sharing of information, and really appreciative of her giving in that way.

(What is the challenge in defending a player like Chiney?)

Chiney is really relentless. Those types of players are really tough to guard because she doesn't take any plays off. She's certainly the engine for this team, and everybody feeds off of her. And she's just got a wealth of energy on the court, on both ends of the floor. And when you're playing a player that's just that relentless and never slows down, she's tough to guard. And she's got the full complement of things to do on the offensive end. So it's definitely going to be a challenge to guard her.

(Could you talk about the freshmen class and how they've grown, and maybe how the seniors have helped them develop?)

Our freshmen have certainly gotten better over the course of the season. They're enjoying and learning what their roles are, and learning how to perform those roles night in and night out. Certainly, I think Peyton Whitted and Kaliyah Mitchell have really embraced being impact players off the bench.

(How important is balanced scoring going to be against Stanford?)

It's going to be really important for us. When we get balanced scoring, and we're having offensive contributions from a number of different people, we're at our best. That will definitely be the goal to get a balanced scoring attack from our team tomorrow.

(Do you just concentrate on Chiney, or do you worry about the rest of the group?)

I think you sell Stanford short a little bit. They don't win all those games with only one player. They've got good players, outstanding players I should say, at every position. Maybe they're a little underrated by the media, but they're certainly not underrated by our team and our program. We have to guard everybody. Part of the reason Chiney is able to do the things she does is because of the players around her, and their skill sets and what they bring to the table. We're full prepared, and we understand that they've got a deep team, they get a lot of contributions from a lot of positions. They shoot the ball well. They have drivers who can get to the basket. They rebound the ball well. They do a lot of things very well and it's going to be a challenge for us to defend all five players that are on the floor.

(Your team has been pretty decent on the road this year. How does that help in facing a team that has won so many games on its home court in the NCAA tournament?)

Stanford playing here at Maples has been very good for them here over the years. The focus for us is not whether you're at home or on the road, it's about execution. Our focus is going to be on executing our game plan and making sure we can do the things that we talk about coming into the game and that we can execute on the high level.

(Can you talk about the impetus for making the call to Tara to meet? What did you think the answer was going to be?)

I hoped the answer would be yes when I called. At the time that I called, I think I was finishing up our fourth season here, I felt like there were a lot of things that I wanted to learn about coaching. I wanted to tap the mind of coaches who have had sustained excellence. When you look at Stanford, that's a program that's been excellent for decades. I wanted to find out, what are some of the things that make that work. How do you achieve that level of excellence and how do you sustain it? How do you manage your team, how do you manage your staff? How do you do all of those things that it takes to be a program that year in and year out competes for a national title?

We focused in on a few things that we wanted to talk about. And Tara's been great. I learned so much. One day, but it's almost like going to graduate school. Graduate school of coaching in six hours. I came away with notebooks full of stuff. And I'm like, how am I going to remember all of this? So I had to go back again. So much knowledge, and so much to learn. And I'll remember that for a long time.

(Does the resume of this team coming in here make it a little easier?)

That was one of the things that we wanted to do this year was challenge ourselves in the non-conference and play some of the best teams in the country. For this exact reason. When you get in the NCAA tournament you don't know who you're going to play, you don't know what style you're going to play, so we wanted to challenge ourselves and play some of the best in the nation in the non-conference, to prepare ourselves for moments like this, should they come. I think the Big 10 is a conference that, there's so many styles we face in our conference. There's so many coaches that do different things, whether it's pressing, or defensive-minded coaches, or offensive-minded coaches, so then when we get in the NCAA tournament and you don't know who you're going to have, and you've got one day to prepare, we have a lot to fall back on from our conference play. And Stanford, this is going to certainly be a challenging game for us tomorrow, but I think all the things we've gone through over the course of this season, how we've grown, will put us in a position tomorrow to go out and give a great effort.

(Can you talk about what Maggie Lucas has meant to you and the team?)

She's meant a tremendous amount to this program. She's having a fantastic year. I think she's having an All-American year. I think she's put this team on her shoulders. A team with seven freshmen, essentially four new starters, and we've been able to grow and come together, and it all really starts with her, and her leadership, and her competitiveness, and her passion. And all those things have rubbed off on the rest of her teammates. And she's demanded their best day in and day out, and they've followed her lead. And because of that, we've been able to have a measure of success this year.

(How have you tried to carry momentum from the Florida game, into Stanford?)

It started for us on the defensive end. And the energy and the intensity with which we played the game on the defensive end, carried out to every other area. And I think our team understands

that it has to be defense. Our defense has to be at a high level. And if we can compete defensively at a high level, then usually things open up for us on the offensive end.

Penn State Players: Talia East, Maggie Lucas, and Dara Taylor

(Dara, in your last game you had a career high in points and tied it again in rebounds. What do you have to do to continue that momentum going into tomorrow?)

Taylor: Just take what the defense gives me and stay aggressive. I don't need to do anything too out of the ordinary, don't try to force anything. Just let the game come to me. And I'm not looking to keep scoring career highs. That's not something I go into the game trying to do. Whatever the team needs me to do is what I'm going to do.

(Talia, going into the game tomorrow you're going to be facing off against Chiney. How have you been preparing for her in this battle that you're going to be having in the paint?)

East: It's just been watching a lot of game tape. I think I've studied her more than I've studied any player in my life, seeing what her favorite moves are, seeing what she's going to do. She's a great player. People come out looking to play their best defense against her and she's averaging 26.5 points. Focusing on what she does best and trying to keep her as far out of the paint as possible.

(Maggie, against Florida, you guys went on a couple of big runs, especially to start the first half and the second half, and Stanford's coach actually came in earlier and said that in the first two games of the tournament they kind of started slowly. How important is it to really get momentum going?)

Lucas: It's important, but we also understand that all these games are games of runs. We'll make our runs and they'll make their runs. We've just got to be able to stay calm and focused on what our game plan is the whole time.

(Talia, what are Chiney's strengths? And how many hours would you say you put in on her? And maybe who is the second player in the country you've studied even close to that amount of time?)

East: She finishes very well offensively. She challenges your team defensively. She just has multiple threats -- great rebounder, Pac-12's leading scorer and rebounder. Once we found out who we were playing, we all study these teams. Everybody is watching more game tape than they ever had before with our team, because it's the Sweet 16, it's more serious. I don't know exactly how much time, but I think myself and my entire team, we're all just focused in and just locked in. We have nothing else to do besides watch game tape. It's what we're doing.

(Talia, the first two rounds you had a pretty big size advantage. How are you going to take advantage tomorrow?)

East: Both teams are really tall. But, to Coquese's greatness, she has helped us to play against a lot of tough teams, top-tier teams, all season. We've faced people who have been taller in certain aspects than us. So I think there's definitely a height difference, but I think we'll be okay.

(Dara, can you address playing here at Maples and what you think the atmosphere is going to be like tomorrow?)

Taylor: I've seen it on TV. I've heard about it. It's a great place to play. They draw a huge crowd. They've got great fan support. It's going to be loud. It's going to be exciting. It's a Sweet

16 game. I think, as a team, we just have to stay calm, stay focused. We know what it's like to play in front of your home crowd. We have to go in there, and that's something we're going to have to stay calm and stay together. If they go on a run and their fans get into it don't get flustered. It's just basketball.

(Maddie, so much is made about Chiney on this team, but what about some of the other players — Amber, or some of the perimeter players — who have knocked down some big 3s in the last few weeks?)

Lucas: They have more than one person who can score for sure. And like you said, they shoot the three-ball really well, so that's something that we've got to be focused on, because pretty much everyone can come in and knock down a three. Personnel is big. Like [East] said, watch lots of film on them. They do have a lot of threats.

Lucas: Chiney doesn't bring the ball up the floor. Their guards bring the ball up the floor. And they spread the ball around. They get the ball to her when she needs it so you can't fall asleep and just focus on one player, because the rest of their players will hurt you. I think our perimeter defense has got to be extremely good this game.

(Maggie, your coach was talking about how you led the way this year with so many new starters. Can you just talk about how important it was for you to take this team on this journey with you?)

Lucas: I probably did have the most experience as a starter coming into this season. Like the rest of the seniors, we just wanted to make it a great year. We wanted to go out on a great note. I think the four of us — the four seniors — we did a really great job of coming together. We hadn't played all that much together on the court, leading up to this season, so it was important for us to be on an accelerated course of getting to know each other on the court, working together and leading our team together. I think I had a big leadership role this year, but so did the rest of my captains. And I think everyone really did a great job this year of leading so many freshmen and underclassmen.

(Talia, can you just talk about the resume that you guys have built up -- Notre Dame in the nonconference and then, of course, the Big Ten is rough and tumble. How does that prepare you to walk into Maples and go against Chiney and her teammates?)

East: Coquese has helped to prepare us so much with the nonconference schedule that we had. We played a lot of tough teams, a lot of ranked teams. And sticking with those teams—we had some good wins this year, and the Big Ten is really tough—but I think that's definitely prepared us for a game like this.

(Can you give us something tangible or specific and how it's made you tough, and how you can come in here and not be intimidated by someone by Chiney?)

East: Chiney is a great player, and I think our team is prepared because we've gone into a lot of gyms this season. And the Big Ten is a tough place to play. We've gone into a lot of gyms and got some key wins in tough situations and tough environments and against great players. So I think we're prepared.