

March 23, 2013



NCAA 2013 BASKETBALL
CHAMPIONSHIP
DIVISION I WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

An interview with:

**COACH WASHINGTON
ALEX BENTLEY
MAGGIE LUCAS**

THE MODERATOR: Welcome to our first press conference of the Baton Rouge first and second round site. We will ask Coach Washington for an opening statement on her season and the game coming up. Then we will take questions for the student-athletes.

Q. Alex, what are the challenges of facing a team that you didn't know a lot about until recently?

ALEX BENTLEY: We've got to make sure we pay attention to film. Our coaches do a great job of preparing us for games. So, yeah, we don't know much about these opponents, but we're going to know plenty. We have to focus on the game plan.

Q. You're playing a team you don't know much about, in a school you probably haven't heard of before this week. Did you get lessons from the men's tournament, Florida Gulf Coast, nobody heard of of them until yesterday. Do you respect all your opponents and this is a big deal to be here, this is the first time.

MAGGIE LUCAS: You know, we see that everyone in the tournament is capable of beating anyone. Everyone is very talented. Cal Poly has a lot of strengths. So, you know, we go into the tournament and we don't take them lightly. They're a good team and they're here, obviously, so they deserve it.

ALEX BENTLEY: We just want to take it a game at a time, focus on who we're playing and take it a game at a time to advance.

Q. The familiarity of being here a year ago, knowing the facilities, knowing the surroundings, does that help you prepare for this year's tournament?

ALEX BENTLEY: I think it does. I think it's nice that we're familiar with the area. It's fun to come back and play here. I loved playing here last year, so we're excited to be here.

MAGGIE LUCAS: I agree with Alex. We loved playing here last year and we're excited to be back.

Q. Alex, if you would comment about the Naismith Award?

ALEX BENTLEY: Oh, yeah, I'm very honored. I couldn't have done it without my teammates.

Q. Alex, your thoughts as a senior now that the NCAA Tournament is here?

ALEX BENTLEY: It's crazy. This season flew by very quick and it's been fun. We're excited to be going into the NCAA Tournament. Yeah, it's bittersweet.

Q. You both said you loved playing here last year and it feels like a time warp for you. Why did you like playing here, the confidence of events last year or other factors?

MAGGIE LUCAS: I love the facilities here. It's a nice place to play. It was just fun, yeah.

ALEX BENTLEY: Yeah, I agree with Mags. The facility is awesome, the place is great. It's a good area, and there were plenty of fans out there last year, so an exciting environment.

Q. You said you guys had a good week in practice, able to sit back and really work on

what you guys needed to after the loss to Michigan State. What's it going to take to make a deep run from what you guys learned after that loss?

ALEX BENTLEY: We have to stick to the game plan. That's the plan, take it one game at a time, listen to our coaching staff.

MAGGIE LUCAS: I agree with Alex.

Q. Penn State has been in the tournament 25 times. Tell me your reasons for coming to Penn State and what the program means to you. You've never been to a Final Four. How much unfulfilled are you about not doing that yet?

MAGGIE LUCAS: One of our coaches, Maren, played on the Final Four team for Penn State in 2000, so she has been there. And one of the things about me going to the Penn State program was I believe in Coach Washington, and I wanted to be a part of it.

ALEX BENTLEY: I agree with Mags. When Coach was recruiting me, I bought into what she was telling us. We can rebuild a program, do great things at Penn State and we all bought into that. We're trying to reach our goals.

THE MODERATOR: Ladies, thank you very much. Best of luck to you.

Q. Now that you've had a chance to look at Cal Poly, what are your impressions of them?

COACH WASHINGTON: A well-coached, hard-working team. They have a pretty dynamic player that they're centered around in shore measure, their post player. She's very good. She's tall, big, wild. So they're going to present some challenges for our post defense, and they surround her with good perimeter players who like to drive and kick, and when they can get their feet set.

They can get open, and once they knock 'em down they're a good-shooting team. They have good balance, get through close up driving lanes quickly. They're very good with their help rotations, and they're aggressive in defending the way they like to defend.

So, as Alex said, every team in the tournament is good. They know how to play to their strengths, whatever those are; and that's one thing that we've noticed in watching film of Cal Poly is they play to their strengths. They do the things they do well and they're consistent with those things. I'm certain it's going to be a challenge to our team Sunday, tomorrow.



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Q. Coach, I just wanted your take on my question to the players as well? I wondered if you had talked to Nikki since you got here and if you're still talking about babies this year? What's going on?

COACH WASHINGTON: Well, you know, I feel the same way that they did, you know. When you get into the NCAA Tournament, one of the things that's cool is if you get sent to a great basketball environment. It was fun playing here last year because the crowd was into the game. They're knowledgeable fans. They showed up for all the games. It's just a great environment.

Like they said, the facilities here are outstanding; it's a great arena to play in. Our kids, our team, our coaching staff, we like playing in great basketball environments. We would much rather play in a filled arena than play in an empty arena.

So it's great. The people here, that southern hospitality is outstanding. It's just a fun place to be. When we saw the bracket come out we're like cool, we'll go back to the south and the 80 degree weather and great fans. We were pleased.

Q. (No microphone.)

COACH WASHINGTON: Oh, Caldwell, I thought you were talking about Nikki Greene on our team. I was like, she didn't have a baby! Nikki -- we were just out there talking about family, and her daughter is 1 year old now. My daughter is 3. So, yeah, we have a lot of parallels in our careers and in our personal lives.

It's always cool to catch up and to be able to talk -- moms, we can talk about our kids forever. You don't have to worry about us having nothing to talk about when we're together.

Q. You said the other day the team was healthy and everything. Any chance we could see the mother hen, as you put it, playing anytime in the tournament?

COACH WASHINGTON: No, she has not been cleared. She got cleared to play about 30 seconds senior night, but medically she is not able to go.

Q. Coach, you said you were pleased when you saw where you guys were being sent. In a way -- maybe we covered this ground

last year, but in a way would you like to see the tournament evolve to where the men's is where you have the eight sites instead of trying to drum up support by playing at home arenas?

COACH WASHINGTON: If we grow to that point, that would be awesome; and clearly that's not where we are. I don't think it takes away from the tournament at all. It makes for some fantastic basketball environments, LSU being one, you know. All 16 first and second round sites are pretty good basketball environments.

So as a coach and as a competitor, I don't mind. I don't mind the challenge of going on the road and playing. We do it all year long. Half our games are on the road anyway. It's just fun. It's basketball, and it's the best tournament in women's basketball. So we're excited to be a part of it.

Q. What are the challenges of facing a team who may seem like it has nothing to lose up against you guys?

COACH WASHINGTON: Well, we don't look at it that way. We don't look at it as Cal Poly is a team that has nothing to lose. We look at it as Cal Poly is a very good team that has earned the right to be in the tournament and earned the right to play against us, and we look at it as we have earned the right to play against Cal Poly.

Our perspective is we know we are going to see a formidable and worthwhile opponent and we prepare for them just that way. We don't prepare any other way, and we think it's two good teams that will tip off at 4:15 tomorrow.

Q. Sounds like you are happy with the team's mind-set coming here, opponent, all those things being in the right frame of mind; is that correct?

COACH WASHINGTON: Absolutely, absolutely, seedings and all that stuff, I think that's great for fans, great for media, something to talk about, gives an aura of, you know, David and Goliath in every single game. I think that's what makes the tournament exciting, because you have that element.

But as competitors, we don't -- Penn State, we don't see it that way. We don't look at the seedings and say this is supposed to happen or that is supposed to happen. They got the Player of the Year in their conference, and she is very good. They've got some very good players and we haven't seen 'em.

So we've got to come into this game and understand that we've got to execute our game

plan. I would assume they're looking at it the wait a minute say. It's basketball, you know, it's basketball, it's not about who is supposed to do what. When you start looking at sports like that, who is supposed to do stuff, that's -- you know, that's not who we are. That's not who Penn State is.

We are not looking and thinking about making a deep run or any of that kinda stuff. We're concerned about being our best tomorrow against Cal Poly, and then whatever happens at about 7:00 tomorrow night, we'll start talking about that.

But right now the only thing we're focused on is how we're going to slow down Schlemer. How we're going to keep their guards out of the paint, and how we need to execute and what we need to execute to be successful.

Q. They've had some kids hurt. How crucial do you think depth is going to be in this ballgame?

COACH WASHINGTON: I'm hoping it's something we can draw upon. They do have a couple of injuries and probably don't have -- certainly don't have the rotation that they would like coming into this game. I'm hoping that our depth and our ability to continue to throw a bunch of different looks and bodies on the floor will be a positive for us.

Q. When a team is as good as yours offensively shoots 22% in a game, that is obviously noteworthy. How much of a concern is the last outing?

COACH WASHINGTON: We did not eat our Wheaties on that day, so we'll change our bio. We will have a different pregame meal and we will be ready to go.

Q. (No microphone.)

COACH WASHINGTON: Nothing too exotic. We don't need upset stomachs, having this Cajun food.

Q. You talked about Schlemer, how important is Nikki's play going to be, especially staying out of foul trouble for you guys?

COACH WASHINGTON: When she is on the floor, things run smoother for us. So we need her on the floor. But I have confidence in our post rotations. Nikki has been in foul trouble a number of games this year. So if it happens, we're used to

it. We know how to play in that situation, in those scenarios.

But certainly when she is out there, she is a difference-maker for us, and hopefully she can play a lot of minutes.

Q. We are at the stage of women's basketball where there are a lot of coaches who were successful players. I wonder if you ever -- do you ever wonder when you run into some of those women, if we were one-on-one how would we do today or how do you think you would do against Nikki or things like that?

COACH WASHINGTON: We do like the guys, whose got the rings. Whoever has the most wins -- I don't know. Mostly we look at -- thank God we played back then because if we had to play now against these girls and athletes and how tall they are, we would be in trouble, little point guards, me, Dawn Staley, and Jolette. We would be in trouble. We're thankful that we're old and out of shape and can't run around on the court with the young girls.

THE MODERATOR: Good players make great coaches. Coach, thanks a lot.

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