

NCAA Women's 1st and 2nd Rounds: Stanford

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Stanford, California



Tara Vanderveer
Kaylee Johnson
Brittany McPhee
Stanford Cardinal

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with an opening statement from coach.

TARA VANDERVEER: First of all thanks for attending. We are thrilled to be hosting the NCAA tournament and I am so proud of the two women to my left, as seniors, as captains, they have had this incredible four year run at Stanford and I know that they want to really, they will, you will see both of them lead the way and I think just play exceptionally hard for us, for our team tomorrow. It's bitter sweet in that to think of them, the journey that they have been on from freshmen to seniors, to see their growth, I'm really excited to have them here today and I'm so proud of them and so excited to see what we can do in this tournament and just our whole team I think has been working very hard and improving a lot and we know we have to play very well to have a deep run, but I feel a little emotional sitting up here with both of them because they I just can see them as high school players and now they're right here as senior leaders. It's really something special.

THE MODERATOR: Take questions, please.

Q. This particular season, this particular group of kids that you have, where you are today going into the tournament from where you started, can you just take us through how you feel about this growth.

TARA VANDERVEER: I think that there's been a couple of story lines, I think first of all this is a very young team in a lot of ways, even our juniors were not starters or they didn't play very much and our sophomores, so when we first of all we introduced a new offense, we played arguably the toughest schedule that Stanford has ever played, and it wasn't by design, it just happened. Teams dropped us in the summer, and Baylor calls, I'm like, okay, we either play no one or we play Baylor. And then on top of that, Brit got hurt and when you have a senior leader, that's, so every, the deck was really stacked against our team and so we obviously had -- and we will, I think we didn't

always, we weren't consistent. When we got Brit back and we hit the PAC-12, I think we kind of just found our footing. We were able to get some traction with big wins against UCLA and USC, Arizona State when we got them back here and we were the only team in the PAC-12 to go undefeated at home, we were the only team in the PAC-12 to beat everyone else, and again I'm exceedingly proud of Kaylee and Brit for their leadership, their resilience, to kind of to be sitting here today is a little bit surreal, honestly. There were points in this season where I told them to, I said we might not even be playing in the NCAA tournament and to be hosting and one of the other things that is really I think relevant to this particular field is three of these four teams were in the same tournament in Vegas. I don't know if you know that, but ourselves, Gonzaga and Florida Gulf Coast were all in the same tournament and when I saw Karl this morning he said, Tara, your team has improved so much. And that to me is the ultimate compliment that -- and again you don't improve unless people work really hard, they have a lot of confidence and determination and again I think just great senior leadership with these two.

Q. How much does Gonzaga look different from the last meeting against this team was on your floor and how much does that motivate -- I know it's been some time in between -- but you know each other pretty well, these two teams.

TARA VANDERVEER: Lisa does a fabulous job. Gonzaga has an excellent team. They're a different team and we're a different team. We know that we have to play well and I think that they probably know the same thing, but we have worked very hard this week just we focus on who we're going to play in terms of scouting but what I tell our team is it's really about us. We need Stanford's A game and in order to have a deep run, whether it was in the PAC-12 tournament or in the PAC-12 or whatever we need a great effort and great focus from our players and our team. I've seen that from, especially from our seniors, they want to keep it going. At least it feels that way to me. They love playing, they love playing for Stanford, we have a very close team, and we know that I think in some ways the last, having lost to Gonzaga there are some situations where I think some teams -- they look at the seed and they just assume a better seed is -- the seed is going to take care of the game. And it's not. Our team knows that we have to play well and I don't have

to remind them of that.

Q. For both of you, as we were just talking about, how quickly did you guys think about the last time you faced Gonzaga when on the show it popped up that you guys were going to face them?

BRITTANY MCPHEE: It wasn't a big shock, but we definitely think about it and we watch clips from last year where they burned us. But we just know that we're a completely different team, they're a completely different team and that we both have to show up and be ready to play.

KAYLEE JOHNSON: Yeah, just going off of what Brittany said, we know they want to come in, they want to beat us. We know what we want to do. And at this point it doesn't really matter who you're playing, what the seeding is, what's going to matter is how you're going to go out there and perform that night when the time comes.

Q. Brittany, you, are you Irish? McPhee?

BRITTANY MCPHEE: Oh. A little bit, yeah, back a ways, yes.

Q. So do you feel lucky tomorrow?

BRITTANY MCPHEE: Yes.

(Laughter.)

Q. Brit, you did not have the best PAC-12 tournament and we were told that you were not at top health. Was that true and if so how much did it hamper your game?

BRITTANY MCPHEE: Yeah, I had a cold, but everybody's always facing something, so I just thought Kiana stepped up really well and we were able to play even though I wasn't the one scoring, which is fine with me, as long as we're winning. So, yeah, I was sick, but like there's probably a hundred people in the NCAA tournament who have some sort of either illness or injury that's hurting them too, so that's not an excuse.

Q. Kaylee, you're going to run up against Jill Barta in this game. Does she remind you of anybody in the PAC-12 and what do you think of the challenge of facing her?

KAYLEE JOHNSON: Well, she's obviously a great post player, she's got an outside shot. We have seen players like that and it was almost like good practice playing against players with a good outside shot, good post moves inside. But I'm excited, I'm excited to play her, I know a lot of other post players, even like other people are excited to play her and defend her. We know it's going to be a challenge but looking forward to stepping up to it.

Q. Considering that the men are all, the PAC-12 teams are all gone from the men's bracket, considering that the football bowl situation was terrible for the PAC-12, do you feel any added pressure on you and Oregon and UCLA and the rest of the women's teams to have a really good showing in this tournament?

TARA VANDERVEER: No. We just want to have a good showing for us.

Q. Brit, you mentioned Kiana stepping up in the PAC-12 tournament. As a fellow guard, someone who also can kind of sympathize with what a freshman's going through this time of year, what has stood out to you about her development and where she is right now mentally and physically?

BRITTANY MCPHEE: She's just such just a person who loves the game of basketball and just loves to be out there playing. So it really shows. And as long as you're having fun and excited to play, then everything else kind of falls into place. It's when you start thinking about the negatives that you get into trouble. But she's not like that because she loves the game so much.

Q. Kaylee, in the week that you had between the PAC-12 championship game and the Selection Show what was the thoughts about the fact that you might not be hosting and then what were the thoughts when it was announced that you guys were hosting and you would get to play one, maybe two more games here at Maples?

KAYLEE JOHNSON: We were obviously disappointed with the outcome of the PAC-12 tournament. It never feels good to have two weeks off like from a loss, you're kind of stuck with that feeling. But it helps us, just kind of it lights a fire inside of us to just want to get back on the court. It was really eye opening, realizing that you can't just have that many more mess ups and try again, you only get one chance. So after the game we knew at that point things were out of our hands, we were going to see if we were hosting, whether we weren't, technically, we didn't even know if we were in the tournament. So we're just looking forward to it and regardless of where we're going to be we knew what it was going to take to accomplish what we want to.

Q. How key has the development of Marta been handling the ball and to your team's success this year?

TARA VANDERVEER: I think Marta's been really key, not just handling the ball, her scoring, her defense, her court leadership. She's a competitor and you don't ever want to put pressure on one player and say, well how so and so goes, the team goes. But when she plays well, we obviously play a lot better. Thankfully I think that we can give her arrest with playing Kiana at the point and we have been able to play a lot of players

this year, which is, I think, been great for us. But her playing has really, there have been, she's had some absolutely brilliant games where we don't win the game without her doing what she has done. We're going to need her to have a great game for us to go deep in this tournament.

Q. Kaylee, can you talk about the time since the Oregon game and was there anything from that game that has kind of informed your guys' prep as you practiced since then?

KAYLEE JOHNSON: Yeah, after that game we obviously watched a lot of video on that, we just saw things that we knew that we just couldn't walk out on the court with again, just kind of lack of effort, lack of focus. Something the coaches I think have been great with emphasizing is how you practice is how you're going to play, you can't just show up to play and all of a sudden do everything right, you have to practice that way. So I think that's something we really try to bring in, into the practice with us these past two weeks really bringing concentration and focus and then giving everything you have on every play, because that's what's going to matter and that's what's going to show come game day.

Q. Lisa has talked about your influence on her and on other young coaches and being such a positive role model. How would you respond to that?

TARA VANDERVEER: That's a tremendous compliment. I think that Lisa's done a great job at Gonzaga. Having, obviously, been coaching a long time, I do want to be a good role model for our young coaches and I want to set a good example and hopefully I try to do that, but when it comes down to it, I would like to see the mentor win.

Q. Brit, you've talked in the past about kind of pushing the thought of taking the uniform off for the last timeout of your head. I'm wondering, how is that, where is that fitting with you now as you get ready to make this tournament run?

BRITTANY MCPHEE: I think it's still the same because I mean if you're going into the game thinking oh my gosh this is going to be the last time, like that's not a good attitude. I'm just excited and grateful for each extra game we get because there's a lot of seniors who don't get to put on the uniform again. So just want to soak up every minute and just have as much fun and just give it all.

Q. Brit, obviously I'm sure you're aware but your dad and Laura Stockton's dad also played together back in college, but I mean, what's the relationship like with Laura, do you know her and what's that like?

BRITTANY MCPHEE: Yeah, I don't know her well, we

grew up playing against each other a lot and then I've met like all the Stocktons, but it's just always a battle because she's such a great competitor and our parents know each other, but I don't think there's any extra fuel that needs to be added to this game because any sort of NCAA game should be enough incentive to play hard.

Q. I don't recall a 3 p.m. tip off in the past, do you? For a NCAA tournament game. Coach?

TARA VANDERVEER: We play when they tell us to play. I don't remember it, it's just, let's come out -- I think it's great on, hopefully, a rainy Saturday afternoon, what would be a better thing to do? Come and watch the game. So it's a great time to play. We're very excited.

THE MODERATOR: All right, thank you.