

Pac-12 Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Sunday, March 10, 2024

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

Stanford Cardinal

Coach Tara VanDerveer

Elena Bosgana

Cameron Brink

Kiki Iriafen

Postgame Press Conference

USC - 74, Stanford - 61

TARA VANDERVEER: First, I'd like to congratulate USC. I thought they played a very aggressive game, and McKenzie Forbes had a great game.

But I also want to congratulate Stanford Cardinal and the three women that I'm sitting up here with. I'm very proud of how hard they played.

I don't think we did a lot of the things we wanted to do. I thought Elena, number one, played great defense on JuJu. Worked really, really hard at that, just was really focused. And she had some help, obviously, from other people, but I think that was something we're really proud of.

They had some people make some shots early that don't necessarily, really the shooters that -- they haven't had the numbers all season long, but they knocked down some shots, and that was a little problem for us.

For us, I think that we have to execute offensively better. We didn't always get the shots we wanted. Just more than anything we have to rebound better.

But Cam and Kiki are warriors in there. They battled. They worked really hard, and I'm very proud of them. And we're going to get ready for the NCAA Tournament.

Q. I think it was the last game you had mentioned you came to the dais and said, I hope I don't have to keep coming up here talking about coming back from halftime. Was today a day where USC just did everything right, or were there things that you wish you would have done differently in terms of making



adjustments, because you made adjustments so perfectly throughout the tournament? What was it today that was different?

TARA VANDERVEER: I think we're capable of playing better. And I just want to say we're counting on a lot of young players that stepped up beautifully. Elena's game, she didn't play in the tournament really much last year. She came to the tournament and really made a difference. Kiki is a young player. I thought she had a great tournament.

Obviously Cam, we're getting blood off her jersey the whole time when she's coming over to the bench. She really battles out there.

I was very proud of how Chloe came in and really worked hard defensively and made some really big plays for us.

But today was their day. It wasn't that we were so bad. I thought they were very good.

Q. Cam and Kiki, what did USC do really well to outrebound you guys? It doesn't happen every game. What did you see from them to box you guys out so well?

CAMERON BRINK: We were in a weird defense. I think we tried our best, and they just had a really good game. So props to them. They're a great team.

Q. Kiki, was it you guys couldn't quite get -- maybe you got as close as five but then it kept pushing back out eight, nine, 10? Was it frustrating to you guys to not be able to cut it closer and seize momentum?

KIKI IRIAFEN: Of course we want to win the game, but throughout the game we never wavered or gave in or thought we were going to lose until the buzzer sounded. We thought we had a chance to win the game. We were very resilient, no matter what the score was.

Q. The last time you all played USC, you were most disappointed by the offensive execution. It seemed like some of that happened again today. Were they the



same problems with the offense when it came to those two match-ups? Or what specifically went wrong?

TARA VANDERVEER: I think we have to be able to just do some basic things better in terms of moving the ball and running offense. I have to take responsibility for it.

We've got a week to really work on it, which we will. Maybe also you're playing some teams in the tournament that don't know you like the teams you play in your conference know you.

But we have great offensive players, and I've got to put them in position to be successful. I think we can do more with kind of what we've got, and that's what our plan is.

Q. Is there any concern about defending the 3 in this game. USC shot 45 percent from 3. There were a few moments against Cal and Oregon State where they were getting some. Is that perimeter defense a concern for you?

TARA VANDERVEER: You look at players, as an example, McKenzie Forbes, she's a fifth-year grad student. And had a great career for four years.

You look at the same thing with Padilla. They're very good. They're very, very good. They shoot the ball very well. And obviously you throw in the focus that we had to extend to JuJu.

But they had some people come in that -- No. 4, Kayla Williams, hit some big shots for them. One of our biggest problem is we gave up 18 O boards. We were scrambling a little bit, but we have to put bodies on people.

And we get six O boards. And I think our rebounding was really the thing that let us down, and we have been a great rebounding team. But they're big, they're physical. And like you said, they hit some really big shots that kind of get you a little discouraged.

Q. QUESTION; from a big perspective you saw what Lindsay was able to do at Cal and now able to do something like this at USC. What stands out to you the way she's able to coach and build a program?

TARA VANDERVEER: Well, we have a great program because we have great players. And some of our players are young and developing, and I think they're doing extremely well.

But they're physical. They're big. They have some real good experience. And obviously JuJu is a generational talent.

Q. QUESTION; you mentioned the defense that Elena played on JuJu. What was kind of the thought process behind the defensive game plan and how did you feel it was executed?

TARA VANDERVEER: I thought it was executed really, really well. And some different people for them. Obviously she came in and had 51 on us.

Elena worked -- I thought she focused and did a great job. She had great help from Cam and Kiki. At some point, to help when they were rotating and doubling JuJu, that's when Padilla hit two shots outside and Kayla Williams hit two shots right at the beginning. That kind of affects you in terms of what you can do, in terms of how extended you can get in doubling.

But I thought Elena played a fantastic game. Cam battled the whole game. Kiki battled the whole game. Hannah Jump struggled a little bit. She had some nice looks.

But we're just going to build on it. Brooke kind of got clobbered in the head. She has a big egg in the front of her head. We'll just get better because of playing a great game. Like Cam said, just give them their props. They had a great day today.

Q. Lindsay Gottlieb talked about when she was a senior in college, over winter break she wrote all college coaches letters, and she wrote one to you and you wrote one back. What's it like now seeing it all come full circle and how far Coach Gottlieb has gotten since then?

TARA VANDERVEER: I think it's great, whether we have Lindsay or -- we have so many great young women coaches in our conference. To play this level of competition, whether it's Adia Barnes or Lindsay, JR Payne, Cori -- they're all doing really, really well. And I'm proud of them.

I'm sorry this is the last conference game and the last time that we'll be playing them. But it's been a great ride.

Q. Elena, can you talk about the defensive effort on JuJu and how you thought the defensive game plan was executed?

ELENA BOSGANA: I knew I had to be very focused on her. We knew she's the best player. I tried to keep her off from going right, and I knew that Cam and Kiki were next to me. So, I don't know, I just work hard.

Q. Coach, have you thought about at all in terms of

what you've done for women's basketball on the West Coast and how you've helped build up the Pac-12 and have players like JuJu wanting to come play in this conference and how it's contributed to the competitiveness of the conference and getting played in this final season?

TARA VANDERVEER: I can't tell you that I really think about that. I'm more concerned about how we're going to defend a player like JuJu. But I'm exceedingly proud of the great players that have come through our program at Stanford, including the three that I'm sitting with, and the fact that we do have such a great league that will get us ready for the NCAA Tournament.

So I'm feeling very confident that we can learn from this game and get better. And then I'm going to root for all the Pac-12 schools to do really well in the tournament. And I will take some pride in how well they do.

Q. I'm assuming you still think that you guys should be a No. 1 seed and possibly a second No. 1 seed from the conference. How do you just feel about where your position is now after today?

TARA VANDERVEER: You know, the most important thing is not seeding at all. That's going to be up to the committee. Again, I think that we won the regular season, and in a lot of ways our team, because we depend so heavily on Cam and Kiki, is not a three-game in four-day team, but more of a two-day and three days, you know what I mean.

So I think we're in great position for the NCAA. The most important thing is our team being healthy and people really wanting to play with each other.

They're a very close team. We have great leadership on our team. So I think we're going to be in really good shape, whatever seed we are. And we know that we want to do better than we did last year. We want to go to the regional. We have a goal of going to the Final Four, and that's not going to change.

Q. Cam, you've won the national championship. You've experienced some tough losses. I know that you're fresh off the court, but you always seem to remain so poised as well. Can you just talk about where this loss, how it sinks in? It's the last one in the Pac-12. We don't know quite yet, it could be your last Pac-12 Tournament game, but in terms of how you're going to soak this one in, shake it off, move forward, maybe feeding off of other losses that you've experienced since you've been at the peak and the valley.

CAMERON BRINK: Basketball is a game of wins and losses. You're not going to win every single game. I sat down with the girls. I said we tried our best. I'm really proud of Elena and Kiki. We fought our best. Shots didn't fall for us. We gambled on some people on defense.

I'm not disappointed. It's not fun to lose. It sucks. And it sucks it's the last Pac-12 game ever because it's such a great conference, but I think we're just going to use this. We learn from it and we go into March, and, yeah, we're going to turn some heads, hopefully.

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