

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

Saturday, March 17, 2018
Stanford, California



Karl Smesko

China Dow

Erica Nelson

Florida Gulf Coast Eagles

Florida Gulf Coast 80, Missouri 70

COACH KARL SMESKO: Obviously a great win for our program and a great effort by every kid we had that got on the floor. They all contributed in a big way to this success at different points during the game and I'm proud of them.

Q. Erica, thought you played an outstanding game today. I thought the defense was the best I've seen it all season. Would you agree with that?

ERICA NELSON: Yeah, throughout the game, we knew what player that they were going to emphasize, and we tried to just focus on that, and then she did an amazing job tonight but we took everything else away from them. So when you focus in on one player and nobody else is scoring, and all five of us were, it's hard to beat us.

Q. You were able to dominate the team in the paint somewhat and stay even on the boards. Don't have a single six-footer on your team and they have quite a few. How were you able to do that today?

CHINA DOW: I think with their post players being in foul trouble, they really couldn't jump because it's risky. So if you're going in, at first they was blocking shots because they wasn't in foul trouble. But once they did get in foul trouble, we was able to attack the basket, and they softened up on defense, so it worked out for the best and we was just finishing. We knew they was going to go on runs, but like we just tried our best to stick with it and stay in the game.

Q. This was a 12-seed beating a 5-seed but didn't really look like an upset to me. Did you feel confident coming in? Did you feel like this was an upset today?

CHINA DOW: No, because at the end of the day we do belong here. We're just putting our name on the map to let people know we are not just a soft, mid major team. We can compete with the best of the best. It was a big win for us. Missouri is a good team but we

pulled out the win.

Q. Coming out of media time-outs, you're over on the sideline riling up the fans, 4,000 miles away from Fort Myers.

CHINA DOW: It means a lot. Our fans is a big part of our program, and they get us going, so if you want to stay in the game, you keep our fans going; I don't care how many fans other people have. Our fans always make noise, so shout out to them for making their way down to Cali and we can just have fun and enjoy the California weather for a couple more days.

Q. This didn't look much like an upset. I know you're not super pleased when you get a 12-, 13-, 14-seeding. But do you look at this as an upset? Or do you feel like the quickness and the sets you run would be able to off set what Missouri likes to do, as well as what you were able to do today?

COACH KARL SMESKO: Well, it's an upset in terms of seeding, but we definitely came in with the mindset that this was a game we can win if we executed at a high level.

A big thing that we emphasized was the last four times we've been here, we performed well. But at the beginning of each game, there was like a sense of a little bit of nervousness or tension, and we never got off to good starts because I thought that's a little doubt, are we as good as the opponent.

And so we made a real emphasis this time to let our team know, hey, you belong here; you're just as good. It's going to be whoever plays better today.

And this was the first time that from the jump ball, I thought we were all in and believed that we could get it done.

Q. Due to foul trouble and a lot of other things, you ended up having to use a lot of different players matched up on Cunningham, and it looks like towards the end you settled on China. What did you like about that matchup?

COACH KARL SMESKO: Well, that was actually Coach Lyles's idea. You know, we had Rose on her and Rose was making her work. She was hurting us with post-ups for a while, we were guarding her well on the perimeter but we were slow to help on the post.

So we actually, I put tie on her for a little bit but then tie got lost on a screen and we gave up the three to her. So that was Coach Lyles said, hey, I think we need to put China on her. I was a little concerned because China fouls a lot and I didn't want to have to put China on the bench; and, it's a lot of effort to be chasing Cunningham around and then guarding her in the post. You've got to be the first one back because she runs out in transition.

But all the credit for that goes to Coach Lyles. I definitely wasn't leaning in that direction but China did a great job on her. You know, really helped limit her scoring down the stretch.

Q. I thought the two keys in this thing were, one, turnovers, just nine for the game and they had 16. You were really able to hang on the boards today. I thought those two things were key. If you can expand on that.

COACH KARL SMESKO: That's always the biggest key is you have to try to find a way to win possessions, and the possessions are how many offensive rebounds and how many turnovers you have.

So we know we're at a disadvantage rebounding, so all five of our players have to be contributing on those defensive boards on every shot, and they all know that that's their responsibility.

And then we have to be better with the ball than the other team, because if we are going to give up a few more offensive rebounds, we can't also have a few more turnovers and expect to be successful.