

# NCAA Women's 1st and 2nd Rounds: Austin

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Austin, Texas



**Charli Turner Thorne**  
**Reili Richardson**  
**Charnea Johnson-**  
**Chapman**

**Kiara Russell**

Arizona State Sun Devils

CHARLI TURNER THORNE: Obviously, excited to be continuing to prepare. With Texas, it's hard to find any chinks in their armor. They're an incredibly talented team, they play fast, great transition team, great rebounding, good depth, obviously led by their senior back court. It's very, very formidable.

But we're excited. It's a fun challenge. We've played this level of competition day-in and day-out in the Pac-12, so it should be fun.

**Q. I'd like to put a question to each of you. You were in a similar situation last season. You were in Columbia, South Carolina. You took the National Championship team to the brink. You were within one minute of that upset. What did that feel like walking off the court to lose that that day, and what did you take from that experience into tomorrow now night?**

KIARA RUSSELL: It was an amazing feeling that we just emptied out and played with each other. It obviously came down to one possession, with the missed box out. But we just came back, we grouped, and we're here again.

CHARNEA JOHNSON-CHAPMAN: Yeah, kind of like she said, it came down to one possession, so we just took that. You've got to pay attention to all the little things. You've got to do every little thing right and you have to go hard every possession.

REILI RICHARDSON: I think it was an awesome atmosphere to play in, and just the little things are really important, and we're here again, and we have another chance.

**Q. May I ask the same type of question for all three.**

Texas talks about the advantages of sleeping in their own bed through the tournament. They're at home. They get the comfort of home fans. You guys as opponents, how much more difficult is it to be an opponent in a situation like this rather than playing at home?

KIARA RUSSELL: Yeah, Texas fans are going to be crazy and all that. But we just have to focus on each other, focus on the game. Can't focus on anything, it's about the little things and we'll be fine.

CHARNEA JOHNSON-CHAPMAN: Yeah, we have to stay connected with each other. We have to make sure we have eye contact, make sure we're talking. Make sure team touches and make sure we're all on the same page so we can't let the atmosphere bother us.

REILI RICHARDSON: I think it's awesome to play in games like this, and it comes down to just being connected with each other.

**Q. Reili, as a point guard, how will you control the tempo of the game? Is how important will it shall for you as a guard to get back on defense?**

REILI RICHARDSON: We've played really good transition teams before, so we have experience.

**Q. Charnea, you guys were a fantastic rebounding team yesterday, especially on the offensive boards. Texas has a very good defensive rebounding team too. What's it going to take to offset their strengths, which appears to be a strength of yours too?**

CHARNEA JOHNSON-CHAPMAN: Just stepping to them first and boxing them out. Like a lot of teams can just jump, go straight up and then it's a 50-50 chance who is going to come down with it. But if you hit them first, you'll have the advance. So we're going to focus on stepping to them and not stepping in and hitting them before they hit us.

**Q. I kind of wondered, as a player, there is a lot made about homecourt advantage. But I'm kind of wondering as a player in a tournament like this, if it doesn't in some way give you an advantage because you've kind of approached this thing as a unit. You're staying in the same hotel. You're not kind of spread out all over the city. Is there**

**anything that playing on the road is maybe even better than playing in front of your home crowd tournament time?**

CHARNEA JOHNSON-CHAPMAN: I mean, I guess it depends on who the team is or the opponent. It's always a challenge playing on the road. But like I said, just being connected and playing for each other and playing for a bigger purpose than ourselves, it's always going to be fun.

KIARA RUSSELL: Yeah, I feel like a home game or an away game, as long as you're connected and you're focused on the little things you have to do and your goals, you'll be good.

**Q. Do you guys get energized by the crowds even when the crowd is pulling for the other team?**

CHARNEA JOHNSON-CHAPMAN: I do, personally.

**Q. Why is that?**

KIARA RUSSELL: It's kind of fun to like shut up the crowd. I don't know. That's just me.

CHARNEA JOHNSON-CHAPMAN: It's a lot of energy. Because a lot of times the crowd is like the other team does something and they're still making noise. Like I can't really hear specifically what they're saying, but the fact that they're making noise is in my head like, oh, they're cheering for us now.

REILI RICHARDSON: I think just shutting up the crowd, like Kiara said, and just pushing back.

**Q. Yesterday y'all didn't shoot that well from three points in the first half. Tomorrow night might you be hesitant to shoot a lot of three pointers because they can get lead to long rebounds and that could contribute to upping the tempo?**

KIARA RUSSELL: I'm just going to say that we're playing with confidence. Everybody's going to have times where they're going to take their shots. They're also going to look inside and out. So we'll have each other's back by rebounding.

**Q. Charli, about that close loss last year, this round, I guess how much did it hurt that team to have that opportunity slip away, and how much do you think they carried that experience into tomorrow night?**

CHARLI TURNER THORNE: Well, Robbi made a good comment yesterday. She's like it just made us hungry. Each player is a little different on how they think about it and remember it. We had some really good seniors in that game, and we don't have anymore.

But that's the incredible part of this team. We don't have one person in our starting lineup that was a full-

time starter last year. So for them to be in this position right now is just, you know, a super credit to them and how hard they've worked.

But Arizona State basketball, we're about winning, we're about championships, we're about making deep runs. We didn't want to be knocked out. We knew it was more us than them. I think that's what they knew. We had an untimely turnover, we had a missed box out, and that's what they keep saying things like, we had it and we didn't take it, and they know that.

So I think what it does in a nutshell, it gives them confidence that they absolutely can win this game, you know? And we have these types of environments in our conference, and we talk all the time about mastering the environment. You know, just master the environment and you're going to be fine.

So the things that they're saying, the things that we talk about in that regard, so I think -- again, unless the biggest thing that happens is people start playing as individuals. So you hear them echoing to stay connected, stay connected, and that will be huge for us tomorrow.

Then we have to execute and hit shots and play good basketball as well.

**Q. Reili mentioned the tempo before this season. Do you do anything different? Instead of sending one guard back, you send two guards back?**

CHARLI TURNER THORNE: We kind of do that. We play a three and a half, we have a safety and a ball stopper. With this game sometimes we'll say, hey, just two safeties. Our ball stopper has been fairly ineffective this year. She's been too tired. We're not getting to the ball the way we normally do.

We had a pretty good discussion on that this morning leading into practice. We don't have a scout team. We're not practicing. We're not getting to practice our transition defense. But it is one of the biggest things we worked on after the Pac-12 tournament to now.

So I'm confident that we'll be solid in it. I do think it's one of the biggest keys is our rebounding to win this game. So your question is right on point, and long shots, long rebounds, long rebounds lead to quick transitions. You know, we just shot too many threes in the first half last night. That's just not us. But I think we're going to start with ball stopper safety, and try to get our ball stopper to actually get to the ball, which we haven't been doing. We didn't do that great last night.

But we're athletic. We can get back with them. I think we're plenty fast enough. We just have to get a jump. I thought we had too many soft possessions in transition

last night for sure, and we've got to clean that up for tomorrow.

**Q. Because Texas is such a good defensive team, if you're not able to control the tempo the way you like it, how will you go about your half court offense to try to create?**

CHARLI TURNER THORNE: Yeah, and we had 15 points in transition, so we got going a little bit yesterday. We'll definitely try, obviously, to get their defense because it is so good.

We just, really for us, Texas has pressure. Sometimes they just don't guard people. We're not exactly sure how they're going to play us, but we've seen it all. I think it's probably -- obviously it's going to be a lot harder to get that many second shots. So we have to be more efficient, and we have to finish our plays better. Get the ball to our top scorers better, get more touches for them. Just execute better overall because it's very unlikely that we're going -- however many offensive rebounds we had last night, they're probably going to be a lot stingier about it.

**Q. After the game yesterday Coach mentioned you guys were forcing your shots too much. What is going to be key for tomorrow to get back on track?**

CHARLI TURNER THORNE: Kind of what I just said. Not forcing, executing. Getting to the next action when they take away an action. Also just sometimes, obviously purposely our plays are designed to get the person the shot at the end of the action, after four possible looks because you get to this point, defense is so good and people take things away.

So we just have to be patient. We have to wait on the screens. We have to read. They're going to be chasing us over screens and not switching like Nebraska did. So, I actually think some of the less -- switching of the screens might make it a little bit -- I don't know if it will be easier, but it will be something that we've probably played against a little bit more.

But, yeah, this is something we worked on a lot in the break too. Just better execution. We're out there and we're half speed, and we're not waiting on screens, not cutting hard, we're bad. That was us in the first half against Nebraska. I thought we cleaned it up a little bit in the second half, and we just have to build on that tomorrow night.

**Q. I believe it's been four years now that the NCAA went to the format where top four seeds are playing at home. One, do you favor that because it generates more fans to venues, or do you think it's unfair that three teams have natural road games where one team has the comforts?**

CHARLI TURNER THORNE: Yeah, that's a great question. I mean, obviously big picture-wise we want our tournament to draw. We want people in the stands. We want it to be an atmosphere for the student-athletes, for everybody, for television. We want to be good television. So I get it. I understand.

Obviously as coaches, being a very old coach, we fought for the neutral site. Then when we had the neutral sites and we couldn't draw in them.

Obviously, from a competitive equity standpoint you like neutral sites. But you've got to take all the parts into consideration and all the parts are, you know what, you need -- we want television to want us. We want atmosphere and stuff. I think it's hard.

We'd love to get back to the point where we have neutral sites and we have full stands and big crowds. But we are just not there right now.

**Q. Because you sub a lot or very quickly, defenses don't get used to the personnel on the floor because you might be subbing every three to four minutes. How might that play an advantage for you tomorrow?**

CHARLI TURNER THORNE: Well, I mean, Nebraska had a lot more depth than us, and Texas has a lot more depth than us, and they're both playing more people than we play.

We're just playing hard and get tired. I don't think three to four minute rotations are that short. But it's going to be really important that our bench steps up. I thought they did yesterday big time. Sophia and Jamie, and obviously Kiki, and I thought Junior, Bre Sanders, gave us some quality minutes off the bench, and that's going to be huge again.

We had such a short rotation I have to sub some people quickly, because I kind of have a four-guard rotation. If they all get exhausted at the same time, I can't sub them all. So that's part of our guard rotation.

And the post just kind of feeling the game out. We got in foul trouble a little bit too, and that didn't help us yesterday with our rotation.

**Q. I don't want you to give out your game plan right now.**

CHARLI TURNER THORNE: Don't worry, I won't.

**Q. When you think of trapping Brooke out of a pick-and-roll or the guards out of a pick-and-roll to have more pressure especially on the half court?**

CHARLI TURNER THORNE: Yeah, I guess you'll just have to see, huh?

things like that.

**Q. Does Texas remind you of any team you've played this year?**

CHARLI TURNER THORNE: Just off the top of my head last night I kind of likened them to Oregon in our conference, because Oregon is big, very big inside. They're a great transition team, and they have a great back court. Pick-and-roll, Peck and roll, on-ball screen, action, every possession. That's a comparison, so. We held Oregon in our second game. We just didn't score. Yeah, we had about 20, 25 points below their average.

**Q. In tournaments?**

CHARLI TURNER THORNE: No, it was the last home weekend of conference. But obviously they're different, but that's probably the best comparison. The difference is everybody gets in the last weekend of conference and everybody's tired. Then everybody gets fresh. The transition game is back going and that's what Texas has. Then we have to be ready for that.

**Q. Very competitive (Indiscernible) some tall post players, how is it going to be facing a team like Texas?**

CHARLI TURNER THORNE: Yeah, I think with Oregon State, with Stanford, we've definitely played teams with good, effective bigs. I think early in the season we struggled with it, and as the season went on, we got a lot better at handling the bigs, because we're obviously not a very big team. So I think we feel confident that we can be solid and get some.

**Q. Are you concerned because they are such a big team that sometimes guards who dig and help bigs out?**

CHARLI TURNER THORNE: You keep wanting me to tell you how we're going to defend them. Yeah, you've got to pick your poison, huh?

**Q. Do you ever talk with Tara about anything?**

CHARLI TURNER THORNE: No, never. No, I'm just kidding. I'm joking. I played for Tara at Stanford. You know, you like Xs and Os and even strategy or?

**Q. Or even friendship. I don't know.**

CHARLI TURNER THORNE: Usually when we see each other. We always text each other, and what she says is the best. Obviously as my college coach, I have great respect for her. I probably once or twice over the years I have maybe called and asked her a question or something. I don't think she's called and asked me a question.

But we share scouts during this time of year, and mainly just best wishes and stuff, birthday wishes and