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AN INTERVIEW WITH:

**COACH TARA VANDERVEER
CHINEY OGWUMIKE
NNEMKADI OGWUMIKE
KAYLA PEDERSEN**

THE MODERATOR: We'll go ahead and take an opening statement from coach.

COACH TARA VANDERVEER: First I want to congratulate North Carolina on a great season and they have a heck of a team. I thought that their team really played really well, they stepped up, made big plays, but our team stayed in there and battled and this is kind of one of those classic survive and move on. So Kayla, Neka, Chiney, I thought Chiney just was a warrior in there, there were some real big bodies, some real strong aggressive experienced players and Chiney battled. And then Neka really had a great second half, we struggled a little bit in the first half, but I thought Neka made some real big plays for us and Kayla was steady throughout and I'm really excited that we'll be playing Monday night.

THE MODERATOR: We'll take questions for the student-athletes.

Q. Neka, do you feel like you guys survived tonight? That was a little bit of a brutal thing out there sometimes?

NNEMKADI OGWUMIKE: Absolutely. Our team fought hard,

obviously we didn't come out as hard as we wanted to in the first half, but at halftime coach told us we have to be more aggressive and take the opportunities that they're giving us, because they were leaving a lot of people open and letting us do a lot of the things we like to do.

You think we kind of captivated on that and we delivered. And all the way through the whole 20 minutes of the second half. And I think we just did a really good job of staying together and staying poised.

Q. Chiney, when you're looking at the stat sheets, what stands out? What are you looking at?

CHINEY OGWUMIKE: The first thing my eyes go to personally are turnovers, because I try not to make too many of those and I think that with possessions in a close game like this turnovers are key, so personally that's what I look at. But other than that, I think that's, we're just, we just look and laugh and, yeah, just -- you can say it.

NNEMKADI OGWUMIKE: We just try to take care of the ball so we were looking at championship was proud because she only had one.

CHINEY OGWUMIKE: From six to one, guys.

NNEMKADI OGWUMIKE: And so we just try our hardest to perform as well as we can. When you see something like that it's just kind of exciting to know that

you tried your best to take care of the ball and contribute as much as you could on the court.

Q. Kayla, can you talk about what made this team distinctive? They were bigger than a lot of teams you've played in quite awhile. Can you talk about their size and what it meant for you guys.

KAYLA PEDERSEN: They are very big team, they're very aggressive, they're very scrappy. I think it they are rebound really hard. They send four to five people to the offensive boards and that's tough to deal with. And I think that we did a better job boxing out in the second half, which kind of separated from us them for a couple moments, but they're just a very aggressive team.

Q. For the sisters, can you guys, Neka, start with you, a little bit, you were struggling a lot of this game, it almost looked like they took you out of it. And did you guys talk to each other, because in the last 10 minutes or so something clicked and you looked more like what we have seen for 30 games.

NNEMKADI OGWUMIKE: Absolutely. My teammates were in my ear constantly just telling me, you can do this, you're fine, just keep being aggressive. They knew what I was capable of. That really helped. And my coaches as well. They're just always in my ear. I actually told Melody Murphy, because she was telling me like, you know, Neka, like, you can score. And she was being really supportive. And I told her she was my mind in my mind. They're just very, very supportive. I've never been more thankful and without their support I don't think that I would be as successful as I could be, because they believe in me and when they believe in me I believe in myself. They're just a really big reason why I do what I do.

CHINEY OGWUMIKE: And I agree. I'm also going to give all the credit to our bench, they were really motivational and they got excited and especially Jeanette, even though she had a semi rough night, she was still Jeanette Pohlen bringing the ball, taking care of the ball, making sure we ran our plays. And she really helps us a lot despite what the stat sheet might say, so just the bench, keeping us in the game, mentally, and then motivating us physically to make plays also I think is key tonight.

NNEMKADI OGWUMIKE: It's interesting actually because we learned a new word this week it's called benergy and so our bench as a lot of benergy and they really motivate us throughout the game.

CHINEY OGWUMIKE: Which is going to be key.

Q. Neka, did you realize it was your sister that had grabbed the rebound and scored with like 35, 40 seconds left?

NNEMKADI OGWUMIKE: Not until after I turned around and saw her sliding on the floor. But honestly, that was an awesome play we ran and I was really sorry that I couldn't make that shot I was thinking to my self I should have used my left hand, but when I turned around and saw she got the rebound, I wasn't surprised at all, but that's just kind of a characteristic of her. She's very aggressive and relentless and she does a really good job of firing the team up.

It's kind of scary because she's almost like a junior out there. She knows what she's doing and she knows how to get involved in any way possible when she's on the court and that was just a really exciting play and I mentioned before that I think that really turned the game

around.

Q. Question for any of you, you get to play Gonzaga again, what, what do you think is the greatest challenge that Courtney presents?

KAYLA PEDERSEN: She's a tremendous point guard. I think she sees the floor extremely well. Knows when to take her shot, knows when to dish. So I think she's just a very heady player and it will be tough to stay in front of her and kind of take away her passing lanes and her vision.

CHINEY OGWUMIKE: Same.

NNEMKADI OGWUMIKE: Kayla said it. No, no, Kayla said it well.

CHINEY OGWUMIKE: Okay. Okay. Well also I think that they have other great players, they have great shooters on their team. So it's not only defending Courtney but it's also defending those people she passes to because they make a lot of shots. So it will be a handful but we're really excited to play.

THE MODERATOR: All right. We'll excuse the student-athletes. We'll take questions for coach.

Q. Jeanette had a rough night. You said the other night if she hadn't played well up to this point that maybe that was good for you guys and she would bust out, that didn't happen tonight. What is the conversation you have with Jeanette tonight? Do you think her confidence is a little shaky?

COACH TARA VANDERVEER: Honestly, a lot of times I'm not really concerned about her confidence, I have a hundred percent confidence in her. We are going with Jeanette. She is the person we brought to the dance and that's who we're dancing with. She is a great player, she has had a fabulous year, and the thing I said to Jeanette was, I'm glad that wasn't your last game.

Because she has been so important for our team's success and I

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know that she's just going to break out and play really well for us when we need her to.

Q. Will you just talk about the matchups and their size and the game. It looked a little bit like a slog for quite a long time just in terms of?

COACH TARA VANDERVEER: You mean this game North Carolina game?

Q. Yes.

COACH TARA VANDERVEER: Well first of all I think that North Carolina has very talented players. And some of their players who have not shot well made big shots for them. DeGraffenreid hit I think two 3s, is that right? Two 3s, you had Ruffin-Pratt whose not shot well for them making shots, so we had to make some adjustments and we weren't able to double the way we wanted to double. So defensively they were tough for to us guard. What we did very well we did not give them easy shots, we got back on defense. We did not rebound as well as we needed to, nor did we shoot as well as we he needed to but to have seven turnovers against them, we took care of the ball, which was a great thing.

As you already said, Jeanette didn't shoot that well, Toni didn't shoot that well, Lindy didn't shoot that well, so other people picked up the slack. I thought Joslyn came in and gave us great minutes and you can expect her to be playing more. Sarah Boothe came in, even though she didn't score, she played very smart, gave us a good physical presence in there.

And we had a lot of people struggling tonight and some that have was us, but some that have was them. They are a very talented team and we had to --

and they beat some very good teams and we had to really play well and make plays down the stretch. So I hope that, I just think that coming out against Gonzaga, they're a different team, but equally talented in a different way.

Q. What do you think is the greatest challenge that Courtney presents to your team?

COACH TARA VANDERVEER: I think as Kayla said, she does a lot of things really well for them. She -- to graduate with over what? Over a thousand, or how many assists?

Q. 1,000 assists, 2,000 points.

COACH TARA VANDERVEER: Right. And no one else has ever done it before?

Q. That's right.

COACH TARA VANDERVEER: So, obviously she passes the ball really well, she shoots the ball really well, she's an extremely heady player, and as Chiney pointed out, she's not passing to chumps, she's got some really talented players, Redmon, Standish, Bekkering, they're all very talented and they're ready for her passes and she delivers. So I think you have to play great defense, and we'll have to take care of the ball and get good shots and knock them down. And rebounding also will be a really big key for us.

THE MODERATOR: All right. Thank you.

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