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AN INTERVIEW WITH:

**COACH TARA VANDERVEER
NNEMKADI OGWUMIKE
KAYLA PEDERSEN
JEANETTE POHLEN**

THE MODERATOR: We'll take questions for Coach VanDerveer.

COACH TARA VANDERVEER: First, I want to compliment and congratulate Gonzaga and a great season and just -- they have a terrific team, Kelly does a great job, and also the crowd, having over 11,000 people coming out and watching women's basketball I think is a positive statement about basketball in the west and basketball right up here in Spokane.

And also thanking all the people that made this tournament so special. We are so excited to have won it. Two times up here in Spokane for our seniors, and this is just a wonderful experience and we're very excited to be going to I understand Indianapolis.

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

Q. Can you guys just talk about how you're feeling right now?

KAYLA PEDERSEN: I'm feeling extremely elated right now.

(Laughter.)

No, it's awesome. I think right now we're just, we get to soak it in, and us

seniors, we feel on top of the world right now going four for four and Neka is three for three. I mean we played a good Gonzaga team and they're really tough. So to come out with a win, you just, I feel very good right now.

NNEMKADI OGWUMIKE: Right now I'm just really proud of the old people and the young people. I'm proud of these seniors because they're four for four and I'm proud of my freshmen and all the young players that aren't necessarily as experienced, they just kind of came into the team this year and they have been giving us so much and the support system that we had today, I think that the number one word today was benergy, because I could always hear them no matter what. Even if I was on the other side of the court. And we just kind of fought together on and off the court and I'm just really proud of everybody right now.

JEANETTE POHLEN: Yeah, I'm so excited, I really can't even put it into words right now. Going to the Final Four every year, I mean it's a dream for people, some people don't even get that close. So it's, I'm more than happy to be going to the Final Four and just really proud of how we stepped up and how people made some huge plays in the second half and how we rebounded. We really owned the glass tonight. I'm just really proud of how people stepped up.

Q. Jeanette, can you talk about two

things. First of all, you talked about you weren't going to lose confidence in your shot and tonight it really seemed like you had it back. And how much of a factor that was. If you could talk about that. And then also what you guys did to sort of effectively neutralize Courtney Vandersloot in the second half.

JEANETTE POHLEN: Well, as far as my shot goes, I think, yeah, I definitely still had confidence in myself and sure, you can say that once you made five for eight or whatever, but I'm really being honest about that. And my team definitely stayed with me, but I think for our guards and our perimeter players, we have to be able to knock down that shot or else they will just pack it in on Neka and Chiney and any of our posts who are posting up in there. So I think more than anything I was just really happy to step up and kind of spread out the defense.

Then as far as Courtney Vandersloot, I think we did a great job in the second half, it was a great decision to go to zone, because they have that pick and roll play and I didn't know if it was the best matchups for us or I don't know what it was, but I think our zone really came through big for us tonight.

Q. For any of the players, obviously a huge home court advantage for them really considering this is in Spokane their home city, you guys come out in this game not affected by it at all, shoot 66 percent in the first half, how were you guys able to overcome that?

KAYLA PEDERSEN: I think that that type of environment gets us really excited. I think it gets our blood pumping, when everybody's rooting against you you kind of want to play harder, but I think from the get go we just wanted to make sure that the crowd was a non-factor, that they didn't get any spurts so that like the crowd wasn't behind them. But so I think we did a really good job just jumping out on them fast.

NNEMKADI OGWUMIKE: I totally agree. We have had experience with that before, with everyone in the crowd cheering with you like on December 30 and the then everyone in the crowd cheering against you earlier on in the season. We played at home and at Gonzaga's home and that place was sold out. Today was roaring. I remember when we first ran out we were already warming up and they ran out and I don't think I've ever heard a gym that loud. It was amazing.

But at the same time it's really exciting to play in an environment like that. The way I take it is if they're not cheering, if they're not cheering for you they're cheering against you for a reason it's because we're a very strong team and Gonzaga's also a very strong team as well. And they definitely put up a fight and I'm just really happy we got to play in this environment with a team as talented as they are.

Q. For Kayla, you have some of the greatest players in this game, Lisa Leslie is one of them never played in a Final Four in their careers, when you came to Stanford, could you have imagined that you could do this, to make four, that puts you in pretty select company really in the history of women's basketball.

KAYLA PEDERSEN: I think that coming into Stanford I didn't know that the team was this good, but under like Candice's leadership my freshman year, I think she kind of created a tradition of just winning. And I soon realized that, hey, we can do something with this team. I think that with Neka coming in and Jeanette's always been here and Tara, they just, they just push us every day.

I think it's very easy to set our expectations low and we haven't done that. So I think that's one of the big things

that's helped us stay on top.

Q. Just to be in the group of players that have gone to four Final Fours.

JEANETTE POHLEN: Yeah, I mean like I was saying earlier maybe we some people might take this for granted, but I think we're very grateful to be going and like Kayla was saying, with the seniors that we had coming in our freshman year, Candice really did show us the way and she was one of those players that made people better around her. And she was always excited no matter who it was, she just brought that energy and taught us what it was like to win.

She really did lead us. I think that kind of carried on and then in the next year and so on and so forth, and here we are fourth year going to another Final Four. It's just like mind blowing.

Q. Neka, talk about your sister's game tonight.

NNEMKADI OGWUMIKE: Obviously Chiney is my other half and so we're like fire and ice, she was definitely on fire today. And it actually got to a point when we were telling her to calm down, because she was a little bit out of control at some points. But it's okay, because she's making aggressive moves.

But I'm just really proud of her. This whole weekend she's just been talking about, Neka, I just, I don't know what it really feels like, because the last two times I went I was in the stands. And I was just trying to help her just let her know how exciting it was but also trying to calm her nerves, because she was nervous. She's a starting freshman, she's never been in that situation before.

But I think she has so much fight in her that she was just determined to take the team as far as they could. And she definitely contributed a lot today. I'm just

really proud of how she played. She was always there if I missed and so I wanted to be there when she missed. So I think we did a really good job of playing together today and I'm just really proud of her performance.

Q. Jeanette, before you switched to the zone the second half and had a really good success at shutting them down Courtney had like 18 of her team's straight points in the at one stretch in the second 10 minutes of the first half. What was going through your head, I know you weren't guarding her all the time, but what was going through your head when you were watching her and is she the best player that Stanford has faced this year?

JEANETTE POHLEN: That's a tough question, that second one. But she's one of those players that really is aware of what's going on around her and she really pushed the ball well. She's great reading the defense.

She's definitely one of the best point guards we played against this season. We played against a lot of players, I don't know if I'm at liberty to say if she's the best player that we played against, but she's definitely up there and I mean she was keeping their team in the game. She just was doing what she could. I think that I really applaud her effort.

Q. Neka, can you give us an idea of how Chiney is right now after this victory?

NNEMKADI OGWUMIKE: I don't know if I can explain it really. But she's definitely acting like she's still on the court. So, she's just really excited as is everyone else in the locker room. Like I said, it's all about the benergy, and so that's kind of expounded upon the whole team. Everyone's really excited. She's definite really excited.

THE MODERATOR: All right.

We'll thank the student-athletes and take questions for coach.

Q. How did you guys practice the zone? Did you think about that, just how, can you take us through the thought process and the game scheming?

COACH TARA VANDERVEER: Well again, Courtney Vandersloot, she got, the basket got really big for her. That happened once to me in my whole life. And she's just a great shooter and we had to do something different.

At halftime we talked about playing the screen differently and we spent a lot of halftime doing it and then in talking with coaches, Amy and Kate and Bobbi, they just said, we can zone them. And so I said, all right, well, let's look at it. It was their ball the first possession, I said, we'll stay in it as long as they're not bombing us out of it. And we were able to stay in it the whole second half.

We did go over kind of our zone assignments in practice and in fact today at practice the time ran out, with 60 minutes and I just said, all right, we're going to walk through that and be prepared for it. So we walked through it without a ball and I just said, you know, we got to be ready for it.

And we have been working on our zone a little bit I think especially coming into the NCAA tournament knowing maybe not being as familiar with players and being able to spend as much time scouting, so it worked out really well. I think actually the key to it or -- I'll wait for another question, sorry.

Q. No, keep talking. We're good.

COACH TARA VANDERVEER: Well I think that our rebounding and quite honestly the fact that we didn't let them do -- we didn't let them get layups, transition baskets. They are a transition team. And

one of our interns Lauren and Sharae, both of them actually did highlights for me, they cut out every game, they played all of their highlights. And I just watched them just run and run and run and run and run.

And we made a decision to send three people back. And I think that was really key. And the fact that they didn't get going and they didn't get their crowd going. We needed to really keep their crowd out.

Then once we got the lead, we were able to -- they made a couple little runs, but we were able to sit in the zone and our team got confident shooting the ball. Jeanette and I think 3-point shoot something a little contagious, Lindy hit some big shots, Mikaela hit a big shot. So when we went 9-20, that's great from three. So I just think the zone was part of it, but a lot of it was really getting back, not letting them run their transition.

Q. Jeanette she was confident in her shot, you said yesterday you were still a hundred percent in her shot, but when she hit that first shot did you feel good about how the game was going to go for her?

COACH TARA VANDERVEER: You know, I did, and a lot of it was just watching her, watching the mechanics of it. She looked very relaxed and confident and I just talked to her before every game and I just said you need to take open shots, period. If nothing else, you got people in their rebounding so if you miss, so what.

And she knocked down shots and then I think Lindy really was a really big and Mikaela and I think that Kayla will get her 3-point shot going, so we'll have really three or four. Joslyn took a couple, but Jeanette led the way with her 3-point shooting and her confidence.

Q. Really quick, how much zone did you play this year?

COACH TARA VANDERVEER: There were probably of all the minutes like, I don't know, maybe six or seven percent at maximum. We're really not a zone team.

But a lot of it, I didn't feel like a lot of times we had to double a low post and, they don't have like a big get to know the block kind of, so we could stay extended and a lot of teams don't allow to you do that. And they did.

They attack a zone very well, I think Kayla Standish behind the zone does a great job. We knew what they were looking for and we dodged some bullets that they missed some shots that I think they probably ordinarily make, but this is a very big stage and they have never been on it before and it might change just a little bit of the release and I think we were fortunate.

Q. Will you talk about Neka and Chiney tonight and maybe through this whole tournament and how absolutely valuable they are to what you guys do and how you succeed?

COACH TARA VANDERVEER: Well, they have been playing really well. I knew the first possession that Neka got that ball the way she went to that basket I said, she is here to play. And she just, she was aggressive. Whereas against North Carolina I thought she was more analytical. Tonight she just said give me the ball I'm going to the basket.

And then it's contagious. Chiney did the same thing. And I thought Chiney just had a great game. And a great tournament. And then we start, we rebounded, we didn't really get out running as much as we could we just didn't want to kind of turn it over too much, but they got

some really nice looks inside and finished very, very well.

Q. Talk about your perspective, you're taking a class to four straight Final Fours. What's your take on all this?

COACH TARA VANDERVEER: Before the game I told our team I said history will be made tonight. Let's be on the good side of it. Going to four Final Fours for Stanford, what this senior class has accomplished and I'm including Mel in that senior class, is outstanding. And I just believed in this team, we have worked hard. I think that players that they mentioned whether it was people like Candice, but even go further back, Trisha Stevens was in the stands. She went to the Final Four. Won a National Championship. Rosalyn is right here, been at the Final Four. I got texts from Jen, Jayne Appel, I mean it's just, it's really special that we're back at the Final Four, four years in a row. It's incredibly exciting and just tomorrow I just have to wake up and pinch myself I'm so happy for this team.

Q. One team that won't be going to the Final Four is Tennessee and I'm kind of curious if you thought what you thought of that game. You probably didn't have much of a chance to watch it at all, but is it a little bit of a sign that maybe there's a little bit more parity than people thought in women's basketball?

COACH TARA VANDERVEER: I did not want to know the score. I just wanted to focus totally, I watched a little bit of the game but honestly I was on a television I couldn't even see and I was thinking about our game.

They have a great program there and it's, I think just congratulations to Notre Dame for beating Tennessee. I think Gonzaga shows that there's more than just a couple teams that can play

basketball. There are more than a couple players too.

But Tennessee has a great team, that was a very tough game that we lost back there to them. And I know that Pat does an excellent job and they will be reloading and they will be tougher next year.

Q. Anything about Spokane and coming year after year after year, right?

COACH TARA VANDERVEER:
We love it here. It's -- I just think that not just the -- it was a first class tournament and the fact that 11,000 people came out to watch women's basketball is a compliment to the community and the excitement that Kelly has developed and brought to Spokane. And we're playing home and away and I'm glad they're coming down to play Stanford.

THE MODERATOR: All right. Thank you.

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