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An Interview With:

**STANFORD  
COACH TARA VANDERVEER  
CHINEY OGWUMIKE  
LILI THOMPSON**

THE MODERATOR: Joining us on the dais from Stanford we have head coach VanDerveer and student-athletes Chiney Ogwumike and Lili Thompson. We'll take an opening statement from Coach VanDerveer and then questions for the student-athletes.

COACH VANDERVEER: Our team is, I think, really disappointed, with how we played, especially in the second half. And I think we really struggled. We turned the ball over too much in the second half. And we did not do a good enough job defensively.

And I credit Connecticut and they played a really good game. And I'm proud to have coached Chiney for four years and our future great player in Lili Thompson tonight.

But, overall, we did say our teammates are very disappointed but we're really proud of being at the Final Four and representing the Pac-12.

**Q. Chiney, can you talk about the defensive change that Connecticut made? You guys obviously were hitting some shots early and then you probably needed to hit more. Did they do something defensively that was a big change?**

CHINEY OGWUMIKE: At what point, first half, second half? I think that we just needed to be aggressive. Anytime Amber penetrated, she found good things. I think they were giving us penetration and being aggressive as like guards

and spotting up. Obviously, there were people in the paint.

But I don't know if there were many defensive changes besides maybe their personnel, like having their big lineup with Stokes, Dolson and Stewart. And that changed things, because it was bigger on our 3's, so it would affect shots. That was the biggest change. I'm proud how the team was aggressive for 40 minutes tonight.

**Q. Chiney, can you just -- like the North Carolina game, two games in a row, you had a whole team all over you, from front to back. Could you talk about how difficult it was to operate?**

CHINEY OGWUMIKE: I think it's always an honor for a team to focus so much on me on the inside, and I trusted my teammates. I think like they were the reason we were competitive in the first half.

They were aggressive. They were knocking down shots. It's tough for a player to have one, two, three people, and it's hard for me not to force things. But Coach reminds me to let the game come to me. I have full trust in my team. I think we did a great job the first half managing the game and taking timely shots, and people were aggressive in finishing.

Things got a little away from us in the second half. Maybe if two things went our way we could have swayed the momentum. But that's just the way the game goes sometimes.

**Q. Chiney, can you address the impact that Kiah Stokes had in that first half when she came in? That's when they made their run on you guys.**

CHINEY OGWUMIKE: In the first half? I think she changed things maybe defensively so they could go big and guard the 3 with the bigger person. I think that changed our vision offensively, harder to get passes inside and your shot up if you're being guarded by the 3 in Stewart. I think that affected the game.

**Q. Chiney, I know it's just ended, but can you put your time at Stanford in perspective?**

CHINEY OGWUMIKE: I think it's been an amazing run. I'm not even that emotional about it because I was just trying to have fun today, just have fun, enjoy the moment, play hard. And that's easy to do when you have a great coach and you have great teammates that support you every possession. No matter the outcome.

So my experience at Stanford has been a blessing. I've met so many great people. I've been pushed. Days like these will make me a better player and person. Just to have the support in the fan base and family and friends and teammates, it's been an amazing remarkable experience and I'm just fortunate to be able to have Stanford on the front of my jersey this one last time.

**Q. Lili, you scored 10 points right out of the blocks. Stanford was really playing well with a lot of enthusiasm and adrenalin. Could you describe what it felt like at that point to have that lead on Connecticut and be playing so well at that point in the game?**

LILI THOMPSON: We came out very well. I was just trying to stay focused on the game and try to continue that. I don't know if so much we kind of -- we kind of just tried to stick with our game plan and make adjustments as we went, but it was a very good start. So, I'm proud of my team for the way we played.

**Q. Lili, this was your debut at a Final Four. What was it like to have to go against Connecticut's 40 minutes of ferocious defense?**

LILI THOMPSON: They're a very good team. And defensively, they made some very nice plays. They made it difficult for us. We played against other teams with very tough defense. So we kind of just tried to stay calm and focus on our game plan and try to run our offense.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Coach?

**Q. Tara, can you talk about, obviously things were working well early. Could you talk about how difficult it got to run offense, maybe from the point where they went into that run in the first half and into the second?**

COACH VANDERVEER: I don't think it was -- we knew that probably the biggest challenge

for us would be to score. I thought we worked hard defensively. We had a lot of good stops.

But their size, when they went big, their size is really disruptive. But probably more than anything, I mean they have very skilled players that play very well together. And they really pass and move the ball and they screen. One of the biggest problems was we didn't get a single free throw the first half. We did not get to the free-throw line. And in the first half I think we made more field goals than they did. But that's a problem.

Second half, I thought we really turned the ball over too much. We really struggled. Just they got in passing lanes and our pace was not fast enough. We weren't attacking and being aggressive. And we would have litespurts of things, then they'd come back and we could not sustain any runs.

**Q. Tara, now as a fan and great supporter all these years, now that we've arrived at this dream final with two unbeaten teams, can you talk about the impact that could have to get the casual fan to tune into the game?**

COACH VANDERVEER: I hope it's going to be a great game. And maybe that's what -- there's been a buildup all along through the whole tournament. Maybe that will get the attention of some people. And I think the tournament here was great support. There was a great turnout. That won't change, but if that does, as you say, attract some more of the casual fan, more power to.

**Q. The free throws you didn't get, your lack of aggressiveness I suppose, what was the biggest disappointment from your perspective on your team's play?**

COACH VANDERVEER: I think really the inability to run offense. And we knew it would be challenging, and we had seen other teams. Just some of the unforced errors and also on defense, total breakdowns where we gave layups and then the turnovers to Moriah Jefferson. Just things that I thought that we could have been better at that I thought we could run some offense and get better shots. I thought we could take care of the ball better.

I thought we did a good job of getting back in transition, not allowing them run out baskets and in the beginning we didn't box out well. We gave them two offensive boards the first two

possessions. As the game went on I thought we rebounded better.

But just our pace, their pace was really good. I thought our pace was too slow. We're not moving, we're not moving the ball. We weren't screening, and we weren't able to our offense the way we needed to.

**Q. Can you describe -- in the outset you had -- seemed like Breanna Stewart was a little bit out of her sync. What did you do to disrupt her rhythm? And again Kaleena Mosqueda-Lewis was held scoreless. How was it to see her get hot in the second half?**

COACH VANDERVEER: They're very talented players, and I think different people on our team worked hard defensively on them. But, like you said, like maybe the first half Kaleena struggled a little bit. She got her rhythm going, and maybe just took Stokes coming in and helping them relax a little bit.

But I think their big lineup was disruptive when they went with Stokes and they moved Stewart to the 3 a little bit. But Dolson was pretty steady in there. She was very physical. And I just think that one of the things I see with our team and kind of knew this, but in some ways it takes one thing to get here, but then to beat Connecticut when you're here, we needed something else. And we needed to be bigger. We needed to play a bigger lineup. But we didn't. We weren't able to play people together when we needed to. We tried it and it didn't look very good.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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