

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

Monday, March 19, 2018
Stanford, California



Tara Vanderveer Brittany McPhee Alanna Smith Stanford Cardinal

Stanford 90, Florida Gulf Coast 70

TARA VANDERVEER: I'm really proud of our team, how hard we played. You know, we really came out and got off to a great start. Sputtered a little bit in the second quarter and then came out and really had a great third and fourth quarter.

Alanna got us going, and Britt's defense -- Alanna's defense was, I thought, phenomenal. She was on 32 basically the whole night, their leading scorer. I thought she did a great job on defense. Britt's defense; contributions off the bench, Dijonai coming in. I thought Maya Dodson had a big game for us.

Just, you know, know what we're doing and working really hard out there. It was really exciting. I'm really proud of our team, especially knowing where we came from and we're going back to Lexington, I think for our third time in a row. We love Lexington, so we're really excited to be going there.

Q. Alanna, 13 points in that first quarter what got you going and what was your mindset before the game?

ALANNA SMITH: I think just having my teammates around me and knowing we all had the same mind-set of just coming out and being aggressive.

I think our coaches prepared us really well for this team, and along with like Brittany and the rest of the starters, we just came out and we said to each other that this is it; this is our last game at Maples and we need to show it. I think we all did a really good job of doing that.

Q. I can't imagine you've ever played in a game where the team that you were playing against took 47 threes. Can you talk about the experience tonight playing against this specific-type team?

BRITTANY MCPHEE: Yeah, it was definitely different, and our coaches told us before the game that, you

know, they shoot the most threes, make the most threes. So we knew that we needed to be out on them.

But I think the biggest thing is we knew that they were going to make threes, and that was okay, as long as they were taking hard threes and not wide-open ones by their best shooters. So we were really well prepared and ready for it I think.

Q. With a team that hits that many threes, they got back in the game a couple of times and got close. Did you have a sense that a team that hits that many threes was going to be able to make a run at you pretty quickly?

ALANNA SMITH: Yeah, I think it's dangerous, if you're hitting threes, you can get up nine point in three possessions. It's easy.

So I think that was definitely, like Brittany said, something that we focused on is not letting them get open shots. I think our team did a really good job of shooting from three-point line, as well. I think we answered really well.

Q. Tara mentioned a couple days ago that she spoke to you about the thought that maybe this team isn't going to get to the NCAA Tournament and then how, you know, things were not going well; you guys fell out of the rankings and you were hurt for a while. Could you just take us through that journey and that conversations with Tara and how far the team has come to be back in this place?

BRITTANY MCPHEE: Yeah, I mean, we did fall at the beginning of the season, but we always in our minds knew that we could get it together and that we could be a really good team that could make a deep run in the tournament.

Even when we had our troubles, we stayed positive and that was kind of the key. We didn't start to blame others. We didn't start to look other places. We just said, hey, these are the things we are getting burned on when we play games, so we need to fix these. It was never as desperate as our record and I think falling out of the rankings makes it sound.

I mean, it was just kind of like a conversation that was like, hey, we need to kick it into gear, which we knew,

but it was just an extra incentive.

Q. When was that conversation with Tara?

BRITTANY McPHEE: That was during a game.

Q. When you talked about how obviously they make a lot of threes and they also don't have a player that's six feet tall. Did you know going in this could be an opportunity to really take advantage of size?

ALANNA SMITH: Yeah, obviously we did have a size advantage but I think that's something that our team did a really good job of taking advantage of tonight. Yeah, shout-out to Brit and the guards for passing it inside. Good job.

But we all knew that they were a very aggressive, very scrappy, handsy team and that we couldn't underestimate them even though that they don't have the height.

Q. You guys had 33 points in the first quarter and I think you maybe had 13 of those. Is that among the best quarters you've played this season and what went into that?

BRITTANY McPHEE: Yeah, it would probably be up there. But I think just it's that time of year, you know, where you have to treat every game -- it is every game is possibly your last and I think for me, especially, I'm doing this for my seniors, for Brittany and Kaylee, because I know this is their last game at Maples and this is their last game to have a crack at it, so you have to give it your all.

That first quarter definitely showed that just heart that we have as a team.

Q. Following up on what Brittany was talking about earlier with the conversations that she had with Coach Vanderveer, when you were 6-6 and had just lost to Western Illinois, how confident were you that you were going to get to a situation where like right now, you're two games away from the Final Four?

ALANNA SMITH: Yeah, I think just being the team that we were last year, we experienced a lot of moments where we were down, and it was halftime and we were down 17 and we could come back and win the game. I think that has been instilled in ourselves and we're trying to pass that on to our freshmen right now; that even if you are down, we had a bad start to the season, we did. We were 6-6. But that doesn't mean that we can't finish strong.

So we just kept that in our minds. We can't let the start of the season determine what we're going to do.

Q. Along those lines, did you hear Tara say that at halftime of whichever game that was, or was that something she said to Brittany?

ALANNA SMITH: I think that was a personal conversation with Brittany, but I know that our seniors had a chat with us, as well, and just said, hey, like we do need to kick it into gear. Like this is something that we don't want to accept and that we need to do better.

Yeah, I think it was a good conversations to have.

Q. Tara has the philosophy of playing a tough tough schedule to get you ready for March, and she said this might be the toughest one yet. Did it get you ready for this?

ALANNA SMITH: Oh, absolutely. We played some of the best teams in the nation. Tara says it all the time: Every disappointment is a blessing, and right now our blessings are coming to us I think, yeah.

Q. For both athletes, as Coach mentioned, the third straight trip to Lexington for the Sweet 16. I imagine you've had some pretty good experiences there. When this came out and you saw the Lexington regional -- now that you're here, are there things that you're looking forward to going back to Lexington for?

BRITTANY McPHEE: I don't know if it's Lexington in general or just excited to be in the Sweet 16 again. You know, we're very familiar with the court and it's always a good time, but it's hard to know exactly like, oh, yes, like Lexington. But it's funny, when it came out, we knew we were going to be in there again because we've just been in there for so many times in a row. We're excited to go there.

ALANNA SMITH: Yeah, Lexington holds a lot of nice memories for us, as well, so it's just nice to be able to go back to remember what we did there and what we achieved.

Q. As you stepped off the court, did you have any lasting memories of that court and a special moment to remember on that court?

BRITTANY McPHEE: Yeah, plenty. It was definitely weird to come off the court and then when Kaylee came off the court, we really sat next to each other and we're like, wow, this is it.

But not one that stands out. Just a lot all together, like the little things, like running through the tunnel last time or something like that.

Q. People talk about Florida Gulf Coast and the three-point shot but they have other weapons, but you have to be able to keep them out of the paint, the points-in-the-paint margin and second-chance

points, it was a staggering margin. Can you talk about that and your efforts to keep them out of the paint?

TARA VANDERVEER: I think they can hurt you with the three and if you come out on them, then they can put it on the floor. I think that for the most part, there were some times, especially with 22, China Dow, she hit some nice threes on us; that was disappointing to see.

I think for the most part, our team really worked hard to get out on the three-point shooters, and credit Karl and their team. They are a very well coached team. They move the ball really well. Like you said, there's no player over six foot and they are scrappy. They knock down shots, and they are a very, very well coached team.

Our team had to work hard to beat them. You know, you can't take away everything from a team like that. It's no fun to give up 17 threes, but you know, they are that good of three-point shooters.

I'm excited that we made nine out of 17. Like you said, our rebounding was very good. You know, going inside to Alanna, they had some interesting match-ups. They had really kind of a small player on Alanna and she just went to town right in there.

I think that jumping on them was a good thing, but then our team let up a little bit and I was glad to see us come out of the second quarter and do well.

Q. It feels as if Alanna has really hit a stride here as you got to the end of the Pac-12 and through the Pac-12 Tournament here. What is it that she's doing that has her playing this well?

TARA VANDERVEER: She kind of has a way of playing well in the Tournament. Thank goodness for that. You know, she really had a great game tonight. I mean, knocking down her three, finishing on the block. Her defense I thought was fantastic. Holding their leading scorer to seven points, really focused.

I'm excited for Alanna. Going into the regional with momentum. Like she said, both Britt and Alanna played really well there, and we will need them to again.

Q. Playing Louisville, they are a fairly prominent national program and you've never played them. What's your first impression of getting that opportunity?

TARA VANDERVEER: You know, we almost played them. We were supposed to play them in the Columbus tournament. But the game that they scheduled was at 6:00 PM on a Sunday and we said we wouldn't play at 6:00 PM because we wouldn't get

home in time for school the next day. So they played Ohio State instead of us playing them.

So originally, they were on our schedule. So now it's just great to have them back on the schedule. I've seen them in person. They were practicing in the same place we were. They have a great team. They have a great fan base, the Player of the Year, Asia Durr and the ACC. I've watched them play, and they are very impressive.

I'm going to choose to enjoy tonight, and then, you know, probably wake up really early, like 4:00 in the morning, and I'll watch their video.

Q. Which halftime was that game --

TARA VANDERVEER: When we were playing at USF.

Q. And did you figure that Brittany would pass along the message?

TARA VANDERVEER: Yes, I think she did. We had a great second half. We made 11 threes in that game. I just think sometimes with our team, sometimes you've just got to shake it up a little bit or just give them a little like, hey, guys, just because you got Stanford, doesn't mean anything's automatic. You've got to earn it every day, and that was kind of the point of that. You've got to come out and earn it.

Again, I'm really proud. You know, I did the schedule. We didn't start out trying to play Connecticut and try to play Baylor. It just happened that way. It really was -- I think almost any other team would be throwing each other under the bus, and I'm so proud of the leadership from Britt and Kaylee and the upperclassmen to just keep playing hard.

You know, there were games that I think we had opportunities to win. We went into overtime with Ohio State the second time. It was a very close game with Western Illinois. We didn't have a chance against Baylor. They really took it to us. Connecticut really took it to us.

I think there were some other opportunities that we had. Tennessee we had an opportunity against them. And look where we are now, and Tennessee is not in the Sweet 16. Ohio State is not in the Sweet 16. I think that that is a real cohesiveness with this group and just improvement, people really working hard every day, so I'm really proud of everyone.

Q. Val Whiting (ph) got her 1990 championship ring back after 20 years it had been lost, and this March Madness is extra special for her because of that. Had you heard that?

TARA VANDERVEER: I had.

Q. What does that mean to you?

TARA VANDERVEER: Well, I think it's great that that means something to her. You know, that that National Championship -- you know, when we lost in 1989 at Louisiana Tech and they had Venus Lacy, I remember being on the bus saying to Amy, "How are we ever going to beat this team?"

And Amy said, "Val's coming near year." And we won the National Championship the next year. I mean, Val is probably one of the best underrated players that was a great player at Stanford. A lot of other people get a lot of attention but she was the real deal and I'm really excited that she got her ring back.

Q. You warned us about Florida's three-point prowess, but could you ever fathom they would take nearly 50 threes?

TARA VANDERVEER: Yeah, you know, I think they do. That's their game. They came out with their tee shirt, raining threes. That's their game. And if you come out on them, they will put it on the floor.

I will say when you look at it, you know, 32 I think is better than a 1-for-7 three-point shooter. 42 we gambled off of and she didn't hit a three. We were gambling off of 5 and she hit three in a row, so that plan's out the window. So we had to guard her. You know, 22 we were trying to guard as hard as we could and she still got threes. That's their game.

Q. For the third year in a row, there are at least four Pac-12 teams in the Sweet 16?

TARA VANDERVEER: Isn't that awesome?

Q. I wanted your thoughts on that and just what the conference is like now.

TARA VANDERVEER: I think that our conference has always been really strong, and we have had great teams, and we have had great players that have not been recognized. I just want to give a shoutout to Larry Scott and the Pac-12 Network and all the Pac-12 people that have gotten our game on television so the rest of the country can see the great players that we have.

You know, also, I think that then what happens is then you get better seeds. If you went back historically, we have had, even in the Pac-10, we've had some really great teams and great players that maybe everyone thought it was just Stanford and nobody else, and that has -- I don't think that's ever been the case. But now there's opportunities and people are taking advantage of it.

Oregon has a great team. Hard he gone state getting

into the Sweet 16, UCLA, and also with six teams going and seven last year.

The conference gets you ready for this. I think women's basketball is representing in a really positive way and it's exciting.

Q. Do you take any credit for that?

TARA VANDERVEER: I think that we've had great teams and we've had great players. But you know, people maybe haven't known about them. I think it's the Pac-12 Network that deserves the credit.

You know, a lot of times, we're everyone's top rival, but now we've got a great rivalry with Oregon and Oregon State. The teams, more than the top teams, there are no -- I mean, the bottom teams are really good. So there's no easy games. You know, I like some easy games. (Laughter).

Q. You do?

TARA VANDERVEER: I liked them in the past. We don't have them anymore.

Q. You talked a lot about Kiana Williams and deservedly so, but what about Dijonai?

TARA VANDERVEER: I thought Di had a great game. She had three steals. You know, she missed that first layup and she got it in the second half. She hit a couple big threes for us, rebounds. Love her physicality. Someone that has been great to work with. I think she's really improved.

You know, it's different than high school. She was hurt in high school a lot, but she's healthy and she's playing really, really well. You know, I'm not allowed to have a favorite player, but if I did, she'd be right up there. I love her energy and how hard she plays. Like she makes things happen.

Q. You said there are no easy games now. Can you talk about the parity across the board with some exciting upsets so far with Buffalo and Central Michigan?

TARA VANDERVEER: I'm not excited about Buffalo. We play them next year.

No, it's great. I mean, the Tournament, Central Michigan is a former assistant of mine. I'm really excited for them to win. I think they go to Spokane.

Buffalo, actually a friend of mine is coaching there. I'm really excited for her and their team.

And Missouri getting upset, that was a big upset. Florida Gulf Coast did that.

It's great. It's really exciting to see where women's basketball is going, and again, I'm really proud to be a part of this journey.

All right. I hope somebody's coming to Lexington. It will be fun. Thank you.



2018 NCAA® DIVISION I WOMEN'S BASKETBALL
CHAMPIONSHIP
NCAA Second Round
Maples Pavilion - Stanford, Calif. – Monday, March 19, 2018

LOCKER ROOM QUOTES

FGCU

NASRIN ULEL

“At the beginning, I felt like everyone was flustered and not doing what they were supposed to be doing. After that (first) timeout, we decided to come together and at least try to defend their sets correctly. I think we did a good job.”

“Obviously, we knew they were going to have help in the paint. We tried to just cut and penetrate, but they did a good job at covering our lanes.”

“I think we had a really great season. Our seniors did a phenomenal job helping us younger players and being leaders for us. They played a really good game tonight. We’re really proud of them and they were a big part of our success all year.”

ERICA NELSON

“I don’t think we were nervous. We knew what to expect and have been in this situation before. Our offense is best when we hit 3’s and we didn’t hit them. We started getting snagged on offense and had a couple miscues on defense.”

“We cut it to 10 in the fourth quarter, but they got a stop and went on like a 7-0 run. I think that was the turning point in the game.”

“Just look at our resume. Some of the teams that we’ve played are higher seeds than us. Our seed definitely didn’t define what we did this year. We had a tremendous season for being a Mid-Major.”

“When they talk about height, I don’t think it really matters. With our speed and talent, as you saw against Missouri, we went right around them. This game, they packed the paint, so that was tough.

They weren't coming out on our shooters and were giving up 3s. We just didn't hit them."

STANFORD

KAYLEE JOHNSON

"We had a great scout from Kate (assistant coach Kate Paye). We knew what they were looking for. It wasn't just effort, it was focus and concentration because we knew it was going to be huge taking away what they wanted to do."

"They're a great team. We knew they were going to make shots and go on runs. It was almost an uncomfortable feeling the whole game, just because when it's a great 3-point shooting team, it doesn't matter what the lead is, it's easy to get back in. No lead was ever comfortable."

"If you look at our record from the beginning, I don't think anyone expected us to get this far. But I've always expected it. This is the standard that Stanford sets. Something that we always reminded each other at the beginning of the season is, yeah, our record isn't good, but it's a long season. We want to have what we need in March and that's finally come together for us."

KIANA WILLIAMS

"We knew we were going to rely heavily on our bigs to bang in down there. We just kept giving Alanna the ball. She was feeling it early. We just kept riding her. Defensively, we tried not to get too spread out. We wanted to contain the three, but not get too not give them wide open driving lanes for layups."

"Their ability to shoot the three-ball keeps them in games. When a team is shooting the three like that and making them, you can never relax."

DIJONAI CARRINGTON

"Early on we had injuries and tough losses, but we really never let those get to us or our record get to us. We just focused on what we could take from those games and what the positives were and tried to find the blessings in disguise. I think we were able to transform those things into positives and to help propel us into the rest of the season."

"The coaches work so hard. We were just talking about that in the locker room about how great our scout is and how much we focus. I just feel they take so much time and really put so much effort into the scouting report and they make sure that we understand it. They'll keep going over it until they're solid and that everyone understands it. They're very open to making adjustments. We came in with a specific gameplan. Some things changed during the game and we were able to adjust and still be successful. It shows how great they are and how quick they are on the fly."