

# Atlantic Coast Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Wednesday, March 12, 2025

Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

Spectrum Center

**Cal Bears**

**Mark Madsen**

**Andrej Stojakovic**

**DJ Campbell**

Postgame Press Conference



DJ CAMPBELL: As I told the team, when we were in the four overtimes and the two overtimes, keep playing no matter what, play for each other. Eventually they will get gas because we believe in the work that we do, and I told guys just be ready, stay ready and play together. Simple as that.

ANDREJ STOJAKOVIC: Yeah, just knowing that we've got three resilient seniors that -- they put a lot of work into the game that they love and just doing it for them, doing it for each other, understanding that it's all in the mind.

And after the overtime loss at Notre Dame, just making sure, reiterating that we've been there before and getting it done in the first round. So no matter how close the game is, stay resilient, have trust in each other.

**Q. For Andrej, this is your third crack at Stanford this year, and it seems to bring out the best in you. Can you talk about what it means for you to lace them up opposite guys like Maxime and Ryan?**

ANDREJ STOJAKOVIC: Yeah, playing against those guys is fun, obviously being on the same team as them, but just another game for us, keeping that same competitive mindset, that aggressive attack mode.

Today, we needed it from a lot of guys, and a lot of guys stepped up that don't normally play as many minutes as they did today, so I'm very proud of them.

**Q. Andrej, you started the Game 5 for 5 from the field, scored the first 11 points for your team. You actually out-scored Stanford 16-14 by yourself to start the game. What's motivating you to keep going?**

ANDREJ STOJAKOVIC: Yeah, just my teammates giving me confidence along with the coaching staff. They know that as a team, we put in a lot of work, and having that trust for each other, could be anyone's day at any point.

I got it rolling out early, and DJ got it going later in the game, so that helped a lot.

Stanford 78, California 73

MARK MADSEN: General comment would just be, hey, give Stanford the credit. They did a great job making the plays late in the game. But that being said, I love these guys. I love Andrej. I love DJ. I love everyone in our locker room. You talk about warriors, guys that battled the entire night. It's been a little bit -- the story of our season. We've had a couple different waves of just rashes of injury, and when that happens, it's next man up.

We give ourselves a chance to win. We fell short.

Open to questions.

**Q. Andrej, after the 16-point run, it felt like you died off there a bit, and it was getting a little frustrating for you. What did you do to get back on the hot seat and then get to 37?**

ANDREJ STOJAKOVIC: Yeah, just trying to go back to the coaching staff, see the adjustments that Stanford made after that run, you know, play some off ball to keep the defense honest. But yeah, I don't think it was a lack of energy. I just think it was to give them something different.

I feel like the first couple minutes of the game were very similar in terms of how the scoring went. So just mixing it up, I think, kind of helped us stay in the game.

**Q. For both players, I'm curious, after the four overtimes, the two overtimes, I think everybody in the building was waiting for you guys to run out of gas. What got you through this game?**



**Q. For both the players, facing your rival all the way across the country, was that a little bit strange, and what has been your experience playing in the ACC in the ACC Tournament this year?**

DJ CAMPBELL: Not strange. At the end of the day, we were playing them twice beforehand. Just knowing our opponent, knowing the strategy that we play well. I mean, everybody gave out good energy, tuck, all the seniors that could play. But it was a good game, great energy from everybody.

ANDREJ STOJAKOVIC: Yeah, it's frustrating having that result three times, but that didn't faze us playing them on the other side of the country. If it was a different opponent, we would have came out with the same energy, same end goal, same incentive to move on.

But that's how the chips fell, and I think all the guys gave all they could today.

**Q. (Indiscernible)?**

ANDREJ STOJAKOVIC: I think it's been great. I think it's given us the exposure that Cal needed going into the ACC. A lot of people didn't believe that we would have the season we did, especially in this tournament, the way we fought against a lot of teams, competed against a lot of teams at a high level.

And credit to all the people at Cal who make it easy for traveling purposes, being lenient with us with all the schoolwork and giving us days to come out here ahead of time to get acclimate to the time.

Yeah, it's been a heck of an experience. I wouldn't change it for anything.

**Q. Andrej, your presence has definitely been known in this tournament having 29 points against Virginia Tech, and now 37 against Stanford. What seemed to be clicking offensively for you? Was it just a matter of having a hot hand?**

ANDREJ STOJAKOVIC: Just understanding that stepping up when we need someone to step up -- we had guys going through some injuries. It just happened to be my day today. Had a pretty good game yesterday.

But like I said, we all have trust in each other, and it could be anyone's day.

**Q. Andrej, you guys played six overtimes in the two previous games, and then you had another tough one tonight. Can you talk about what the fight your team**

**showed in these three games says about you guys, and what kind of encouragement does it give you heading into next season?**

ANDREJ STOJAKOVIC: Yeah, I think it shows that we're much better than a 15 seed. We've had a lot of close games this year, games that we thought we should have won, games that we lost because of us, not because the other team played better than us.

I think this should get the Cal fans and the Cal program excited, because Cal is definitely not done in the ACC, and I think we have something to look forward to next year.

**Q. Stanford went on a 9-0 run at the end of the first half. Did you notice a change from them offensively or defensively to kind of flip that switch?**

MARK MADSEN: I'll need to go back and watch the film. Obviously, they had momentum. They were moving the ball. They got out in transition a little bit, and we had a few breakdowns. But I'll really need to go back and study the film to break down exactly what happened.

**Q. When you look at the way this one unfolded back and forth, were you concerned at all that your guys were going to run out of gas, or did you know they had still something left?**

MARK MADSEN: No, we had plenty left. We definitely had enough in the tank. This team is full of guys with just the heart of a lion, and that showed tonight.

I think right at the end of the game, we had two key lapses, one in transition and one communication lapse. But shoot, Stanford still did a great job winning the game. They still made the plays.

So I can look at those lapses, but we didn't lose the game in those moments. Stanford outplayed us, and we had some mistakes in the first half that we wish we could go back and correct.

**Q. Mark, I know it's fresh, but now that the season is complete and you had all the planning for how West Coast to East Coast will work and playing in the ACC, how would you describe just what this season took out of you and your group compared to past seasons?**

MARK MADSEN: Well, I would say we had a number of very close games, some that we won, some that we lost. So there's an immense amount of emotional energy that goes into that.

But to be honest with you, I think our players and our staff

and myself, we feel energized being in this conference. You know, yes. Is the travel hard? Absolutely. But to be able to play at this level of competition is such an opportunity for us.

We have an amazing core group of guys, and I think we're going to retain all our most of them, and that's the hope. Yet, you never know until those discussions -- you never really know until the portal opens.

Then on top of it, we have an outstanding freshman class coming in, so the future is very bright. We have momentum. We've got to stay healthy. That was an issue for us this year.

But I feel energized by this conference, by the quality of basketball and the future.

**Q. Staying on that same topic, the schedule this year just happened to send you to some of the better teams in the league as it played out. Next year, you get some really marquee brands at Cal. Are you looking forward to that, and do you think your fans will respond to some of the big ACC names coming west?**

MARK MADSEN: Oh, 100 percent. My wife Hannah, who's a musician, she has really embraced basketball, and the kids have embraced basketball. She's already talking to all of her friends about the fact that Duke is coming to Cal. North Carolina, Louisville, Notre Dame, USC, Vanderbilt.

If there's ever a year for season tickets at Cal, this is the year. These are going to be sellouts. It's going to be an unbelievable environment, and we're going to be playing high-level basketball against the top teams.

**Q. At the end of every basketball season I always think about that quote Giannis (indiscernible) had about how success is -- there's steps to success and setbacks shouldn't be viewed as failures.**

How would you evaluate the successes and setbacks, as you think about next season?

MARK MADSEN: Yeah, our goal at Cal is to win a National Championship. That's our goal. We are going to do it. We are going to do it.

We wish we had more progress in year one. We won 13 games. This year we won 14. We still have a chance at postseason play. But we're going to keep building this thing. We're locking arms with an unbelievable administration with unbelievable alums and supporters, and this is a true team. This is a true team, and we are

going to do special things at Cal in the future in basketball.

**Q. This is a league that prides itself on success in the NCAA Tournament and getting lots of teams in, obviously, this year, it looks like they may only get three. As someone who's kind of new to the league, what have you seen out of this league, and what do you think you need to see moving forward to get seven, eight, nine teams back in the tournament?**

MARK MADSEN: We have to win more non-conference games. We had the SEC challenge this year. We were at Missouri. We were up 15, 18 points in the first half on the road, and then we didn't finish the game. Missouri outplayed us in the second half.

We have to win, all of us -- we have to win more games in the non-conference, and as we do that -- and you look at the quality of basketball and the quality of coaches we have in the ACC, this is going to happen. This is going to happen.

We have to be better at Cal, and every team across the conference has to be better with non-conference games.

**Q. Can you just talk about what the fight that your team showed in the four and two overtime games and tonight, shorthanded, how that gives you momentum and encouragement for what you guys can continue to build next year?**

MARK MADSEN: Well, the spirit of fight is something that we've never lacked in this locker room. We've never lacked. It's a reflection of our leadership, of the players. Mady Sissoko, Jovan Blacksher, Christian Tucker, and it's a reflection of every player we have in the program. That is going to be a mainstay and a pillar and a core value going forward at Cal.

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