

Pac-12 Conference Basketball Media Day

Tuesday, October 25, 2022

San Francisco, California, USA

Stanford Cardinal

Coach Tara VanDerveer

Cameron Brink

Haley Jones

Women's Head Coach



winning the regional. Those were all great things to be proud of, where in the moment after a loss you feel like it's a failure.

But I think taking a step away and realizing that and getting motivation from the loss because there's more to accomplish this year was something we all have to do individually, but then coming back together as a team during the summer was great.

CAMERON BRINK: Exactly what she said.

Q. Coach, I was curious to get your opinion on just how you've seen recruiting around the conference improve, because you've always been able to get players the caliber of Cameron and Haley, but now with five teams that are bringing in top-8 recruiting classes around the country, and this is a trend we've seen in recent years, I'd say in the last eight, nine years, how you've seen the influx of talent come in across the conference.

TARA VANDERVEER: You might be too young to remember, but remember Lisa Leslie, Tina Thompson, Natalie Williams? The list could go on.

The Pac-12 Conference has always had great -- Kelsey Plum. There have been so many great players that have played in the Pac-12. What I've said over and over is we've always had great teams, great universities, great coaches.

The difference has been people have seen our teams play, and it's thanks to you all. This is a room that honestly 20 years ago you couldn't have even imagined. The support that we get from you, from the media, from just being on television, Pac-12 networks has put the Pac-12 women's basketball on the map.

We always were good but now people know about it.

Q. Speaking about television, you guys will have two games nationally televised on ABC in the regular season this year. ABC had only had one and it was last season when UCLA and UConn played. To see the

TARA VANDERVEER: The music is new. It's exciting. I like it. Always got to have a little wrinkle.

I'm really happy to be here today with both cam and Hailey.

They're two returning All-Americans that we're counting on to lead our team in so many ways, scoring, rebounding, just on court, off court. They both have had really good preseason practices. They've improved a lot. It's just we're really looking forward to a great season.

Q. For the players, not to start off on a downer, but things at the Final Four go really quickly and we didn't have a lot of chance for you guys to process the national semifinal game against Connecticut. How motivating has that been? How much time did you take to process and get beyond that game and what you want to do with that and how you want to use it this season?

HALEY JONES: I think that that Connecticut loss was really difficult, and it's a tough pill to swallow. I think as a team, and Tara, as well, we all hate losing more than we love winning.

I mean, it was difficult, but I think losses are a part of the game, so you have to live and learn with it. But I think we were able to all take individual time with it, understand that maybe you didn't play your best basketball, but there's still more to be played this upcoming year, so we were able to take it and turn it into a positive, but also more so into motivation moving into this next season where we have goals, we have aspirations, and also taking a step back from last year and realizing that we still had a great season.

Going undefeated in the Pac-12 is unheard of, winning the Pac-12 championship. We had a great Final Four run,



growth across the board, the WNBA is having surging TV numbers, even the FIBA World Cup at like 11:00 at night was getting big numbers. What does this show about where women's basketball on the whole is going or where media entities are kind of catching up to where it's always about?

TARA VANDERVEER: I think it's the latter. But I'm thrilled that players like Haley and Cam will have a chance to play on ABC. Again, we love playing on Pac-12 Network and ESPN, but ABC just will get to more homes. We want the young girls, boys, old men, women, whatever, to see these great players and the great teams.

It is absolutely thrilling, except that it's a good diet and I'm not sleeping well.

Q. Haley and Cameron, you guys have been playing at an elite level since you stepped foot on campus. What have you done over the summer to increase or what's in your arsenal? What else can you do?

CAMERON BRINK: I think for me in the off-season it was just taking time to recoup. Rest is so important, so I took time to rest. I spent a long time with family, had a lot of fun with the team.

You know, obviously got up a lot of reps. I want to be more of a perimeter player this year. So yeah, just what I've always been doing, because it's taken me this far, right? So yeah.

HALEY JONES: Yeah, I think what Cam said. I think for me, I've always tried to keep a holistic perspective when it comes to basketball. I've never been the type of person who can do basketball all the time, just because I grew up playing everything and Cam and I are both very family oriented.

I spent time with family, but also in the gym and playing more of a point guard role this year. So a lot of it was ball handling, perimeter shooting, but I think also a lot of mental work.

I think that me and Cam both love working with Fred Luskin, who is our happiness professor. Helps us keep things in perspective, helps a lot with your approach to the game and realizing that you have more identity than just a basketball player.

I think coming my senior year, having more of this wholesome perspective, I'm really excited to just enjoy my season at Stanford.

Q. You have a very special relationship with Aliyah

Boston over at South Carolina. What's that relationship been like, and how has it grown and what has that done for you as far as your basketball career?

HALEY JONES: Yeah, I mean, Aliyah and I got really close with USA Basketball, and we talk almost every day now. We're really close friends.

I think it's kind of played a lot into this cross-country rivalry that we have with South Carolina. Both teams are amazing. So we're really excited for that game coming up.

But I think our relationship leads to a lot of competitive juices between the two of us, but it's also really cool just having another great friend who is going through what I'm going through across the country.

And we're both doing different things, but also have a lot of the same struggles. It's really nice having somebody to confide in, but also you don't see them every day. It's a different type of relationship to have.

But it's great, and I wouldn't trade it for anything.

Q. Coach, you have two of the best players returning, which is a luxury. You have a ton of depth returning, as well, and then you add this amazing recruiting class. You've been doing this long enough that a lot of coaches struggle; there's only 40 minutes. How do you approach this with your team, your players? Not everybody is going to be happy, but it's a team. What would you tell young coaches that are trying to figure that out, because it's a challenge piecing that together I would imagine?

TARA VANDERVEER: You know, what I tell our team is it is not going to be equal opportunity. Haley and Cam are going to play a lot. But everyone is important, and we will need everyone. During COVID obviously that happened, but you're always going to have people not available for certain games.

I think we really try to value every single person on our team, no matter what contribution they can make, and we're counting on players to be very mature.

That is a tough -- I think kind of a balancing act because we live in a world of iPhone, iPad and everything about me, me, me. This is a "we" sport and this is us and doing it together. That's where I think both Haley and Cam come into it, too.

They know they need their other 13 players, other 13 teammates in order to achieve the goals that they want.



We're in it together.

Q. For the student-athletes, who are your favorite players in the WNBA, and who do you model your game after?

HALEY JONES: So growing up, my favorite player was Tamika Catchings. I had an Indiana Fever jersey. There were so many pictures from my mom that I'm sure she'll share to whoever wants.

She is my favorite player. I loved her for many reasons, mainly just because of the passion that she played with, and you could feel that passion through the screen watching her.

I think as I've grown older and had more of a versatile skill set, I like to take bits and pieces from all the greats across the league from different times of the league. So whether that's taking play making abilities and things from Chelsea Gray and Sue Bird, but still being able to back down in the post like a Sylvia Fowles or stretch it to the perimeter Breanna Stewart, I think I try to do a bit of everything.

So I try to take bits and pieces from everyone around the league.

CAMERON BRINK: I would say something pretty similar. Breanna Stewart is probably my favorite because she's just Breanna Stewart, right?

But I really love Kelsey Plum.

I love Sue Bird. I've been lucky enough to actually work out with them because we share a similar trainer.

Her name is Susan King Borchardt. She played under Tara and Tara adores her. She's probably her favorite player ever. But I've been really lucky to be touched by some of these players. They've taught me so much and I'm really grateful for their influence.

I got to meet Lisa Leslie at the ESPYs recently, and that was like life changing, I adore her.

Rebecca Lobo back in the back of the room. So yeah, so many people have paved the way for us, so we're thankful and we want to play in their -- you know, honor them.

Q. What sized shoe do you wear?

CAMERON BRINK: Haley and I are the same size. We're an 11 and a half in men's.

Q. Without Lexie and Lacie, who are your glue players

this year? Who are the players who are going to come in and complement these two? There have been a lot of inter-conference transfers this year. You're not necessarily involved in that, but what do you make of it?

TARA VANDERVEER: First, Cam, I have no favorite players. I love you all.

The portal is -- I think it's just shaking itself down a little bit. It's not something that we deal with a whole lot. But I'll have to, I guess, get the new names on the new teams, and we'll have the scouting report already, which will be good.

Then what was your other question?

Q. What are your glue players?

TARA VANDERVEER: I really think it's going to have to be our four seniors, Haley, Hannah Jump, Fran, and Ashten are the four that have to be our leaders.

Obviously we did a little exercise yesterday where our team recommended captains and talked about things, and our team looks to Cam and they look to Agnes, our upperclassmen. We have nine young players, so it's really important that our upperclassmen lead the way.

We lost a lot, but we have a lot coming back.

Q. Wondering with the rules, it looks like you were the one that voted for Utah because everybody else had you unanimous. I was wondering if you could talk about them and some of the other teams you expect to be a factor, Arizona, Oregon, et cetera.

TARA VANDERVEER: Yep, that was me. (Laughter).

Utah came in second in the Pac-12. They have obviously a lot of great players coming in. I think Lynne does a fantastic job. But I could have voted for four or five other teams probably. The conference I think is that good and that deep.

I think Lynne has done a fantastic job. We were talking about this earlier. You look at the job Adia has done, just a fantastic job.

The Pac-12 is stacked, and again, I brought this up at one other little interview I was on. I was on a couple today. But we have 11 of the 24 McDonald's All-Americans in the Pac-12. No other conference has that number, that many of the best young players. It's going to be a battle, a heavyweight fight every night.



Q. Coach, you mentioned right out of the chute the improvement of Cam and Haley. Could you be a little bit more specific about that, please?

TARA VANDERVEER: Well, Cam I think we're playing Cam on the perimeter at the 3 in practice a little bit, experimenting with that.

Haley obviously playing point guard for us. If nothing else, we're going to be big this year. I think Cam's versatility, Haley's versatility, they're practicing with a sense of urgency.

Cam just didn't lay on the beach in Hawai'i all summer, she worked really hard with Pau Gasol. She's I think really expanded her game.

A lot of her -- just her fluidity out there, her three-point shot, her ability to go left, right, guard a perimeter player. Haley has always been an extremely versatile player, but she's put hours and hours into her game in the gym.

She knows, too, that she wants to have a great senior year, but she has a great future. She wants to have -- I think just the skill set to make a smooth adjustment to the next level, too.

Can I just say that I think Kiki Iriafe -- the freshmen on our team have improved tremendously. Kiki, Brooke Demetre, those two have really impressed me with their improvement, and it's going to be very -- it's very competitive every day in practice, and it's going to be really exciting to have some of those young players out there.

Q. Coach, you've been around a long time. You've been in this conference and you've seen how great this conference is. Interested in your take on UCLA and USC moving out to the Big Ten and the void it leaves in the conference.

TARA VANDERVEER: I thought someone was playing April fool's joke on July 1st or something. I couldn't believe it.

It's something that -- we have a great rivalry. We're going to enjoy the next two years of playing against USC and UCLA and see what happens.

But I know that the women's basketball coaches, really they had no choice in it. For me, it really -- the way it is right now, I competed in the Big Ten, and I'm really excited to be in the Pac-12. (Laughter).

I love the weather.

Q. Haley, this could be your last season in college if you decide to because you are a senior, but you do have the option to stay. At this time are you preparing this season as if it's your last at the college level?

HALEY JONES: Yeah, mm-hmm.

Q. Tara, knowing that, Haley is somebody you're going to use a lot at point guard. How do you look to fill the minutes and who are you hoping can step into that void in the minutes at the point guard position when Haley is not on the floor?

TARA VANDERVEER: I'm really excited about two young guards that we have on our team, actually three young guards. They're all freshmen. Next year I'll probably have more gray hair.

Talana Lepolo is as good a freshman point guard as we have ever had at Stanford. She really is, I think, a fabulous player. Indya Nivar, I think she's doing really well. I don't even think of them as freshmen.

Jzaniya Harriel is another gal that can handle it and run our point. Every day in practice we have four or sometimes five people working at that position.

We're also obviously recruiting point guards. Any more, young people can come in and they really have just the experience and the ability to step right in.

We're really excited about that opportunity for our young point guards. But Haley could change her mind.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports.