

Atlantic Coast Conference Basketball Tipoff Media Day

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Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

Stanford Cardinal

Coach Kate Paye

Alexandra Eschmeyer

Hailee Swain

Women's Press Conference



KATE PAYE: Obviously we expect to be playing in the NCAA Tournament. That is our goal. We have an extremely challenging nonconference schedule. That is intentional. We are the only Power 4 school to play five other Power 4 schools and five true road games. I think we'll learn a lot about ourselves.

I mean, the ACC is a fantastic women's basketball conference. Great teams, great coaches, great players. You have to prepare yourself for that. With such kind of a new roster, you know, we want to learn about ourselves early, and we will.

THE MODERATOR: I just want to piggyback your comment about the schedule. Five Power 4 opponents, four were NCAA Tournament teams. You got away and neutral site games versus Arizona, Santa Clara, Columbia, WAZZU, Auburn, and Ohio State; home games against Gonzaga and Arizona State. Who on your staff put this schedule together?

KATE PAYE: I don't know. I got to talk to them. Our team is up for it. We look at it as an opportunity. We'll be playing in Hawaii over Thanksgiving. It's nothing but good things to look forward to.

THE MODERATOR: Hailee, member of the All-ACC freshman team a year ago. What did you learn as a freshman that now you're using and communicating to the newcomers to your team?

HAILEE SWAIN: Last year I learned as a freshman the importance of rest and recovery, physically and mentally, of course, and just keeping yourself sane mentally so you can go out and perform at a high level consistently.

I also learned physicality. This is college basketball at the ACC. Every single game is a battle. Every game is physical. Just going out there and knowing how to protect yourself, but also play the right way and just compete at a high level.

THE MODERATOR: Alexandra, a year ago you led the team with 43 blocks, the most by a freshman since a young

THE MODERATOR: I am happy to welcome Stanford to the stage led by head coach Kate Paye, Hailee Swain, and Alexandra Eschmeyer. Ladies, thank you for your time.

KATE PAYE: We're excited to be here. Thank you for having us.

THE MODERATOR: Kate, after a couple of practices under your belt now, give me your 60-second elevator spiel on why you think this team will have success in the ACC this season?

KATE PAYE: Christy, as you said, we're excited entering our third year in the ACC. I think we feel a lot more comfortable, a lot more confident. Certainly have a better way to travel. This will be the first time we're going into arenas on the road and not the first time we've been somewhere.

What has me most excited is our team and the women on our team. Starting with the two sitting right here next to me, Alex Eschmeyer and Hailee Swain, you know, have really stepped up as leaders.

We are young. We are hungry. We are full of energy. Our team has been working really hard all offseason. I've shared this before, but for the first time in Stanford women's basketball history we had a player-organized, player-led, player-initiated retreat before the start of the school year. Hailee, Alex, Shay, Joy were a big part of organizing that. They went to Muir Woods, Stinson Beach; had a good time building chemistry, connection, and culture and a championship culture.

THE MODERATOR: Kaye, you increased your win total up to 21 wins a season ago. What's the next step for this program?



lady by the name of Cameron Brink. What area did you focus on this offseason to continue to expand your game?

ALEXANDRA ESCHMEYER: Yeah, I would say it's hard to choose just one area. I think I really emphasized all areas of my game. Strength for one. Just being able to continue to compete in the post with the amazing posts of the ACC, but also my shooting ability, just getting in the gym a lot, working with my teammates building chemistry with them, with Hailee, our two-man game, that sort of thing.

Q. How do you help your players stay composed whenever you're in close games in tough stretches?

KATE PAYE: I think it starts in practice. You know, trying to simulate kind of game-like environment, game situations, end of game situations. You know, obviously we started practice a couple of weeks ago in September and we're practicing end of game scenarios. I mean, that's what it comes down to.

But I think making practice an incredibly demanding and competitive environment so that when the games come, it's not a shock to the system.

THE MODERATOR: Coach mentioned the first time ever that it was a player-led retreat. What was kind of the genesis behind it? Who organized it? What was the greatest takeaways from the retreat?

ALEXANDRA ESCHMEYER: Yeah, I would say -- so it started back in the spring when we had a meeting with the men's gymnastics team at Stanford, who they are an extremely successful program, having won, I believe, six out of seven of the last national championships. So we met with their team. One thing that stuck out to us specifically was that they do a team retreat every year.

Just players. It's an opportunity for them to really build out their goals for the year, discuss their standards, and that stuck with us and we kind of took it upon ourselves to plan this trip to Muir Beach. We got an airbnb, and we discussed a lot about what we want our season to look like, how we want to set the tone, the standards, and it was also just a great opportunity for us to bond with each other, having a lot of new girls.

I think that was honestly the most important thing was get to know each other, because when you have more chemistry off the court, it definitely translates.

THE MODERATOR: Hailee, anything to add?

HAILEE SWAIN: I would say we also set, like, our team standards and what Alex was saying, what we want our

season to look like. We also came up with a theme or a saying for our team this year, which is "it's just us." So that that means focusing on our team and your individual development as long as collective team development and just going out on the court and working together to win.

Q. The keys to the back court have been handed off to your younger players, like Hailee. What goals and expectations do you have set for them in terms of leadership?

KATE PAYE: Well, we have a young team. We're four juniors, four sophomores, four freshmen. I think we're one of only three Power 4 teams not to have a fourth-year senior or a fifth-year senior.

Our theme this year is together. We all have T-shirts that say "together." We wear them quite regularly. What I say is, like, Alex and Hailee, Shay Ijiwoye, have stepped up since the spring as leaders on our team.

We're excited about the work that we did in the portal bringing in Inés Sotelo Miguez; Ilse De Vries, Charlotte Tuhy, three players that bring maturity, strength, instruction to our roster. They are great fits for Stanford.

You don't get to Stanford without being a leader and having leadership qualities, leadership skills. We're going to count on every single woman on our team, all 12 of them, to be leaders in some way that's authentic to them.

Hailee is more than ready to step up as a point guard. Shay Ijiwoye is very experienced. She's ready. We have young guards, Elyse Ngenda and Gracyn Gilliard working hard every day. They will do it together.

THE MODERATOR: Hailee, you started every game a year ago, and you elevated your game in the final six games of the season where you averaged 14 points, shot 48% from three. What should we expect from your game this year? Having success like that down the stretch at crunch time in March, how important is that for your success this season?

HAILEE SWAIN: I definitely think preparation played a huge part in I would say the last few games, like you said. I think also just relying on the people around you and the support and people believing in you also played a big role for me as well.

So for this season you will expect to see an elevated, I would say, perimeter game and a lot of two-man game with Alex and I. We've been working on it ever since the spring started, and it's going to be great.

THE MODERATOR: Alexandra, both of your parents starred at Northwestern. You have a twin brother, Elijah, and a younger sister Mila. And I never heard this in my life, but all three of you share the same birthday, March 4th. Talk about your family and how they've helped you get to this point in your career, and how they make you better every day.

ALEXANDRA ESCHMEYER: Yeah, my brother is also at Northwestern this year as a freshman, which is super exciting. Yeah, my family, I mean, it means everything to me, and I think there's a basketball side of things which they have been so influential in my journey as a player and, like, how I've gone through my life in that way, but also, off the court I feel like they have just been so influential in the person that I am as well, yeah.

THE MODERATOR: Kate, I saw a photo a couple of weeks ago of one of your most esteemed alums retiring from the WNBA, and it was young and old players. It was alums. It was former coaches. It was current coaches. To me, that picture exemplified the Stanford sisterhood. Can you talk about, one, that moment with everyone coming back together, and just about the Stanford sisterhood?

KATE PAYE: Stanford is a really special place, and Stanford women's basketball is really special, and it does come back to the sisterhood.

We've been very fortunate. We've had our alums in the gym all spring, all summer, all fall. Cameron Brink, Hannah Jump, Brooke Demetre. I could go on and on. It was really special to go down to Nneka's retirement game, Tara, Jeanette Pohlen. You know, it was really, really special. Nneka exemplifies the very best of Stanford women's basketball. Elite student-athlete. Even better person. Incredible leader. Madam President. I'm excited to see what she does next.

I think like the women on our team really understand that it's special to be a part of something that's bigger than yourself, and Christy, you know, you bring up the Stanford greats. I'm sitting next to in my opinion the next two Stanford greats, and they will be legacy players at Stanford. They will leave a mark on our team and our program with their individual accomplishments, our championship accomplishments, All Americans and future pro careers.

THE MODERATOR: Hailee, when you hear your coach say that, is that empowerment? Is that challenging? Is it just you want to elevate because of what you represent with that name on the front of your jersey?

HAILEE SWAIN: That's definitely amazing to hear, so

thank you, Kate. I would say more empowerment. I'm definitely very excited, and I know there have been greats before me, so to potentially be in that conversation is just -- honestly it's a blessing. I'm ready to go.

THE MODERATOR: Alexandra, Coach mentioned all the alums have come back throughout the offseason. I'm sure they're not just working out with you. I'm sure there's been words of advice or encouragement. What's been the one whether it's the person or what they have said that's impacted you the most to inspire you for this season?

ALEXANDRA ESCHMEYER: Yeah, I mean, I would say it's been amazing to have all the alums back, first of all, and just be surrounded by pros and like that level of talent.

Cameron Brink when she was back I talked with her a little bit. I think she's always -- she's been very supportive of me and just, like, whenever I ask her questions about whether that's, like, leadership or technical stuff, she's always there for me. I would say that's been a very important conversation and person I've had helping me.

THE MODERATOR: Hailee, every coach has their mantras or sayings or things that when you wake up in the middle of the night are rotating through your head because you cannot unhear them. What are Kate's?

HAILEE SWAIN: Mantra.

THE MODERATOR: What are the things that she consistently is saying in practice to you guys?

HAILEE SWAIN: I would say "here we go, Stanford," or "pace, pace, pace," or "here we go, here we go." It's mostly encouraging, like getting you ready to go, get you going.

THE MODERATOR: Alexandra, a number of newcomers for your team this year. Who is that one newcomer that's really impressed you that you think is going to make their mark on the ACC?

ALEXANDRA ESCHMEYER: You know, all of the newcomers have really impressed me. I want to say Charlotte Tuhy for one. I roomed with her over the summer, and she was always up before me getting to the gym. I would come right after her, but her work ethic is definitely unmatched. I'm really excited to see what she does.

THE MODERATOR: So this question will be for all of you, and Alexandra, we'll start with you. Give me the one word to describe for this season Stanford women's basketball.



ALEXANDRA ESCHMEYER: I'm going to steal it from Kate and say together, because that has been our motto so far, and I think it really emulates what we want out of this year. Just stay together, stay strong, and if we have each other, we're going to be just fine.

HAILEE SWAIN: I would say hungry. I think that we are obviously a very young team, but that is room for opportunity and for us to grow individually and together. I'm just really excited.

We're hungry, ready to go, ready to work, and ready to win.

KATE PAYE: Young, hungry, and together.

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