

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship

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Lisa Peterson

Tournament Selection Media Conference



RICK NIXON: Good evening, everyone. Rick Nixon with the NCAA. Thank you for joining us for our national media call. The NCAA Division I Women's Basketball Committee announced their bracket for the 2023 Championship. Certainly an exciting night for everyone associated.

To kick things off, I'll turn it over to Lisa for a quick opening statement. Lisa, it's all yours.

LISA PETERSON: Thank you, Rick. Thank all of you for being here. Thanks for what you do for women's basketball. I know a lot of you were covering it before it was cool, so I appreciate it.

I just wanted to say, on behalf of the Women's Basketball Committee, we're excited about this bracket and college women's basketball and what's happening right now.

We certainly have South Carolina, who's gone undefeated and has the opportunity to be the fifth school to win a National Championship with an undefeated season, but we also have a lot of firsts. The first is that Indiana and Virginia Tech are on the 1 line and Utah is on the 2.

But we also have four schools that are going to the dance for the first time, and they all happen to start with S: St. Louis, Southeast Louisiana, Southern Utah, and Sacramento State. So very excited about that.

RICK NIXON: Thanks, Lisa.

Q. Good job bracketing by you guys.

LISA PETERSON: Thank you.

Q. I'm curious, though, about the last couple teams. Can you say who the four that were snubbed are? And my other part of the question is, if I did my math right, I think 34 of the 36 at large teams are from the Power Five and the Big East, including some teams that are mediocre in those conferences. So what was the decision to put some of them in instead of some of the

other teams that may have better records and such?

LISA PETERSON: I'll answer your first part first. The teams that we had talked about -- I don't know if they were snubbed, but they were our first four out. Alphabetically, they were Columbia, Kansas, Massachusetts, and Oregon. There were varying things on each one of those teams as to the reasons why that they didn't get in.

As far as the number from the Power Five, I didn't know that math. But we just looked at the body of work and the people that they're playing and how they're doing in those games. I feel like we got the right 68.

Q. My followup is what do you say to a team that isn't in a Power Five that does the best it can to schedule and do things when obviously there's a slant towards Power Five schools to get in just because the teams in the Power Five have a chance to play better squads, so to speak?

LISA PETERSON: I think we did have some teams that got in that didn't have the strongest schedules that did go out to try to play, but they won some of those games. I would say continue to schedule those games and win a few, and hopefully we'll see you in the tournament.

Q. You touched on it a little bit when you were asked about UConn on the selection show, but I'm curious how you rated performance in conference tournaments and down the stretch because Iowa ended up as No. 2 despite winning the Big Ten tournament, whereas Stanford and Indiana both lost in their conference tournament and didn't even reach the finals.

LISA PETERSON: So we looked at the whole body of work and not just the conference tournament. I think some teams could have played their way higher by doing well in the conference tournament, but we didn't discredit what people had done all season long.

Q. I'm the Ivy League beat reporter for The Next and just wanted to follow up on Doug's question. Curious specifically how you evaluate Columbia and what kept them out of this field?

LISA PETERSON: Unfortunately, them losing in the first round of their tournament is what kept them out of the field. They had a great season. They were playing very well in the beginning of the season. They kind of fell off a little towards the end of the season and how they were playing. But specifically, it may have been losing that first round of their conference tournament.

Q. I'm just curious if you were able to share how many teams were you deciding between for the top -- I guess the 1 seeds, how you determined, because there seemed to be a lot of question marks down the stretch of the season, how many were kind of in contention for those final spots and what kind of made Virginia Tech and Stanford -- I know you just alluded to it in the previous question -- get those two spots.

LISA PETERSON: Sure. So Virginia Tech is on an 11-game winning streak, and the way they have played at the end of the season and in their conference tournament was the reason why they ended up on the 1 line. They also, like Stanford, had 20 wins in the top 100.

It was a very difficult conversation. Certainly we all are very well aware of the injuries that Connecticut had had. While those games may have ended up differently if their lineup had been different, we can't discredit those ended up being losses, but at the same time, they're a really good team and deserving of where they are on that 2 line.

Q. Were Iowa or Maryland, were those also in consideration for the 1 line, or was it really between Stanford, Virginia Tech, and UConn?

LISA PETERSON: No, Iowa was as well. Certainly the way they were playing, that last second shot against Indiana in the regular season and how they managed themselves throughout the Big Ten tournament, they were definitely a part of the conversation.

In all honesty, it was probably the Iowa-Stanford conversation that was the longest.

Q. I was talking with some coaches earlier today, some women's coaches, as they're kind of predicting what's going to happen, and a couple of them said to me, well, so and so doesn't have quad wins or quad this, and I said, the women don't do quad wins. What I'm curious about is the NET is extraordinarily confusing to everyone, including coaches. So my first question is how do you fix that? My second question is we've been having so many conversations about equity lately. Why aren't we doing quad one wins and all of that on the women's side? Because that's all the

men talk about.

LISA PETERSON: I would first say, you're right, we don't do quads, and I'm glad you explained that to somebody else. We use categories. Despite gender equity, I'm not sure how you evaluate teams is a gender equity issue. I think this is how the women's committee does that.

As far as how NET is derived, I think it's about efficiency. Probably one of the challenges the coaches are having is to schedule toward the NET, but you have to be efficient in the games that you play, and that's how you see what's happening with the NET. I don't think that I can get the NET changed, and I don't know that we need it changed, but we are not doing quads. I thank you for sharing that message.

We try to tell all of the broadcast teams that the women are not doing quads, we're categories.

Q. A couple of questions. One, when Iowa State wins the Big 12 tournament just a few hours before the committee wraps up its business, how difficult does that create the seeding process for the committee?

LISA PETERSON: So going into today, we actually do multiple brackets, and it's not just with the Big 12 scenario. It was also with the four other conference tournaments because, if you watched them, I'm pretty sure that all of them had different conference tournament winners versus the regular season. So we actually do multiple.

So we walk through all of that before the game is actually played, and we talk through the scenarios. If Texas wins, if Iowa State wins, and then if there's a point differential, what that looks like. So we take care of all of that so that, when the game is done, we can go forth with the bracket. So it's a lot of pre-planning.

Q. How much discussion was there about Iowa State being a 4 rather than a 5?

LISA PETERSON: Significant. And the challenge with them was what happened in the middle of the season. They had some ups and downs related, and it's -- you know, I think we're all wondering what kind of team they would be if Stephanie Soares didn't go down. They were incredible at the beginning of the season, and I think it took them some time to figure out how to play without her, but they certainly have it rolling, and they were a lot of fun to watch in the tournament.

Q. Can you detail the reason why Kansas was among the first four out?

LISA PETERSON: Yes. So we really compared them, first, to West Virginia because in the league that they're in -- and the one thing about the Big 12 is they do a true double round robin. So those teams play each other, and West Virginia had the better regular season conference record.

Then the way that Kansas lost in the first round of their tournament was the differentiator between Kansas and West Virginia. Then like we said before, with the other ones, it's always a thin piece of paper that you can slide through them, but that was really what it was. It was how they're playing right now.

Q. Just a quick followup. Olivia Miles' injury is probably the most high profile question mark in terms of player health for the tournament for a team in the top 16 no less. How did you all assess what to do with Notre Dame given the question marks around her status and it is unclear what the player status will be unknown. At least Notre Dame hasn't publicly said anything. How does the committee go about deciding anything there?

LISA PETERSON: Precisely. We just go about the information we have in front of us. We were told it's unknown, so we can't assume she's not able to play. They were treated with their season of work. At the same time, they have that significant loss at the end of the season. So that certainly impacted their seed.

But we can't go off of the assumption that she's not going to be there because we weren't told that she wasn't.

Q. Lisa, you said on ESPN that besides the No. 1s, that who's hosting was the toughest decision for you guys. Just how many other teams were in the mix, and how close was it deciding who the top 16 were, the 13 through 16, versus the next four or few?

LISA PETERSON: It was very difficult. I would say the whole 5 line, and then Iowa State basically played their way into that this past week. So I would say there's probably five teams we were considering on that line. Like I mentioned earlier, we make these decisions, and then we go away and come back and start over by re-evaluating all the decisions.

So it was very difficult. There's so many deserving teams and just things that are happening that seems -- it's very hard for us, but so great for the game.

Q. Just wanted to follow up regarding hosting. Curious your thoughts on North Carolina getting a 6 seed and maybe a little bit lower than some folks

thought.

LISA PETERSON: That kind of plays into what I was just explaining to Doug related to that 5 line. Certainly how North Carolina is playing now, but it was also what other teams were doing that kind of moved them above North Carolina. They were right on the edge, and today's outcome certainly impacted that, you know, what happened in the tournaments today.

So they were right there, just feel like -- again, a team that has a lot of injury in and out of the lineup. So that's just where we put them based on what we know today.

Q. Obviously I know you because you worked at Oregon forever, and you are a huge women's basketball fan, just a tremendous advocate of the game. How big a deal is it that we're at this point in the women's game where there are people who are angry that teams are being not picked as 1s that are being left out? Like to be frank, it used to be hard to find 68 good teams. How much progress do you think we've made just in the last few years?

LISA PETERSON: Can we say that we've arrived? Is that allowed? No, it's really great for the game. We were talking all week that you can watch a game and a team can be up by 24 at the half, and then the other team comes back and wins.

So I think it's incredible. I think it showed to the investment that our institutions are making into women's basketball. It's a credit to the coaches and what they're doing but then also to the student-athletes.

The power that they're having not just on the basketball court but outside, on social media, in their community, all of the different things. So I think it's a combination. It's kind of like the perfect storm of all of these things that are happening, and it's really, really exciting.

I think that, yes, we are here now, but five years from now, I can't wait to see what the conversation is that we're having.

Q. You guys aren't releasing the top 68 like the men are, I assume?

RICK NIXON: We don't do that. We do the 1 line, and then we do the first one, last four out. That's what we do.

Q. Lisa, I was just curious, and I joined a couple minutes late so you might have answered this. For years before we had the NET, 20 wins was like the magic number for a team to get in. Do you feel like



that is completely not a factor anymore? It's all NET, NET, NET?

LISA PETERSON: No. We actually have 14 different categories that we look at, and the NET is just one of them. No, I don't know that there's a magic number that it is. There's a lot of different components.

But one of the things that was changed was observable components. So we really do watch a lot of basketball games, and that is what's playing into it as well.

RICK NIXON: Thanks everybody for joining us. Look forward to seeing you on the road in the upcoming championship, and it's going to be a great one.

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