

# Stanford University Women's Basketball Media Conference

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## Tara VanDerveer

### Press Conference



Stanford - 104, Pacific - 61

THE MODERATOR: We'll take an opening statement, please.

TARA VANDERVEER: You know, I'm just so thankful. Our team came out and I thought, you know, did what we needed to do. We had a lot of different people stepping up for us. They wanted this win for me and I felt it from them the whole game, the whole bus ride up here.

And I'm just, it's just feels great that we kind of have something, we took care of business and we had fun, and they got me a beautiful swag sweatshirt and we had little fireworks in the locker room. We miss, obviously we miss all the fans coming to the games and doing what we're used to doing, but I feel like it made us closer as a team.

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with questions.

**Q. Are you feeling a little more sentimental tonight than you were on Sunday? It seems like.**

TARA VANDERVEER: Well, maybe a little bit. But thank you for the great article with all the coaches. You know, the thing that has been, I always teased and I said, Someone put my phone number on, like, a bathroom wall or something. My phone is like blowing up and it is just so wonderful. So many people have reached out to me and I think that that's been, just to connect with people during this time that you feel so isolated, that it's really meant a lot to me and thank you for the things that our coaches said.

I'm just -- I do think back. I do think back about all the different players I've coached. I just want to thank every player I've coached, every administrator I've worked for, assistant coach that I've worked with, trainers. Everyone has made this just a great ride.

**Q. What was it like immediately afterward up there celebrating with the team? You just mentioned fireworks and --**

TARA VANDERVEER: Yeah, little pop things.

**Q. Okay. Some T shirts were made and some little cakes and stuff. How does this feel for you? I heard you shout out your mom and your family afterward. And just, this has been a long time coming and you said you hoped Pat's looking down, and Tennessee just congratulated you as well. Just, can you sum up the moment? And I know it's always about your players with you, but this is something that shows longevity in this game.**

TARA VANDERVEER: Well, I'm feeling the love from people. And, you know, it's just a wonderful feeling when so many people are reaching out to you and it's just, but you know, I want to be in that pool tomorrow morning and I thought about today, when I was swimming, I just said, I hope we play well. I hope the record is set. And I'm going to be in the pool tomorrow and I'm going to be the same person. So I've been really fortunate to have a great job at Stanford with great administration. I've gotten texts from, or e-mails from our president and from our provost Persis Drell and Marc Tessier-Lavigne, and they're working so hard to allow us to have this season. I'm very thankful.

**Q. On this date 42 years later, I think 15,335 days or something like that, do you have any thoughts about win number one? Do you remember it?**

TARA VANDERVEER: I think I do. I think it went into overtime, and I think I told this story, but we were ahead going into the last like couple seconds of the game and there was a timeout and I remember telling our team, you know, All right, just play great defense. Don't foul. And of course we fouled and we went into overtime and I said to myself, This is going to be harder than it looks.

**Q. Were there any fans there that day?**

TARA VANDERVEER: You know, there were probably about as many as are in the gym now. It was at Idaho, and we started in the little gym. I pulled out the bleachers and we ended up in their big gym and we ended up getting, like, after, when I first went to Idaho and I had come from Ohio State, they said, Tara, this isn't Ohio State. I'm



thinking, We're going to turn it around and we did. And then when I went back to Ohio State, they said, Tara, this isn't Idaho. I'm like, Okay, I've heard that before.

And they said the same thing at Stanford. So it's really exciting. We miss our fans so much, but we're just, we're just rolling with it right now.

**Q. We have gone through, a number of us on this call, have gone through a lot of milestones with you over the years. Does this one feel different than the others?**

TARA VANDERVEER: I mean, this is special because of, I think the magnitude of that many wins. Like, you never go into coaching, I never thought, well, I'm going to try to win a thousand games or anything like that. But this is special, having currently the No. 1 team, being undefeated, playing in a pandemic. I will never forget this for sure.

Could I say one thing before the next question? I said this on the air. I don't know if anyone watched the game, but I think that this is such a hard time for so many people in our country and in our community that having this platform of all of you, I am going to donate to our local food bank or Season of Sharing, \$10 for each win, which I'm not a great mathematician, but it's somewhere around \$10,000.

And I just, you know, we're playing games and we know people are really suffering. They don't have jobs. Their unemployment's running out. They're hungry. So I think, I'm so thankful for my job and my opportunity that I just want to make sure I'm giving back.

**Q. We saw Billie Jean King is one of the people who sent you congratulations, and I wondered if you can reflect on what it means to be somebody who has seen basically the entire growth of modern day women's basketball, and in a certain way, modern day women's athletic, how much it's grown and how you've been a part of really that entire thing.**

TARA VANDERVEER: I don't really -- I mean, when I look at her, I feel like I'm really looking up. I mean, to have a shoutout from her, to have a text from her, which I've gotten on a thousand wins, is, I mean, I have to pinch myself. I mean, it's really special.

I'm happy to be a part of the growth of women's basketball and I'm happy to support the Women's Sports Foundation and the Legacy Fund that is in my name to help promote women in coaching and just, it's an honor to be associated with someone that has done as much as Billie Jean King has.

**Q. You actually stole my question talking about the**

**donation to the food bank because I was going to ask you about that. And it makes it easy because your next win is 1,100, and that's an easy \$11,000, so the math, for people like me, who it's not easy for, it makes it simple for you.**

My other question is, I mean, obviously, there's been so much emotion to tonight for the team. They obviously probably came out a little bit tight. Did you say anything to them at halftime, like, you know, just play basketball or anything, to sort of like take the pressure off them that it seemed like they were feeling first half?

TARA VANDERVEER: No, I think our team hasn't played a team that is as physical as Pacific is. I think that the physicality kind of just, we didn't throw the first punch, they did. I think I just talked to our team at halftime about being more physical. I thought Pacific did really well. This was their first game. I think we just wore them down.

I was really excited about how Cameron Brink did coming in. I think she kind of really got us going inside. And just, I think, in the second half Haley Jones got it going for us too. We got out in transition a little bit.

But this will be a game that we can build on. I think it's to their credit. They played very well.

**Q. Every time we get to talk to your players, we get a little glimpse of really how special they are. And I'm just curious about your opinion and your thoughts on how special this group is and how special they can be on the court when it's all said and done.**

TARA VANDERVEER: You're really right. These are young people that are going through a pandemic and being asked to do things that no other players have ever been asked to do and they're trying really hard to follow protocol and play basketball without their family and friend here. It's just, I have got to give them a lot of credit.

I'm so proud of our team and just how well they're rolling with everything. But I'm going to tell you, it's very challenging. And it's challenging for our staff too, for someone like Kate Paye to be away from her family and her two little children. We're working really hard and we're really sticking together.

**Q. I'm curious, Pat Summitt, obviously such a trail blazer in the sport and you guys had a good relationship. What do you think she would say if she were here today? And would you say, what would you say to her if you had the chance, just about the influence that she had?**



TARA VANDERVEER: You know, we were friends and obviously competitors. She would tell me, Tara, your team needs to rebound better. But I think all in all she was, she had great passion for the game and I think she sees that with me and she loves unselfish basketball, which I think she would see with our team.

But more than anything, she helped me get better as a coach because you had to really work hard to prepare. We lost more games than we won against Tennessee and unfortunately, we're not able to play them this year. But I would hope that she would -- she was a great mentor and a great friend and I think she would be proud of us.

**Q. One follow-up question. I'm just curious, what is the legacy that you hope to leave behind? And for little girls, young athletes, maybe people, girls growing up that want to be coaches, what would you want them to know or what would you say to them tonight?**

TARA VANDERVEER: I think that seeing, for little girls to see whether it's me or my assistants, like Katy Steding or Kate Paye or Britney Anderson, to see those coaches and to see the women on our sideline is the best message. To be able to see them doing that, I think then they can see themselves doing it.

But I would just say have confidence and be passionate about whatever you do, whatever it is. And if it's basketball, more power to you, come on.

**Q. So many of your former players have been so complimentary of you for the way that you've set them up for success in life, whether that involves basketball or not, so many of them have gone on to careers that they're very proud of. Maybe it's obvious -- for some coaches, it always isn't, but why did you decide that that was a principle that you wanted to embrace when you first got into coaching?**

TARA VANDERVEER: Well, I know that there's really, when I first went into coaching, there was no professional basketball. So, and my both of my parents were teachers, and so I think, number one thing, I really believe in education. And the fact that -- young people come to Stanford to get an education first. They're not coming to Stanford for basketball.

But I really wanted them and Andy Geiger, when I talked with him, I wanted them to be able to come to Stanford and have excellence in both academics and basketball, and that's what we tried to do.

Beyond that, it's being a great teammate and being the best person you can be. Again, you're going to be, you're

going to work for somebody some day. You're going to want to, it's getting along with people. It's being a really good teammate. I think the work ethic that is demonstrated by, whether it's myself or my assistant coaches, is something that is not wasted on some of our players. They know that we work really hard and we demand them to work hard in practice, so that carries over.

**Q. I have been a fan of yours since you came to my hometown and recruited my homegirl Sonja Henning, and of course, to be able to fast forward and cover you in the 2000s has been awesome. But how do you feel about you being able to impact the lives of these players, even during a time when I was even in college, way back in the '80s?**

TARA VANDERVEER: I mean, I just, I never really, like, kind of say, I'm going to go to the gym and impact someone's life today. I just try to work really hard, set a good example with work ethic, with working well with people, respecting our student-athletes. I think I probably, if you talk to some of the, someone like Katy Steding, she would probably say I've mellowed.

I think, for me, getting away from the team, being with the Olympics helped me in some respects come back with a little bit of a different perspective and the same drive, but maybe just different way to relate.

Everyone wants, I think I want to be a coach that our players want as a coach. I want to be someone that they want to play hard for, that they want to work hard for, and they want to please. So I think that that's, going back to whether it's 6 zone I can't or Jennifer, that's my goal all the time, to be a great coach for them.

The people in the locker room are the people that, I'm really excited that they were excited and happy for me. That's who I work for.

**Q. One quick question: What is it that has kept you coming back to the gym day after day after day? I mean, it's really special to have longevity in a career and to still have the enthusiasm that you have. What gives you that?**

TARA VANDERVEER: Well, one time, it was a couple, I think it was like four or five years ago, I really just thought, I've got to hang it up. I talked with someone at Stanford, very special, John Arrillaga, and he said, Tara, don't do that. I said, John, I'm just exhausted. I need a break. And he said, Well, take the summer off. So I did.

And I feel like maybe being away from something sometimes, and the players, they're not hearing my voice

all the time in the spring and in the summer, but I think that that keeps a lot of tread on my tires. So I waterskied 93 times last summer. Now this was different because of the pandemic.

But I think that by keeping myself healthy, by working out, I'm swimming, like Janie knows, or I'm riding my Peloton, you know, to play bridge with my mom, then when I'm in the gym, I'm excited. It's not like a J-O-B job. It's like F-U-N, fun.

**Q. I would like to discuss the terms under which we can call you T-Dawg? Who can call you T-Dawg, under what circumstances can we call you T-Dawg, what's the, please tell me what we can do with that?**

TARA VANDERVEER: No, that was from Kiana, and I maybe - she knows I love my dogs, you know what I mean, and she just someone day called me than a then Haley started saying, you know, all right, T-Dawg, and that's a very -- I mean the gift that I got with the sweat shirt with T-Dawg on it, it's -- they know there's a line, but I don't think they would be saying that probably when I'm yelling at them about their defense or their rebounding, but I take it as a very nice nickname and I'm really -- I'm really -- it's affectionate, so I don't mind it at all. So anybody wants to say it, I'm fine with that.

**Q. I already asked Heidi if she would call you T-Dawg and she said no?**

TARA VANDERVEER: No, Heidi, she has another nickname for me. (Laughing. So, I want to wish you all a very safe and happy holiday. I truly appreciate all the wonderful things you've written about our team and our players and me and it is really special and I'm very excited to be able to share this virtually with you guys, I wish we were in person and in the Maples little media room. But Brian, thank you very much and everyone stay healthy and stay safe and we'll be back in the gym together again.

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