

Stanford University Women's Basketball Media Conference

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Bernard Muir

Kate Paye

Press Conference



BERNARD MUIR: Thank you so much for coming today. Great to see the team here as well.

This is truly a special day for Stanford women's basketball. Coach Paye, this was an exhaustive search, and I'm glad we got to the finish line.

But I have to acknowledge Tara VanDerveer, who built this program and put this program on such great footing for you to take over. Great to see you here, Coach.

I will turn the mic over to you, Kate, but before I do that I have a little something. This is your jersey, I'm told, No. 3.

KATE PAYE: Tara, I think I have more people here than you did.

Wow. Thank you all for being here, this is a really exciting day for me and my family. First I would like to thank President Richard Saller, Provost Jenny Martinez, President-elect John Levin, members of the board of trustees and Bernard Muir for this incredible opportunity.

I am grateful and humbled to be asked to lead Stanford women's basketball, a program that has meant so much to me for over 40 years. I assure you all, you could not have found anyone who feels a greater sense of honor, privilege, responsibility enthusiasm and passion to lead Stanford women's basketball into the next chapter of our storied legacy.

I promise I will work tirelessly every day to honor that trust and belief.

I would also like to extend a special thanks to Dr. Condoleezza Rice for her support of me and our program for so many decades, and for her efforts on behalf of the entire athletic department.

I also want to thank the Ishiyama family. I'm truly humbled to hold the title of the Setsuko Ishiyama director of

women's basketball. Setsuko's grand daughter, Julia, sent me an incredible e-mail this morning sharing the story of her grandma.

And she is right. Her grandmother and my mother were kindred spirits. Family is the most important thing to me in life.

I want to thank my family whose unwavering support encouragement and sacrifice has allowed me to keep living my dream. To my wife, Raquel, your strength, patience and grace sets the bar every day. You are my rock.

Thank you to our children, Cass, Anne and Lauren, you three inspire me. You motivate me, you make me laugh and inspire me to be a better coach.

Coaching is something that is really a family effort and my family is all in.

Tara, to say thank you doesn't seem adequate for all you have done for each of us, our team, our program, our campus, our community and the game of basketball.

While this is an exciting day for me personally, it is also bittersweet. I am going to miss being in that foxhole with you every day. Thank you for all you have done for my family little, and thank you for all you have done to prepare me for this opportunity and thank you for entrusting me with your life's work. I know you will always be there for me and for all of us because you always have been.

And while some people might worry about me down on the bench, I know they might want to be worried about Tara up there in those red seats Tara has said many times that being stuck in the stands while a Stanford women's basketball game is going on is literally her recurring nightmare.

Bernard, good luck, you've got your hands full on that one.

I want to thank Amy Tucker. If anyone knows anything about our program, they know how important you have been to building the legacy that is Stanford's Women's Basketball. Thank you for being my coach, my mentor and



my friend. I have learned so much from you, and I know I can always count on you.

I kind of actually think that maybe Tara finally retired because she realized she was never going to beat your record as the Pac-12's all time winningest percentage head coach.

My story is a Stanford story, and it starts with the family I was raised in because there is so much of who I am as a person and a coach, why I love Stanford and why I have this incredible opportunity today.

Everything for me has always started with my late mother, Anne Paye, the guiding light in my life. My mother got her Master's Degree in English Literature here at Stanford, and was an English teacher in the local community college district for nearly 40 years before passing to colon cancer almost 11 years ago.

My mom was passionate about education and empowering women in sports. She was the strongest person I've ever known, hardest worker and a bigger lover of life. It is so special to me that we have a scouting report in her name that benefits our program, and it has been a full circle moment to have the first-ever recipient of this scouting report, Erica Bird McCall on staff this year giving back to the women in our program.

I want to thank my dad, John Paye, I didn't really think he would actually make it. He played football here and was a political science major like me. He made a huge impact on me because he always valued my interest in sport the same as did he my older brother. He challenged me, pushed me and provided me every stunts to pursue my love of sports. He believed basketball could take me places.

I owe so much to my older brother, John, as both Stanford starting quarterback and starting point guard. John was my childhood idol. I wanted to be just like him. My brother is also one of the many coaches who have positively impacted my life as my high school basketball coach at nearby Menlo School. The biggest things I learned from watching my brother as an athlete and a coach was how hard he competed and how much he cared.

My older sister, Amy Paye Venuto was a double major here at Stanford. She was always making us look bad. She worked in the athletic department while a student and serves today on the Cardinal board. She is the blue that keeps the family together in my mom's absence. We were raised the with the values of loyalty, hard work, character, strength and a love of life.

I also want to thank my brother-in-law Steve Venuto, who is here today, and I want to thank any in-laws, Manuel and Maria Pierce who made the long drive over from Lodi to be here today.

I would not have this opportunity without such unconditional family support.

I've been asked a lot this past week if this job is a dream come true. I don't really think of it like that because I'm so lucky and blessed that I have been living my dream.

Since I was a young girl, I dreamed of being a part of this program and I have gotten to do that now as a player, an alum and for the last 17 years as a coach.

I fell in love with Stanford Women's Basketball at basketball camp. I met Tara at camp her first summer on the job. In the years thereafter, I watched wide-eyed as Jennifer AZ and our very own Katy Seding and their talented teammates built Stanford into a national champion.

To follow in their footsteps I chose to come to Stanford and join the team as a walk-on. Tara and Amy, I'm never going to let that one go.

My experience here as a student athlete was magical, a beautiful campus, world-class academics, championship basketball and amazing people all around. Professors, some of whom I see here today, dormmates, classmates, teammates and coaches, I learned work ethic, resilience, team work, leadership and communication, lessons and skills that have served me the rest of my life.

When I left Stanford, I didn't know coaching was in my future. I played professionally for six seasons and got my JD MBA from Stanford while playing in the WNBA. I tried being a Silicon Valley corporate attorney. I lasted six months.

I quickly learned to listen to my cut and tried coaching. After short stints at Pepperdine and San Diego State Tara called with an opening on her staff. It was the opportunity of a lifetime to come home to the place I'm committed to and the people I love.

I've had the honor to coach the most extraordinary student athletes here at Stanford. I know I have learned more from them than they have learned from me. For me, coaching is all about developing strong women and lifelong relationships.

I have heard from so many of my Stanford sisters this past week. Teammates, alums, players I've coached, and



coaches I've coached with. As I sit here today, I know I am not up here alone. I am up here with and for my Stanford sisters. There is such immense pride we all have in this team, in this program, our shared history, our shared values, our shared experiences, and our shared stories.

Together we are all caretakers of this legacy, and I am proud to lead it forward.

So what is our plan to move forward? It starts with our team, and I'm looking at a lot of them up there. In our program, it has always been, it always is, and always will be all about our team.

I woke up today with the goal of being the absolute best coach I can be for the women on our team. I want our seniors, Brooke "Big Shot" Demetre, Elena "Freaky" Bosgana, and Jzaniya "Jay" Harriel, to have a fantastic senior season.

This is their team and their program, and they will lead the way. I know they will be terrific mentors for our whole team including your three fabulous freshmen: Kennedy Wesley, Shay Ijiwoye and Harper Peterson. I can't wait for those three to get to Stanford and start their own Stanford story.

I know our rising sophomore class, the trio, Courtney Ogden, Nunu Agara and Chloe Clardy will build on all their successes this past season and make that sophomore leap. We are counting on them and I know they will deliver.

I am excited to see our rising juniors, Talana Lepolo, Stavi Papadaki and Lauren Green step into larger leadership roles as upper class players in our program, and I'd just like to ask everybody here if you can give the players on our team a huge round of applause. Shout-out to Hannah Jump, too.

I love you guys and I'm honored to be your coach.

We will continue to compete relentlessly for championships. There is change to navigate but the standards and the expectations remain the same. Excellence in the classroom and on the court. We are going to lean into continuity and the strong foundation that has been laid for us. We are not going to change for the sake of change. We will continue to stand on our program values of hard work, unselfishness, toughness and togetherness every day.

We know there are challenges ahead. We embrace them because we know they are opportunities for growth. As we always have, we will constantly be looking for ways to improve and ways to get better.

I am also well aware that there is way too much work to be done to waste any energy on being anyone but myself. We will continue to have one of the most elite coaching staffs in the country. I am beyond humbled that our entire staff has enthusiastically agreed to stay on board. War.

I would like to recognize all our coaches: Katy Steding, Tempie Brown and Erica McCall. Let give it up for them. Our coaches are gifted teachers and mentors and tireless workers, and totally invested in the overall development of our student athletes at Stanford and for the rest of their lives.

I also want to recognize our entire support staff who will also continue to serve our student athletes: Eileen Roche, Brian Shank, Katelin Knox, John Cantalupi, and Casey Spinetti. Their loyalty and dedication to our team and program is second-to-none.

We will continue to recruit the most elite student athletes who want to get a world-class education and compete for national championships.

In this highly competitive world, a Stanford education, the Stanford experience, the Stanford degree and the Stanford network are more valuable than ever, especially for women. Quite simply, Stanford changes your life. We are excited about our move to the ACC.

It's fantastic women's basketball conference. Great competition and great universities. We will continue to play a fast and exciting, up-tempo, team-oriented style of basketball. We will be tough and we will be aggressive. We will play Stanford Basketball.

Women's college basketball is absolutely on fire right now. It is such an incredibly exciting time. Our program is well-positioned to successfully compete for championships with the tremendous support from our university, our administration, our donors, our community and our fan base.

I want to specifically thank our Collective Lifetime Cardinal for their investment in our student athletes. We know the landscape is more competitive than ever and we know that Stanford is committed to pursuing excellence in everything we do.

Again, thank you all for being here. I am humbled and grateful for this incredible opportunity to keep living my dream, and I'm excited to get back to work.

Q. What is, like, the mental shift for you? Because obviously you've been with this program for a long



time, know as much about everything this team needs to do and does as anyone. But with this upgrade in your job, what is that mentality switching from every day doing all this to kind of that next level?

KATE PAYE: I feel really fortunate, as I said, I'm here at a universe that I with people that I know and our staff is coming back.

When we first walked into our first staff meeting, we all had to elbow because they weren't sure where I was going to sit because it was a little awkward to sit in the chair that normally Tara sits in but it was the most obvious one.

I feel so well prepared for this opportunity. I know Stanford. I love Stanford. I know our players, their parents, their families, working with fantastic people. You know, I know that there are challenges ahead but I feel totally prepared and ready to get to work.

Q. With the internal promotion keeping the entire coaching staff, it does leave a seat open. Do you have at this time a plan as to when you might be announcing any potential new coach that you guys would look to hire, or would that be something --

KATE PAYE: We are already way ahead of you. We have already elevated Jeanette Pohlen from director of player development to assistant coach.

Q. Having said that, how does that continuity help the program? Obviously the entire staff is changing at the top but for the players, it's the exact same people that have been around day-in and day-out.

KATE PAYE: This is a big change and we have been talking with all the players on our team in meetings, in the weight room, on the court. This is a big change, and we have change coming with the move to the ACC.

I think the fact that the whole staff is back, familiarity with me, all of our assistant coaches, hopefully that sense of continuity and stability provides them a tremendous sense of comfort. Most of them kind of said, yeah, we kind of knew this was going to happen and we kind of feel like it's mostly going to be the same.

Q. You said you only lasted six months as a corporate attorney but in that time after you earned those degrees what did you learn that helped you start your coaching career, some of the lessons that you learned from that experience?

KATE PAYE: Well, first of all, my favorite political science professor is laughing behind you. Thank you for coming

Professor Brady. It's wonderful to see you.

And six months, I actually rounded up. I think it was only five and a quarter.

I think of coaching as teaching. I come from -- I talked about my mother who was a teacher and an educator. My grandmother was a music teacher. And when you are a teacher and educator, I believe you bring everything, all of your life experiences to what you do.

I loved my experience at the Stanford Law School, at the GSB, and I wouldn't trade it for anything, and hopefully I think it helps me in my day-to-day interactions on our team because it's part of my life experiences.

Q. I think it's pretty rare that we get the news that one coach is retiring and the other is in negotiations to assume the role in the same press release. So how long have you been working on this, how long has this kind of been in the works and what has that process been like? Apologies to Tara.

KATE PAYE: Well, usually every spring I go to lunch with Professor Brady, and about ten years ago, we were having lunch, probably out by the quad, and he had a big old hamburger with bacon on it and a plate of french fries, and he said, "Well, when is Tara going to retire? Am I going to get to see it?"

I said, "Not eating like that you are."

So he switched to salads. He's eating much healthier now, which is hard for a Midwestern guy.

I'll be honest, the first time this came up was in 2011. We had a tough loss, and Tara I think kind of came back and she just said, "I don't know if I can do this anymore. "

But we've had the conversations before. I think this was kind of a plan that was in place. I've been asked a lot this week, wow, you waited so long, you're so patient. I've never felt like that. This is the only place I've ever wanted to be. These are the people that I love.

When Bernard came on board, what 11, 12 years ago, I think he kind of inherited this arrangement, and kudos to him for signing on and agreeing to it.

It's just something that I think we've always kind of talked about and felt comfortable. I think -- I see how much Tara puts into it -- has put into it every single day. Pours in all of herself. I think there was a time where teammate thought she was going to retire and unretired.

So I think I've always known, and I've told her that I wasn't really going to believe it until she walked into the press conference and announced it publicly.

But it's just something that kind of feels comfortable and natural and is it has kind of always been a plan in place and again, I hope it provides continuity to our student athletes and our incoming freshmen.

Q. All the talk about continuity and everything, but you also said you want to be yourself. Like, what differences do you feel like -- or what is different about your coaching style compared to Tara?

KATE PAYE: I think the exercise of comparing, I think we are going to focus on competing. And that's the same thing that we do with the players on our team. You know, we just want people to compete, and they will be -- maybe they can answer that question better.

But I'm just going to be myself.

Q. So going into this ACC, there's going to be a lot of travel can dealing with that, and then you lost a lot of your rifles. So will there be any scheduling of those West Coast teams to keep the continuity, and who do you think will be your rival in the ACC?

KATE PAYE: We're really excited about the move to the ACC. I think, you know, we've obviously known this since last summer when conference realignment came down the pike. Our fantastic Doble (ph) Eileen Roche works extremely hard on scheduling.

We are going to look to play more of our present games more on the West Coast. You know it used to be that we would always go back and play at Tennessee, at South Carolina, at Connecticut. We've been to the Bahamas or Florida, but I think we are going to look to stay more in the West Coast in the preseason, knowing that during the winter quarter, conference play, we'll be making cross-country trips.

You know, it is what it is. We talked to the players on our team. I don't think anybody in the ACC cares. They are complaining about making one trip every other year. We will figure it out. We know we're going to have tremendous support. We'll adjust kind of class loads. We'll get on the plane. We'll study. We'll take a nap. We'll get there and we'll play basketball. And we'll take advantage of all the tremendous resources and sports science opportunities we have at Stanford but we are not going to make a bigger deal out of it than it is.

Q. To go off of that, obviously the conference

transition is happening but college basketball, not just from when you were a player but even when you started as an assistant coach, has different rules and availability and opportunities for players to leave and make money. How do you now, moving into the head coach, see yourself adapting to those changes and kind of setting the program with the transfer portal and NIL?

KATE PAYE: There are a lot of changes with the transfer portal, NIL, conference realignment. We are all trying to keep up as quickly as we can.

I think our sense here, my sense here is that at Stanford we have to double down on who we are, and continue to find incredible student athletes who come from families who value a world-class education, want to get a Stanford degree, want to come be a part of an incredible team, play championship basketball. And I think Stanford continues to differentiate themselves by really leaning into who we are.

Q. First of all, from walk-on to head coach, that's pretty cool (laughter). Secondly, going off that, though, having actually played basketball at a high level both at the cleanly eight level and a WNBA player, having experienced what it's like to be a player, how much do you think that experience will benefit you as a coach and how has it already benefited you as a coach?

KATE PAYE: I think it's extremely helpful. You know, just to understand where the student athletes are coming, different things that they are thinking about, you know, always keeping in mind what it feels like to be a player. I think that helps you as a coach.

Q. The NCAA announced new policies today regarding the transfer portal and also the school's ability to organize NIL deals. Is this a surprise to Stanford Athletics? Was this expected and what is the program prepared -- how is the program preparing to react?

KATE PAYE: What specifically are you referring to?

Q. The NCAA announced that, I believe, all transfers will now be able to play immediately without any waiting period, and also that schools will now be able to directly organize NIL deals with outside either collectives or companies.

KATE PAYE: You know, I think we are going to -- we plan to utilize the portal. We've talked to the players on our team about this.

Our roster will never be built through the portal and you

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

see plenty of teams out there that they are assembling whole teams that way. Our pipeline will always continue to be through high school, finding fantastic student athletes who value education and can play basketball at a really high level.

You know, but we'll use the portal in very select ways. You know, the admissions at Stanford remain the same. The profile of student athlete that we are looking at is no different in the portal. They have to be great academic students; and they have to be great players that fit a specific need that our team needs; and that can come and play with our players and they have to be fantastic teammates.

I don't know that any of those changes really affect us dramatically, but we are excited that it's a tool that we can use. But it will never be our main sledgehammer.

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