

Pac-12 Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Friday, March 5, 2021

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

Oregon State Beavers Coach Scott Rueck

Postgame Press Conference



Stanford - 79, Oregon State - 45

COACH RUECK: Give them a lot of credit. Their transition hurt us, but that was based on what they did on the defensive end. They were very disruptive, very active, like they've been. They're rated the No. 1 defensive team in the country for a reason.

I said before the game, they're the most complete team in the country. To have the floor leadership that they have, to have the length, the speed. I think they're the fastest team. I haven't seen everybody, but it would be hard to imagine a team that executes with the precision they do, at the speed that they do.

Tonight they made us pay for everything. And I don't know if fatigue caught up or what, but obviously it wasn't a great shooting night for us even when we did get good looks and all those turned into transition points for them.

We talked before the game or in our preparation about defensive transition being the number one thing. And it is when you play this team. So you can't turn it over. You can't miss -- out of balance any way offensively because those shots and those opportunities for them turn into points.

And so just an impressive performance by them. I couldn't be more proud of our team. What this team's done over the last month has just been absolutely remarkable. One of the most enjoyable stretches of basketball that I've had in my coaching career watching this come together like it has. To win the games in the places that they have, play at the level they have, shoot the ball better than any team I've ever coached during that stretch has just been unbelievable.

From my understanding, and I expect that we've earned more, and I'm excited to keep working with them and see what we can do here in the postseason.

Q. My question is, just you kind of just talked about it, but you guys have been playing really well last month or so throwing out today's game. Just what this team, you think the future for the rest of the season and the NCAA is going to be for you, and how good you think this team can be? Seems like you're peaking at the right time.

COACH RUECK: I think even -- we absolutely are. We've played unbelievable basketball. And it's a tribute to the character of this group to weather all the storms that we have and to put themselves in a position to not only go through the strength -- or the strength of the schedule that we've just played, but to do it successfully like we have has been just absolutely remarkable.

Today was too much for us under the circumstances. But even today it's making this team better, more experienced. They're just adding and adding and adding to the quality of team that we are, all these experiences are adding up.

Anybody that's watched us play, this is the first time we've played six consecutive games this season. And so every game we have just gotten better. And so as we head to the postseason this team is hungry. There's a belief. They know they're good. They know they can play with anybody. And that's what you want in the postseason.

When you've got an inside game, you've got an outside game, you've got the defensive mindset that's emerged over this last month has really been a difference maker for us. The youth on this team has developed.

And give Stanford a lot of credit for taking opportunities away from us today. But this team has moved the ball and scored from all five positions. And that's a hard team to cover. So those things usually equal success in the postseason and a tough out. And I think that's who we are.

Q. Do you anticipate playing any more games before the 15th, or do you think this is it for you?

COACH RUECK: As of this moment, no, I do not. And so we'll kind of regroup, head home, I think, in the morning. And just kind of look at where we are with everything and



see if anything makes sense. And so I'm all for doing whatever it takes for this team to reach their potential and continue to play.

Q. When you got to halftime, when you go back and look at that second quarter, what was going through your mind? What did you tell the team? Were there some things you thought you could do differently? That second quarter was just -- it was a tour de force, it looked like, the way they played.

COACH RUECK: What does that mean?

Q. I mean they just seemed like they were -- that was as good I've seen a women's team play. That was both ends they were just --

COACH RUECK: Stanford, that is?

Q. Yes. That was really sharp. If you thought there was anything you could do --

COACH RUECK: We talked about defensive transition. That was the number one thing. I mean, Brink is such a, just a handful. The way she runs the floor is special. And so you've got, in my opinion, I'm kind of biased towards Kiana as maybe the best player in the country when it comes to her overall impact on a game, so understated but so capable.

Unbelievable floor leadership. There's nothing she can't do with the basketball and leading a team. You've got her. Then you've got -- Haley Jones that is basically a point forward, (indiscernible) went out as if she was a point guard, and then you've got Cameron Brink running down the middle. Then you can come in with Fran after that.

So that's just -- I mean that's impressive. And Brink really hurt us tonight in general, but especially in that second quarter with those offensive rebound putbacks and the transition layups.

That was the name of the game, transition for them. That's where they got to the free-throw line. They scored 14 first-half points in transition and we had zero. And we were down 11. So that was the talk.

You gotta give them credit for coming out and staying just relentless with their defensive effort in the second half, just to disrupt us and never allow us to get comfortable. And that's what continued it.

Q. Anna Wilson on Aleah, you just don't see guards like that that guard like that very often? Just seemed like she just kind of really wore on Aleah.

COACH RUECK: She wears on everybody. That's the defensive player of the year in our conference for a reason. It's been neat to follow her through her career. That was someone that didn't play at all hardly as a freshman. Just a little bit more as a sophomore, a little bit more as a junior. Then this year has carved out her niche.

She's a capable shooter that makes enough open shots to hold you accountable, but she's there. Gabby Hanson, for those of us who followed our program for a while, she's that disruptive defensive player that that's her identity. She hangs her hat on it. She doesn't need anything more than that. That's what she does for them.

Yes, she does a nice job handling screens, getting through, disrupting, getting tips. So, yeah, she's an excellent defender. And she had a big impact on this game as well.

Q. I know you've wanted to play games. You had this stretch where you played quite a bit. Is it kind of nice to take a step back and have a little time to go over some more film, work on some details that you haven't been able to so much because you've been preparing for so many games here? Is that maybe a positive as you head towards the postseason to have a little bit of a break now where you can work on those things?

COACH RUECK: Yeah, I think we could use a break at the moment. It's been -- it hasn't -- we're finally playing games but we've also played a lot of road games. This has been a grind. I told the team that: I said I couldn't be prouder of you. There were things tonight that I wasn't real happy with. I didn't think our decision-making was as good as it could have been. As good as they are, they make you make great decisions and we were just okay, I thought, in that. Why? I don't know. Give them the credit.

But now, to take a break, catch our breath, just go back over all the stuff we've done over the last couple of weeks. When you think about it it's been quite the grind. And part of it is the level of teams that we've been competing against. There hasn't been a possession off, to be honest because all these have been playoff games for us, too.

That's another thing we've known. Our back's been against the wall for a while now. You think back to the USC game, ultimately that was a must-win for our team. The Cal game the other day, that's a must-win. So that had a funky pressure to it.

So this team's been really grinding, our staff's been really grinding. Now certainly to catch our breath a bit before the postseason begins, the NCAA postseason begins, is going to be nice. And I think, like, we've used all our pauses this

year. We'll use it well, and we'll be better for it.

Q. A team that's going to play a third game in three days, Stanford was going to try to wear your down by running on you, and you guys knew that was going to be. Did you guys wear down, did you see the legs start to get heavy?

COACH RUECK: I think so. I mean, I think so. You don't want to make excuses, you know? But at the same time there's not a team that plays faster than Stanford. There's just not.

I mean, UConn typically plays fast, of course. This team, with their veteran play and they just know each other so well. Plus you have the youth on their team is on the inside.

And so they're just running from rim to rim. And so the decisions with the ball. The skill with the ball and then the calmness that they're able to play with because of their experience allows them to play at such a speed. So it's an unusual speed. You don't see it very often. It's hard to recreate.

And then to come off the emotion like I mentioned of kind of a funky pressure Cal game and then a rivalry game. I almost said it, a rivalry game yesterday with Oregon. There's a lot of emotion in that.

So we all think we can bounce back and let's go because we want to win this game, too, and all these things. Then you get out there and the reality of it is, man, this is really hard; I don't know if I have any left. Stanford is tough to cover even if you have a full week to prepare for them.

So it probably played a little bit into it especially with our shooting numbers because I thought we did get some good looks. This is a team that has shot over 50% the last seven, eight games from 3. We had several air balls tonight, uncharacteristic, but partially them, maybe partially fatigue, I don't know. I just know that Stanford is a tough prep on 30 hours or whatever it was.

Q. Interesting you brought up Connecticut and Stanford and pace because I had a conversation with Tara a few years ago where she said the difference the way Connecticut plays and everybody else is pace. I want us to play at that pace. Do you see that in this Stanford team? Do you see that pace, that elite level, championship level pace they're playing at?

COACH RUECK: I do. I've said it a lot Stanford when they're playing like they're capable who is better than them? They're just complete. And can you get them on an

off night? Maybe. But they're just relentless in their effort.

And so because of that, that pace is -- like I said it's tough. We played Breanna Stewart's team at the Final Four in year four for that group. I don't know if you can compare the two teams at the moment because they had five seniors that were all five first-round picks that year and basically were a WNBA team at the time.

This team, I don't know if they're quite there, who knows about that. But I can tell that they're trying to do the same thing and they do make you pay for every mistake that you make. And their transition game is similar. And it's tough. It's tough. It's impressive.

Q. Do you have thoughts on -- I know it's going to be a weird year for the selection committee, but where you should be seeded? Probably want to stay off the 8-9 line. Do you think you played your way into that high of a seeding, though, given the way you've played over the last month?

COACH RUECK: How many teams are going to go into Pauley and probably win? How many teams are going to go to Oregon and win? How many teams are going to go beat Oregon again in a neutral site game three days later when they have three days to practice and you have 20 -- 18 -- 20 hours, something like that? The way that this team's playing, we deserve to be where the teams that are capable of doing that are.

And so I don't know how the committee's going to do it. I look at net rating. I don't really understand some of net rating, some things in there don't make sense to me. We're still learning it. I think we all are. This year, how do you judge us? Was it our fault we were shut down? No. And so you can't penalize for that. But you can judge us for the way we've performed and the team that we are. And what do your eyes see?

So I've looked at net. I've looked at RPI. RPI is absolutely not relevant this year because of the way it's built. And I know we're not using it. I've looked at Massey this morning. Massey had us 16. And those of you who know me know I've looked at that for a long time and I think that's as accurate a measure as there is in our sport and many other sports, actually. And I think it's tough, but I just know there's not very many teams in the country that are going to do what we just did over the last few weeks. I think we belong with those teams.

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