

Pac-12 Conference Women's Basketball Championship

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Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

UCLA Bruins

Michaela Onyenwere

Postgame Press Conference

UCLA - 58, Arizona - 49

MICHAELA ONYENWERE: Michaela Onyenwere.

Q. You were talking a little bit about it on the end of the TV broadcast, I was watching your postgame interview. I know you're going to appreciate the day's rest but how different do you think the Stanford game -- why and how is the Stanford game going to be so different than this game you just played?

MICHAELA ONYENWERE: I think probably the style of play's a little bit different. Stanford runs a little more like Princeton offense while Arizona, they're just going to really try to utilize their drivers. It's really going to be more so a physical battle than I would say than Stanford.

Obviously Stanford is super physical as well but just in a different way. But that's something we've been focusing on just, like, moving forward with Stanford, just disrupting their offense more than we could for Arizona.

Q. How much confidence after the last game you played against them, you feel like you're in a good position to do that?

MICHAELA ONYENWERE: Yeah, I think we've proven that we are a team to beat. And obviously Stanford is a great team. They've been having a great year but we were able to get a win up in Santa Cruz against them. I think that does give us confidence a little bit, but every game is a new game. As long as we come out and execute, do what we need to do obviously it's going to be a great game.

Q. Can you elaborate on (indiscernible) how you said it will a much different game, (indiscernible) -- can you just elaborate on just how you feel like you'll disrupt the Stanford defense?

MICHAELA ONYENWERE: Like I said, they run a little more Princeton offense. So last time we were pretty



successful against them when we were being super aggressive, being able to deny just like some of their catches. That gets them out of rhythm. Once we were able to get Stanford out of rhythm we're able to do good things. That's one of the good things to focus on doing when doing the scout against Stanford.

Q. Could you talk about tonight? Second straight night you hold a team to a season low, but over the last sequence they carve into a 10-point deficit, cut the lead to two. Could you talk about the last sequence of the last minute for just standing your ground and doing what you ladies had to do to hold off their rally there at the end?

MICHAELA ONYENWERE: The whole game, even when we came in, part of our game plan was staying steady. Yesterday we got out of character just a little bit just as far as, like, the emotions. This game we really wanted to focus on being super steady. We knew there were going to be ups and downs, lefts and rights with Arizona. They're a great team and they like to take you out of rhythm on offense and on defense.

Our keyword was to stay steady. They went on that run in the fourth quarter. And every single huddle and timeout we were, like, look, stay steady; they're going to make their run, stay steady. We have this game. I'm just super proud of my team for being able to bounce back from yesterday's game emotionally and pull this one out.

Q. There was a point in the third quarter yesterday over the last, I think, three minutes that Natalie had three key steals. Tonight in that last 1:04 there was a point where she snatched the ball, got fouled and went to the line. Defense, first of all, she comes up with timely steals. It's not glaring on the stat sheets but timely defensive stops she makes. Can you talk about her play?

MICHAELA ONYENWERE: She's, Natalie is huge, just a threat on all facets of the game. I'm just super proud of her just being a dog on the defensive end. That's what we need from her. Yesterday she was the passion player of the game. We talk a lot about passion plays in our



program and she's the epitome of what that means.

For her to get little deflections and steals, those rebounds that you have to reach a little bit farther for is so huge for her. And I'm so super proud to call her my teammate and to have somebody who it means that much to her. I'm super, super proud of her.

Q. When you really turn it on tonight, when you drive to the net, what kind of goes through your mind in those moments?

MICHAELA ONYENWERE: Today I just wanted to really focus on being really steady. I think yesterday I could have done a better job of that, so I wanted to come in and do what I needed to do for my team, whether it meant driving to the basket, getting rebounds or whatever I needed to do, even shoot free throws for this game.

I knew they were going to have more post-ish players on me, and so I knew I sometimes can have that advantage where I can drive to the basket and get a foul or hopefully get a basket.

Q. Can you just talk about some of the challenges that come with going against, obviously, Aari being the leading scorer in the conference? Just how do you feel like your team did? Obviously you held Arizona to a really low score as a team, but just what did you think of the way you guys guarded her?

MICHAELA ONYENWERE: Yeah, I mean, just credit to Aari McDonald. She's just a great player and has been her whole career. Just to go up against her, our whole scout is basically designed to stop Aari and she still had 24. It just goes to show what type of player she is.

It's tough game planning around somebody who is going to be a future WNBA draft pick. She did what she had to do for her team. We were just trying to, okay, limit her in some touches and make it just difficult for her. We might not be able to completely shut her down but just make it difficult for her.

I'm just super proud of Charisma. She was the primary person on her. It was a battle, you all saw it. It was a battle for the 40 minutes on those two, held her ground on her, regardless of what was going on. I'm proud of Charisma. She's a lock-down defender. She's somebody -- we need somebody to get a stop we go to Charisma. But Aari did a great job, but we did a great job on her collectively. But shout out to Charisma for holding it down.

Q. You mentioned the free throws a little bit with you personally, but you and Charisma finished the fourth

10-of-10 in the fourth quarter from the line. Was there a focus of getting to the line for you specifically throughout the game? And then how, with the pressure of a conference semifinal, just how big is it making those free throws at the end like that?

MICHAELA ONYENWERE: I think I was just trying to do what the defense gave me. I was able to drive to the basket and get those fouls. And obviously when you go to the free-throw line you have to make those shots because those are free shots. So I think we really harp on, look, they're free shots; you need to make them.

Super proud of Charisma just capitalizing at the free-throw line. When it gets to these games, gets to the postseason, those points are so important. Our ability to knock those down is super huge. I'm glad we were able to do that tonight.

Q. Can you just talk about the play for a minute where they cut it to two and you went the length of the floor with the layup and that felt like a moment you were like, oh, no, this isn't happening. They cut it to two and you took that ball and went the other end and put the ball in. Was that kind of what you were feeling in the moment?

MICHAELA ONYENWERE: Yes. I think, like I said before, I just wanted to stay really steady for my team. And like I said, I didn't do a great job of that had yesterday in our game against Washington. So when they were able to make that run, I saw that I had the advantage a little bit. So just to be able to take it to the basket, it was pretty wide open when I got down there. So getting that foul was really huge for us, and being able to make the free throws was really huge.

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