

Pac-12 Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Wednesday, March 2, 2022

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

Oregon State Beavers

Coach Scott Rueck

Ellie Mack

Talia von Oelhoffen

Postgame Press Conference

Oregon State - 59, Arizona State - 54

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Scott Rueck and Ellie Mack and Talia von Oelhoffen.

COACH RUECK: It's an exciting time of year for all of us. You're 0-0 again. And for this group, you know, to come in and start the game the way they did today, just be so ready to play, didn't surprise me. It was beautiful to watch, just the mindset. But this team has just gotten better all year long.

And Arizona State is not the easiest team to play against, as everyone knows. They're so gritty and tough. You can just count on that, night in and night out. And that's 12 years talking now. And it's always the same.

And so we knew we needed to be that tough and that physical in order to match theirs. And I loved the way that we defended throughout this game. And certainly we had some breakdowns in the fourth quarter and they hit some big shots to make a run back into it.

But overall, this was a great defensive game against a team that can give you lots of trouble. And so a lot of credit to Arizona State. They never quit; they never do. They made it interesting in the end. But I loved today's performance by our team.

And it was -- everyone played a big role in today's game, I thought. And it's just a team that continues to improve. Bottom line. A lot of new people on this roster. And every night, even though we've lost a few games that we're not used to losing this year, the progress has been there.

And this is not the conference if you want to have a lot of youth or a lot of new people. There's a lot of vets in this



conference that make you pay for your mistakes, that we saw that at the end tonight.

And this group has just continued to come back, day after day, have a great time together and play great basketball. So really, really proud of them.

Q. Talia, I don't know if there's a play of the game in this one but I'll pick one out, the one where you're in the back court, time is running out in the back court and you see Greta wide open down the floor. Just go through that play and what you saw?

TALIA VON OELHOFFEN: I honestly didn't know how much time I had to go it over, but it felt like we had it back there for a while. I was trying to be safe and I saw she broke away from her defender. I just saw she was open and threw it and she ended up scoring, so it was a good play.

Q. When you scored there, it didn't feel like the game was over. Did it feel like the team maybe took a -- I mean the weight was off a little bit there?

COACH RUECK: I don't know about that. It felt great, though. It was like we couldn't catch a break there for a few minutes. That was a break. We needed a break. And that was one of them.

I think it came off a broken play, didn't it? Wasn't there a deflection in the back court and that's what made Talia -- I looked up and I thought I needed a timeout, to be honest.

So right when she was rising up to throw the ball, I'm thinking timeout. And once the ball was out of her hands it was perfect timing for us and a great play. And Greta went and finished.

But you just stick with it and good things happen. And that was the theme today, in lots of instances.

So, yeah, it put pressure on them. I thought the next possession they got a 3 look, an O board, another 3 look. Missed them both. I thought that turn of events probably was the pivotal moment down the stretch.



Q. Ellie, you had 11 points in the third. What was your mindset going through that? You guys really spearheaded a huge lead and a lot of it was coming down to you. I was curious what your mindset was?

ELLIE MACK: I think my mindset was the same for the entire game. I was just a lot more open in the third quarter. Huge credit to my teammates. They got me open coming off screens and just finding me. It was really just us moving the ball, I think, that let me score all those points.

Q. The first game you played them, Loville had 33. Today you threw a bunch of looks at her. Different people trying to lean your defense toward her. What allowed you to be so successful against her? She didn't hit her first field goal until the fourth quarter?

COACH RUECK: How many looks did we throw at her?

TALIA VON OELHOFFEN: One.

COACH RUECK: We just defended her with a different intensity. That's the story of this team -- a lot of people understanding what this conference is. It hits fast and it hits hard and if you make a mistake, you pay.

And she gave us a lesson at our place -- or in the first one, in the first game at their place, I should say.

And we just were more accurate today. I thought defensively we played with a great intensity on that end of the floor. And that's something that this group continues to evolve. And it's hard night in and night out.

I thought that was an inspired performance and I thought she came out ready to do that again. I just thought we were more accurate. And I loved the intensity.

And we're a good team. We're a good team, and we just keep getting better. And I think that defensive intensity is one of the ways we've really grown.

Q. Talia has been here before but you've got two outside-of-the-Pac-12 transfers, two freshmen in that back court. What did you see out of them today and how much of this was a bit of a baptism by fire? In a Pac-12 Conference setting, how did they respond?

COACH RUECK: It's been that. And I think even for T, she's a true freshman. And I know our conference doesn't want to recognize her as that. Which I don't agree with. This is her freshman year in college. She's a freshman.

Last year was an aberration. It seems the only person that

last year counted for was her, which I don't understand. Last year, Aleah Goodman had the ball in her hand 90 percent of the time, and made life easy for us.

We had a veteran one that knew everything inside and out and was so poised -- she had been through every war there is -- and played against the very best teams in the country for four years. And we all got to relax because of that, including me. And so this year it's been, every night has been -- including tonight, facing that press down the stretch and that environment, that was new.

So to help Emily Coddling through it and Tea Adams through it, it's just new. To help AJ and Greta and Talia through it, that's been the challenge of the year.

I got in the locker room, they're jumping around, dancing. I just sat down. I need a nap because it's just a challenge to help people that are experiencing things for the first time. And I love the challenge but it is a challenge.

So today I saw the resilience and that inner confidence. I saw great plays from all five of those players, which I'm really proud of, all of them for sticking with it. Ellie Mack, Taya Corosdale, all the vets have provided so much support for them through the year that it's been beautiful to watch.

And, so, I just saw progress, which makes a coach and a teacher really happy. I'm just happy for all of them.

Q. Ellie, you've kind of done everything in your career. You've been a starter, a player of the year, you've had three senior days. You've been awesome off the bench all season. I wondered why. Do you like coming off the bench? You seem to really enjoy it.

ELLIE MACK: It's really fit me well. I think it's kind of what my team needed from me, just scoring off the bench, so I was happy to fill that role.

But also it honestly take some of the pressure off, too, just because I get to come in when everyone's been playing for five or six minutes and I've kind of already seen what the flow of the game is looking like and I just kind of fit seamlessly in.

Q. Now you deal with the task of playing Stanford for a third time. What did you learn from the first two matchups and what can you take away from those matchups that can help you this time?

COACH RUECK: We've had great stretches in both games. Down there we scored 25 in the first quarter. At our place it was a great game up until the fourth when they

pulled away.

And so a great team. Really no weakness. And that's how you go undefeated in conference is not to have much weakness.

So a huge challenge, of course, but that's what this is. So when you're playing Stanford a third time, that usually is a good sign. You're doing things right.

And so for us, we're excited to get to play tomorrow. And I'm excited to get back and go to work tonight. And I know this team, they're here for challenges just like this. And so we're excited for it. At the same time we respect them immensely and know that we've got a tall task and we'll have to play great.

Q. Just wondering, it's been almost a year since so much of the gender equity between the men's and the women's tournaments came up. And I'm wondering what you would hope to see in the women's tournament this year, if you make it, of just what changes you would like to see.

ELLIE MACK: I've been to the NCAA Tournament now I think three times. And I think just as a woman's basketball player, that's kind of the pinnacle of success that you can see is getting there. So, so many people, so many young girls look to that tournament; they dream about that tournament.

So I think what went on last year was kind of disappointing just seeing the differences between the men's and women's tournament. Some of them were really obvious. And so hopefully the NCAA addresses those. I know they've probably taken a lot of big steps towards that.

But, yeah, I mean, it's just really important to have equity in sports. And I think we're moving towards that.

TALIA VON OELHOFFEN: Yeah, just to add that. I think we saw last year how big of an influence we have as women basketball players. Obviously social media was kind of going crazy about the inequity that we saw. Sedona kind of started that. There's so many people looking up to us, and so it's really important to have that equity and for young girls to see that and see us fighting for that.

Q. One more question about Stanford. They've had some close games these last three games they played, including with Washington. Is there anything you've seen in that that you can draw on, or do you think the reverse is true, that Tara is going to boost them back up and they're going to come out like the full "go

Stanford" that we've seen in times this year?

COACH RUECK: That's the only one we've seen. And I would -- that's the one I'm counting on seeing. So they haven't held anything back. And so I would just -- I always expect a team's best. Always. And so they're a great team.

I would expect a great performance by them tomorrow and us having to be great ourselves.

Q. Talia, you said, you guys you realized your powers as female athletes. Do you think you two understood how much power you had and how many people were looking at you before last year when that all blew up?

TALIA VON OELHOFFEN: Personally, I don't think I did. But just seeing, like, the influence that a lot of female basketball players are having, even more this year, it's been kind of crazy and eye-opening.

And so I know, thinking back to when I was little, if I saw women's basketball players having that sort of influence, that would have been really inspiring. So I can imagine that's how it is for young girls now. So that just gives me a lot of hope going forward for women's basketball.

Q. Just to get back to Ellie's performance today and you talk about, I guess, the lack of experience in this tournament really up and down the entire roster. How important is it to have a veteran that you can lean on when shots aren't falling, when it's a defensive slugfest, and now that you've got Stanford, a team that brings basically experience at every part of the floor?

COACH RUECK: Well, I think you've got to have vets. I mean, obviously Taya Corosdale has been through it all as well. To have those two, they've just been that core of the team, the glue. They've been through all the battles and they've got the wisdom and they've got the game to rise to whatever the game demands at the time. And the skill set, I should say.

And so certainly this time of year you lean on that. And the confidence that they play with and that veteran experience, everybody feeds off that. In my opinion, that's where you want to be when you're them. Give me the ball, you know, I'll hit the shot, I'll make this play, and everybody else rises with them.

And now, today was new. This venue for many people. Tomorrow it won't be. And so we'll be a team that's already played a game here. And we've played Stanford twice.

So those things kind of start to go away, even day-by-day this time of year. So tomorrow this will be the third time all of us on this team play against Stanford.

So there's really no excuses. And so we're all veterans now. The freshman year is kind of -- it's over, we're on to the next.

And so one other thing I want to say that I forgot to say at the beginning was to thank Beaver Nation for traveling again so well. It's so encouraging to turn around and see, or to look up and see so much orange in this place. It means the world to us to be supported the way we are.

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