

Pac-12 Conference Women's Basketball Championship

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Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

Oregon State Beavers

Coach Scott Rueck

Ellie Mack

Emily Coddling

Postgame Press Conference



out on you guys really quick in these tournaments?

COACH RUECK: Well, they're good. I think that's a big part of it. And they're the best defensive team, there's no question. The way they close, their length, it takes a little while to get used to. And I wish, as coaches, we could just draw this up and it's going to work perfect.

But there's nothing like that against them. You have to make plays. And so you're playing against a player-to-player defense that's very zonish in the way they help, where you just, as a coach, you can't predict it. They're going to switch this. They're going to hedge this. They're going to three-quarter you this time, play behind you this time, which makes them really good. They're very intuitive defensively.

And so because of that, in both those games -- I thought that game you're referring to, you know, they came out and the Hulls just hit shot after shot. I don't know if you remember that, but that's all I remember was just watching 12, 24, 12, 24, hitting pull-up jumpers. And our heads were spinning. I think it was 25-12 at the end of the first quarter, something like that.

Today didn't feel quite like that. Today felt like we had control defensively and we made them take the shots we wanted. They hit them. We didn't. That was the only difference, I thought. We just couldn't get comfortable down there. I thought we took a few rush shots, but I thought overall we actually got some pretty good looks in that first quarter. It just didn't go down as we were settling in.

The experience of their team, I thought, was the difference in the game, and maybe just how relaxed they were to start the game. That might have been the difference. But in both games, you're right. We showed a lot of grit and a lot of toughness coming back and making it a game before it was over.

Q. Just talk about the resolve the team showed in the second quarter, only scoring two points in the first quarter, and then they were able to battle back and make it a single-digit game heading into halftime.

Stanford - 57, Oregon State - 44

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Oregon State head coach Scott Rueck and student-athletes Emily Coddling and Ellie Mack.

COACH RUECK: Proud of the effort today. Our goal was to hold this team under 60. I thought that would give us the best chance to win. We did that. Just didn't shoot the ball well enough. Didn't score enough points, of course.

Stanford is an excellent team. Haley had a great game. Anna Wilson hit big shots in the first half. You've got to pick your poison with them just a little bit.

And you know they made us pay, which good teams do. Cam hit a couple of 3s as well, but Haley was just that consistent playmaker. When they needed a bucket or a play, she made it.

For our team, I loved the heart. I loved the fight. Obviously it was a tough first quarter scoring the ball. The difference was they made shots, we missed shots.

I thought we -- I don't know, I thought that was the only difference early. Then it was battling back from that point. And I thought our team showed their character today. This has been a group that has just fought like crazy and improved all year long. They're a joy to coach, a joy to be around every minute. I love our team. And I thought their performance was inspiring today.

Q. This game felt actually a little bit similar to 2020 where Stanford jumped out to a fast run there in the first quarter and then you guys battled back. If you could look at that game and this game, what has it been about Stanford where they have been able to hop



COACH RUECK: We're a good team. That's the thing. This team is good. We've been battling adversity. It's been hard for us to get -- we haven't had a stretch of games where we weren't just tested to the limit. I mean, if you look at our schedule, it's one of the top-10 schedules in the country. The rating system, it's the fifth toughest schedule that we've played.

And because of that it's hard to get super confident. But the talent there, it feels it's a matter of time before those shots would go down for us. And the grit and the toughness within this group, that's not with a question; that's without question. It was just settling into this game. And in the second quarter we did that. We continue to get stops. We continue to make them miss.

We won boards today, which is huge. And then fortunately that ball started falling. And I thought Ellie really set the tone for us in that quarter, making some shots. And then other people followed along.

And then obviously the shot before the half was a big shot for us, gave us momentum going into the second half.

Q. Tara mentioned this when she came in that these are two teams that know each other really well. It, to me, felt like a really typical Stanford-Oregon State game -- you take away what the other one is really good at. Haley Jones only had two points in the first half. Could you talk about Emily stepping up. Seems like that's what you have to do to beat Stanford is other people have to really bring their A game.

COACH RUECK: Yeah, that's been the beauty of this team and the beauty of Emily, Tea Adams, grad transfer, Ellie Mack, grad transfer -- getting accustomed to the Pac-12 and then finding your niche within it. They're probably tired me talking it.

But it is the story, and for a teacher and a coach you recruit them. You're telling them you can do this. At the inside they're probably 80 percent wondering if they can do it. And deep down they probably know they can. But you're overcoming, I was a mid-major, I'm a mid-major player for four years, recruited mid-major.

And you've got some little guy telling you, no, you can battle against the very best teams in the country. Can I believe this person? And the next thing you know, you're doing it. And you're out there and you're playing big on the biggest stage.

And that for me, I mean that's what this is. It's helping people see who they truly are and pushing them out and

making it just uncomfortable enough that they almost kind of hate you, but at the same time deep down they know you're doing them a favor.

And that's what I hope they both feel. And so that's the beauty of it.

So today, Emily's played huge for us. She stepped into a point guard role for first time since third grade, according to her mom, about a month ago. Thrown into the fire. We needed her there. She's got great poise, great confidence there. She understands and she's just as tough as they come. So today we saw that. We've seen it numerous times throughout the year. But she proved today she belongs with the very best.

Q. You're both seniors. If you're not offered an NCAA Tournament berth do you want to play in the WNIT?

ELLIE MACK: Yeah, I do. I think I want to play basketball as long as I can. And I love this team, so I want to keep playing with them.

EMILY CODDING: Going off what Ellie said, we've really shown our improvement over the year, and I think the NIT would just, isn't ready for us. We've grown so far and these past few games have shown that and I think we're ready to keep going.

Q. Charli announced her retirement today at Arizona State. Will you offer some thoughts on coaching against Charli for a long time.

COACH RUECK: Yeah, I'd love to. It was interesting talking to her yesterday. And this is not -- she and I are both used to winning a lot -- and obviously we haven't won quite as much as we're used to this year.

And so we shared just some thoughts before the game. And I've always had a great rapport with her. In my first-ever Pac-10 game at the time was at Arizona State. And back then I was trying to figure out how you can be a parent, a spouse and a coach at this level. It was year one for me.

And I asked her, because I knew she obviously has a family. And she said it's tough. And there's some tradeoffs that you've got to make.

So we've shared a similar bond. She and I both have been head coaches for 26 years now. Hers are all at ASU. Mine are at two different places.

We've got a lot in common. She's made us better. She's a true competitor. And her teams are as tough as they

come. Always have been. And she has made me a better coach and made our program better by having to rise to that challenge.

Certainly we've had some absolutely epic battles, having Sydney Wiese in our program, a Phoenix kid, gave us some great rivalry because Syd didn't want to lose to them and they didn't want to lose to Syd. And that added to it was already a good battle between us.

And so I just -- I'm happy for her. She's done amazing things for this conference. She's a great coach and she's a great person. And I'm just grateful to have the opportunity to compete against her. And I wish her the best and much happiness. She should feel great about everything she's accomplished for sure.

Q. Ellie, the last two games it's been very clear you left it all out on the floor. Would you mind just sharing what this journey at OSU has been like from initially being recruited out of Bucknell, Patriot League Player of the Year, to where you are now, and what these last two games have meant to you?

ELLIE MACK: I'm going to try not to cry, but it's meant everything. Dang it. I mean, when you grow up, like, playing basketball you don't necessarily dream of going to a really small mid-major school. So I'm just really thankful that Scott gave me this opportunity. And, like I said, I just love playing for this team and this group of girls. I'm just really thankful for that.

COACH RUECK: We're equally thankful, if not more so.

Q. For Emily, you had that big injury at Saint Mary's last year. You've been to Las Vegas four years between Saint Mary's and Oregon State. Just talk about your journey and how much you've grown as a player this year and getting this opportunity at Oregon State?

EMILY CODDING: I can't thank Scott enough. There were a lot of schools that weren't really willing to take a risk with a kid coming off an ACL injury. And from the moment I first talked to Scott, he just was instilling confidence in me and my abilities. And I can't thank him enough for giving me the opportunity to play at this high a level.

I'm trying not to cry. But I can't thank him enough. I'm so happy that I had the opportunity to play with these girls on this floor.

Q. Emily, on the injury note, is your hand broken? Are your fingers broken? Can you tell us a little bit about that? Because you're shooting pretty well.

EMILY CODDING: It is not broken. Not necessarily sure what's going on. It has been getting better. And when I'm playing that's the last thing I'm thinking about on the court. Just being in the moment. Injury's really not what I'm thinking about. Just doing anything on that floor that I can to help our team win.

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