

Pac-12 Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Sunday, March 6, 2022

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

Utah Utes

Coach Denise Dillon

Brynna Maxwell

Dru Gylten

Postgame Press Conference

Stanford - 73, Utah - 48

COACH ROBERTS: Want to congratulate Tara and her staff. They're a classy bunch. They know how to win and consistently do it. And they're very talented and deep and big.

We could have used McFarland tonight, that's for sure, just with the size. But I thought these two played like veterans, Brynna and Dru. We had a lot of people playing in a game -- the caliber and intensity they hadn't played in before.

So I'm incredibly, this game doesn't define our season. I'm certainly proud that we were here. Disappointed we lost. But our season's not over. So I'm excited about the NCAA Tournament and what this group -- we'll get a week and a half to get healthy. We're pretty banged up. And get ourselves right, work on us for a little bit and play in the tournament, which will be great for our program.

Not the outcome we wanted, but certainly a great achievement to play in this game. We want to play in this game again more time's in the future.

But I'll finish how I started. Congratulations to Stanford. Just a great game for them.

Q. You said this game doesn't define your season. Does getting to this game define your season?

COACH ROBERTS: Better said, the outcome of this season doesn't define our season. Thank you. That's a good clarifier. But getting to this game was huge. It really was. And it put us on a stage that we haven't been on. So, yes, you're right.

Q. Dru, what was working offensively for you guys in



the first half and maybe even into that early part of the third quarter that just stopped working?

DRU GYLTEN: I think at the beginning we were playing a little more fearlessly. I think that was our mentality going in is they had the stop us. That's what we've been saying all season. So we were hitting 3s, we were getting those inside/out. And we were getting defensive stops.

I think after halftime we just missed the shots we usually take and then we kept turning it over. And that's just Stanford's, that's what they do best is make you pay for those.

I think after halftime that's kind of what fell apart for us was the turnovers and missed shots.

Q. Brynna, when you look at this experience, I know playing in the Pac-12 is a grind, but playing in this tournament this deep, I'd imagine feels a little bit different. What was different about it and how is it something that can help you once the NCAA Tournament time comes around?

BRYNNA MAXWELL: How is the tournament different than Pac-12 play?

Q. You play Stanford normally in the regular season, but was there something about how this game played out, intensity-wise, that was different than what it is playing in the regular season?

BRYNNA MAXWELL: I think once March hits, everything escalates a little bit. The intensity gets more intense. And the saying, anything can happen in March rings true. Before our game there were already like two upsets in the other league tournaments.

So anyone can get beat in March. Our team, we've played Stanford twice. We know how they play. We know what we needed to do. And we executed really well in those first three quarters. But, again, like Dru said, once we give them an inch they take a mile. Credit to Stanford. They're a great team.



Q. What type of seed do you think your team deserves in the tournament?

COACH ROBERTS: I love that question, thank you. I think we should be in the upper half. To compete in this conference, to have 20 wins -- and I don't like to toot our own horn, as they say, but I think we should be at least a 7 seed. I really do.

Who we have competed against, game in, game out, I think we've earned that, for sure. Just in terms of our net ranking as well. Our net is really high. We're in the top 30. I don't know what it is today. But it's been hovering around 25, 26, 27. So we should be one of the top 32 teams.

Q. Gianna clearly wasn't herself. She had the tape on her shoulder. What was wrong with her?

COACH ROBERTS: The shoulder she actually hurt in our game against Oregon at home. She just kind of had a stinger that's been sore. Yes, she, for the first time, kind of maybe looked a little less sure of herself.

And Jenna Johnson, too. Both those guys are banged up. Jenna had some feet issues, Achilles and stuff. She was in a lot of pain before the game. Wasn't sure she was going to be able to go.

But she fought through for her team, which I appreciate and respect. They went 2-for-15, which is so unusual for them combined. So, yeah, there's no greater teacher than experience. And they'll get better from this.

But we did miss their scoring. But I thought Brynna had a great game, did a really nice job picking up -- she was the only player in double figures for us. Dasia had a great first half. But, again, in that second half, felt like nobody, Brynna, but nobody else could make a shot.

Q. Dru, that buzzer-beating or shot clock-beating 3-pointer you made, is that going to be one of the most memorable shots of your career? And what were you thinking?

DRU GYLTEN: Actually my most memorable shot was when we beat Stanford for the first time at home, and I shot a layup wrong hand, wrong side of the floor. But there's an inside joke, sometimes I jack shots up from the volleyball lines. And Jo, our assistant coach, always gets on me for those. When I made that one I had to point at her because she's always telling me to not shoot that.

COACH ROBERTS: We call her Logo Dru.

DRU GYLTEN: It just felt good. I think about being an upperclassmen, I think there's moments like that that you have to embrace and just be in the moment and be excited and get your team going. I don't know if that did it, but I really enjoyed it.

Q. Brink only played five minutes in the first half. And that was a factor. When they have Brink and Jones both going and you mix in the guards and everybody else, how tough is that combination? And then with South Carolina losing, you've seen Stanford all year. Do you think they're the best team in the country?

COACH ROBERTS: Well, to answer your first question, if Brink and Jones are both going, they'll cut down the nets in Minneapolis again. Those two -- alone they're a matchup nightmare. But when they're both going, there's not much you can do.

I do think they're the best team in the country. I think last year, them winning and then there was a lot of talk about them losing Kiana Williams, and I think in the first half of the season we saw some of the effects of that. They were trying to figure it out because Kiana was such a dynamic leader out there. When things went sideways, it was, like, give the ball to her and she'd figure it out for them.

You saw that learning curve and those growing pains in the first part of the season -- like, oh, Stanford is not the same without Kiana.

But never count out Tara and her staff figuring it out. I think they're actually more balanced this season because they're not relying on one player to kind of, okay, go make it happen. And that, as an opposing coach, that's really hard.

Shot clock's winding down, I have no idea who is going to get it. And what a luxury, right? I think it actually has made them more balanced and therefore more dangerous because their balance is not -- those are some talented guys that are really well-coached.

That's a long answer to your question, but I actually think they're better than they were last year. And last year they won the national championship.

Q. Can you guys talk about how this experience playing four games in five days, winning three of them will help you when it comes to the NCAA Tournament, just having that experience of playing almost every day and having to prepare for a new opponent almost every day, and just the confidence you guys got from winning all these games and playing so much in a short period of time?

DRU GYLTEN: I think our regular season schedule helps with that. Like, we have one day to prepare for a team. So I think we've been doing well this whole season. If we had a bad game on Friday, we had a quick turnaround. And our team was really good about learning from that, not dwelling in the past. Learning from our mistakes and being ready to play the next game.

And I think that's what we did this tournament. Playing three games in three days is really hard. But I think our depth is what has been the best thing this year, like anybody coming off the bench is just as good as the starting five. And that's also been our strength.

Some teams they don't know who is going to go off on our team. Sometimes it's Brynna. Sometimes it's G. Sometimes it's a post. So I think this experience, just playing three games in three days, is just a positive thing and we'll just take that mindset into March, continuing on.

COACH ROBERTS: I echo that. I think this group's been really good about, win or lose, they show up the next day the same. And I think that's for us to win games in the tournament, I think it's going to be a key. Luckily you get a day in between to prepare a little bit. But I'm just excited about the opportunity. And I have so much confidence in these guys. And they're excited.

They were saying afterwards, these guys who have been in this building after it's a season-ending loss, not just a tournament-ending loss. You can see it's like, okay, we're not done. We're disappointed we lost, but it's not the end of the road for this season and this group.

Q. Can you talk about -- she had a really strong performance Friday and then eight points, 10 rebounds -- could you talk about the way Rees has stepped up with Peyton out?

COACH ROBERTS: She's done a great job. She really has. And for her -- I think when we played Stanford at home, she didn't even play the first time. She wasn't in the rotation.

And it's such a cool thing as a coach, when you see a player just accept kind of their role and just say, okay, I'm just going to -- I'm going to keep showing up every day until I get my opportunity; and when my opportunity comes, I'm going to be ready.

And that is what Kelsey has done. Andi Torres got hurt. So then Kelsey is in the rotation. Then all of a sudden she's our most consistent defender, our most consistent talker. She knows the scout.

Free-throw shooter, all those things. It's like, okay, she went from not playing to being in the starting five. You put her in these situations where she's outmatched physically in terms of size and she's effective. And I'm really proud -- as a coach, that's a really cool thing to see a player -- a lot of players, when it gets hard like that, they bounce or they check out.

And she stayed engaged, and she waited for her opportunity. And mentally when you do that, then you can see the -- she's a perfect example.

Q. Wanted to ask you about the Hull sisters and what they bring to the floor for Stanford. What do they do for them, and quick follow-up.

COACH ROBERTS: I will admit that I'm glad they're graduating. They're just the glue players. And I still get them confused. I don't know which one's which half the time. And I have twin boys, so I can say that.

They just play so dang hard, and I think they set the tone for that effort and intensity with their whole team.

And Anna Wilson, those guys play hard every possession, every single day. And they've played in that system for four years, five years, feels like 87 years. They're smart, savvy, tough, extensions of the coaching staff out there.

Q. Last follow-up is about this team we're watching on the TV. I've seen a lot of examples in sports where the team that loses watches the other's celebration, for whether they want it to burn a hole in them a little bit, whether they want to sort of see what they want from this. I'm just wondering what you're all thinking as you watch Stanford cut down the nets and being here for that, because you're the team that could have been in a position to do that. So I'm just wondering, when you're looking at these TVs they're cutting down the nets, what you're thinking?

COACH ROBERTS: I'll answer it and then I'll let the players answer. Of course we want to be out there. And it stings, thank you for bringing that home, Michelle. It's good. It's motivation, right?

And I think we all knew what was at stake. And we all believed in our locker room that we could win in light of how talented and experienced Stanford is.

But I think the other thing that I've really enjoyed about this season is we don't get too high or too low, and we just trust the process. And I'm disappointed we lost, but I don't need to watch that for it to burn a hole of motivation in me. Like,

I have that. And that fire isn't stoked any other way, but just that's who I am.

I know that's who Brynna is. I know that's who Dru is. We have a whole locker room of it.

So I'm motivated to get back here and actually climb the ladders and cut it down. And it will happen. We'll do it.

BRYNNA MAXWELL: What coach said, we've been motivated. Coming to the locker room after the loss wasn't lighthearted, at least we made it to the finals. Everyone on that team, on our team wanted to win today. And it hurt. And but there were no hanging of heads.

Everyone's getting ready for the NCAA Tournament, I think reflecting on this week, I think it just shows how good we can be and how playing these consecutive games against these really challenging teams will pay off for us in the NCAA Tournament. And I think it's kind of fuel for the fire.

And I'm excited to see what the NCAA Tournament holds.

DRU GYLTEN: I think that's what you sign up for, playing in the Pac-12, is top 10 teams every week. And like Brynna said, obviously we weren't just cheering in the locker room after the game, like, oh, my gosh, we made it. It was more like sad because we know we fully didn't play to our potential and we have so much more to play for.

But I think that just shows how motivated this team is. Like, there's only been a couple of us who have gone home, like, we lost the first game and we went home and we're done for three months.

This team is in there, a lot of underclassmen are like, shoot, we have so much more to play for; we want to be back here. And I think that's credit to them. They've honestly carried our team this whole way. And that's amazing for freshmen just showing up and playing on a big stage.

Maybe they didn't have a good game today, but they'll have an amazing game in the first game of the tournament.

We'll use it as motivation. I don't think anyone needs to watch or wants to watch. I think it's a personal choice. But all these underclassmen, they'll definitely be back for sure.

Q. It almost feels weird asking this, but you play a defending national champion that's got two players that are probably in the top of the country and feel like nationally we don't talk about them the same way if they were national champions in Storrs, Connecticut. It would be more wall to wall than they are. Do you

think that this Stanford team, given what they've done the last two years, is a little underappreciated nationally for who they are and what Tara has done with this group?

COACH ROBERTS: Absolutely. Thank you for that softball. Yeah, absolutely. I mean, to consider what Stanford does year in, year out, and they do it the right way and they play the right way, but we're not on the East Coast so we don't get the same -- we being the Pac-12, the same TV games over there, just the time and everything.

Just the East Coast media does not, in my humble opinion, cover us with the same vigor as some of the other East Coast teams.

And Tara has a way of ignoring it and chopping wood and keep doing what she's doing. She's the G.O.A.T. for that reason; but, yes, absolutely, they should be talked about as much as South Carolina, as much as UConn, as much as Iowa.

Those players, those are good teams. And it's not zero-sum, that you have to take away from one of those to take away from Stanford. Stanford needs to be talked about more. Just their consistency. They went undefeated in this league. When was the last time that happened with such the level of play in the Pac-12? So yes, 100 percent.

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