

# Pac-12 Conference Women's Basketball Championship

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Oregon State Beavers

Scott Rueck

Raegan Beers

Adlee Blacklock

Postgame Press Conference



**Q. For either of the players, you guys won last Saturday. Did you see anything different on the bench from the demeanor or anything during the fourth quarter, just different in terms of confidence at all today when you guys were down and trying to come back?**

RAEGAN BEERS: I would say from our Arizona game our confidence was the same. You could tell people coming off the bench played well. We knew we needed to play well in order to get this win today. USC's obviously a very good team. It took all our effort. Our demeanor was about the same as Arizona and that's why we pulled out that win and that's why we pulled out a win tonight.

**Q. It took one game, didn't it? Just one game to flip the whole thing, it seems like. Surprising probably isn't the right word, but are you a little taken aback, I guess, it would just take one game to do it?**

SCOTT RUECK: No, because we're used to winning. That's what we do and that's what we've done. It's why they all come here. We're all winners. We lost nine straight games. That's only happened to me two other times and it was year one and three of this complete rebuild. It's never happened to these guys. They have never, nobody in our program probably has lost that many, other than Coach Ely and I.

So we're winners. It's just, okay, how? How does this group do it against a conference that's so talented, so well coached and so veteran. This group has just needed time. Certainly there's a confidence within our group because we've played everybody tough. We had a shot to beat Utah, we had a shot to tie Stanford. You look back at all the leads that we've had where we've come up short. We've played with everybody.

So inside there's been this just building. It's like a wave that's just been ready to crash is how it's felt. It's just been building for two months now. And all the lessons have paid off. It was just like something flipped and it's like, oh, we can do this. This is what it takes. And it's worth it to give it.

And maybe it does take a little bit more than I thought it

Oregon State - 56, USC - 48

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations. Coach, we'll have you open and then we'll take questions.

SCOTT RUECK: All right. Well, I mean, what a great win. They have been tough to come by for our group this year. We've had a lot of similar scenarios where we've been in really tight games, tight contests, played with everybody, for the most part and have come up short more times than not.

Saturday's game against Arizona was a big lift finishing against a great team on senior day at home, proved, I think, to everyone that we can. It had been awhile since we had won. To carry that momentum into preparation for tonight's game against a great talented, athletic SC team, obviously very well coached, we knew we would need a great game. We knew it would be a 40-minute game.

You could just see the belief that this team has. They care about each other. They have never really hung their heads for more than a few hours after our losses. We've practiced well all year. That character has carried into the end of this third season of this year, non-conference, regular season, and then post-season.

And here we are competing and playing our best right now, which is fantastic to see, fantastic to watch as their coach. I'm just so proud of them and happy for them to watch them rise on this stage tonight and find a way to pull out a game. Down eight in the fourth and then to win by eight, that just speaks to the character and the fact that this team's learned how to finish games.

THE MODERATOR: All right. We'll take some questions.



did, and so I'm going to give a little bit more. Senior day was a special day in Gill Coliseum on Saturday. We got a great performance from Jelena, a great performance from Bendu and Noelle. It was just a very special day. Maybe that's what it took to get to us that realization.

But that confidence has been so close all year and it's just been just slightly illusive, which has been painful, but at the same time it's kind of head scratching because you're like we're so close and then here we are.

**Q. Reagan, it seemed like early on in the game USC was doing a good job just kind of crowding you, making things difficult for you in the paint, but as the game went on, you got more comfortable, got some shots around the basket, knocked down some big free throws. What kind of changed for you as the game went on where you were able to get yourself going a little bit more?**

RAEGAN BEERS: Yeah. I think the moral of it is trust the process, trust that things will eventually come, especially when have you good teammates that if I'm not scoring, my teammates are going to do it, and if they keep scoring, that is going to open up things for me. If I'm going to get doubled, I'm going to dump it off to someone else.

In the first half I did struggle seeing the double team and at halftime Bendu took leadership in the locker room and helped us adjust to when it was being doubled, when I had one-on-one, when Jelena was being doubled, things like that. She took leadership in the locker room and we adjusted and that's what it took to win this game.

**Q. I think you were down six or eight in the fourth. You hit the three and came down where you were pretty fired up and telling the teammates, Let's go. Do you remember that? And like was that kind of one of those moments that kind of started helping you guys believe a little bit, let's just hit some shots?**

ADLEE BLACKLOCK: Yeah, absolutely. I was thankful Coach drew the play up for me and I'm glad that we were able to execute it. I think at that point everybody wanted to elevate. It's easy to want to win for the seniors, for Bendu. You don't want this to be her last game. So I think it was easy to get fired up for that moment.

**Q. When Colorado came to your building they got off to a fast start and just buried you early. You get them again. So how excited are you to get them again? And what do you think was kind of the difference in that game that you guys can maybe flip this time around? And, Reagan, you being from Colorado if you could talk about on that as well, that would be great.**

SCOTT RUECK: Well, they were at a different level than we were to start that game. It was almost as if -- I think, that was Sunday, right? And we had played you Utah so well Friday night. We had a chance to beat Utah. The ball's in Jelena's fingertips with 1.2 seconds with nobody between her and the rim and the ball falls out of her hands. We're that close, and then we lose in overtime.

So we're feeling good about ourself. They came in and absolutely beat us up in that first quarter. They beat us to every basketball. They played at a completely different level of intensity. Before you know it, the game's basically over at the end of the first, like you mentioned.

From that point forward, we played 'em even, which showed a lot about our team. Kept fighting until the end. So it's going to be, I would assume, a very similar start for them tomorrow. They're going to come with the same energy that they did that night. Sherrod's going to be everywhere, all over the floor, and so we're going to need to be ready for it. I believe we will be.

But they bring a ton of energy. They play really fast, and so you've got to be on your A game from the tip. So it should be a great game, a big test.

RAEGAN BEERS: I just second that. They came in and kicked our butts starting off, so we need to adjust that one and come out in the fourth quarter. And we're a different team obviously from when we played them, even though it wasn't that long ago. We have some good wins under our belt and we're really coming together as a team.

So it's going to take great post position, going to take great guards knocking down shots, Adlee dropping 20, 25. And so --

SCOTT RUECK: 30. Why stop.

RAEGAN BEERS: Yeah, let's just go 30.

But everybody coming to play and giving our hundred percent max effort because that's what it is going to take to beat 'em tomorrow.

**Q. A.J. probably, she kind of flies under the radar a little bit, but she seemed to come off the bench tonight, have a little bit of an attitude and kind of will you guys, I guess, at times when you needed it. Did you see that from her tonight?**

SCOTT RUECK: I thought this game, it felt like her best defensive game she's ever played. That's how I felt. I felt like she was so disruptive. She competed on the boards at

another level. She fought for rebounds. She provides offense for us and she's always done that. We count on that from her.

She's got about as pretty a jump shot as you're ever going to see in the mid-range. Such a high release. It's just really difficult to stop. But we've been working all year just complete game, elevate defensively.

And I think it just takes time, it takes a desire, it takes an awareness of what's possible and what you can do, and so it's just fun to watch her develop because nobody plays harder than A.J. She's going to give you everything she has every second. It's just fun to watch it all come together for her.

Tonight it did. Her length against USC is important. Adlee and Lily's length against their guards is important in this matchup. So we needed 'em to play well and be disruptive and they were.

**Q. For the players, it seemed like Bendu was really having a lot of fun down the stretch. How much did you guys feed off of her? There was one point, I think, where she was guarding somebody and she was also raising her hands up and trying to get the fans into it at the same time. It just seemed like she was, you guys were kind of feeding off her a little bit out there.**

ADLEE BLACKLOCK: Yeah. Bendu's energy is super easy to feed off of. She's easy to just want to play hard for. She elevates all of us to another level, whether it's on the court, or like in the huddles, just she always like brings consistent energy all the time.

RAEGAN BEERS: Yeah, I second that. My thing is Bendu at the beginning of every game, at least the ones I've started, she brings into the huddle and she reminds us we're going to have some fun, and we play like we're having fun when we do that. We're a hard team to beat and we are competitive with teams like Utah and like Oregon, all these teams.

When we have fun and we play together, it's fun. Bendu reminds that. Take that's leadership role, owns that, and tells us to do the same. So when she's having fun, she expects the same from all of us, and so it's easy for us to do it.

**Q. Could you talk about, it was 21-5 run over the last seven minutes. Can you just talk about your defensive play during that period. They were getting frustrated, throwing up 3-pointers and not taking some good shots. Can you just talk about what you did then. Then also for the players, this idea of you not having**

**lost nine times in a row ever, what's that learning process been like for you to come out the other side to where you are now?**

SCOTT RUECK: Well, I thought we were extremely active. I think we're a pretty good matchup for SC. We had control of the game at their place a few weeks ago in the fourth quarter where you could feel them searching for someone who wanted the ball, and our defensive positioning was excellent.

I felt the same tonight, actually, throughout the game. They got us with a couple switches where they got free a few times. They hurt us in transition off steals a couple times. But for the most part, we made them work for their shots all game long and we made them shoot the shots we wanted them to shoot.

I thought our defensive accuracy got better and better down the stretch. I thought we chased their guards really tough. No. 4, Kayla, got free for the corner three. Other than that, we didn't make a mistake down the stretch.

And then because of that positioning, we had a rebounding position as well, and we were able to survive the couple O boards that they did get and get most of their misses.

Then offensively, we just, we know where to go with the ball now down the stretch better than we used to. We're just, we've really grown as a group that way, so we're harder to stop down the stretch. I think it was a perfect combination of all of that. Then we made 15 of 16 free throws in the fourth quarter. So that's winning basketball.

RAEGAN BEERS: As you said, for that nine-game losing streak, that's rough, obviously. And lots of those wins were super close, so that made it even worse. We had those wins in our hand. At times we were in control of those basketball games. So I don't think any of us have ever been on a high school team or club team that has had nine losses. And like coach Rick said, this is once, this is only his third time having that happen.

So it's been lots of growth and not just in those losses, but ever since the beginning of the year started as freshmen, just having grown together. Our leadership on the team, Bendu, Noelle, Jelena, all those upperclassmen have been doing a great job in guiding us and leading us and getting us to this point where we can play well together.

ADLEE BLACKLOCK: I would just say consistency. Like everybody's been consistently bringing their best every single day, and I think we knew that it was going to pay off at some point. So it's really great to see it happen now.

**Q. Thinking way back to media day, you said that this was going to be one of those years you were going to have to coach more than normal because you have so many freshmen and there's a lot more teaching to do. Looking back on the year, obviously you still have one more game to go, but how much do you feel like this group of freshmen has grown to where now, the beginning of the year you weren't maybe as understanding, and now you're breaking this nine-game losing streak, you're beating ranked teams, you're winning a conference tournament game, how much you've seen them grow and how much you've grown coaching them?**

SCOTT RUECK: I would love to go to video right now and show you some of our first practices. I would love to show you --

RAEGAN BEERS: Maybe not.

SCOTT RUECK: I would love to show you where they started. And they all are talented offensively, all five of them. Martha is the other. And that hasn't been an issue. It's been there all year long.

Getting free and understanding how hard you have to work and getting the timing down, of course. But they all can score. They're all used to it.

The other end of the floor, the defensive end, was a travesty. It was a travesty. It was amazing, actually. I'm not saying it's not normal because actually it's very normal. Freshmen come in -- that's why you don't see many play that much. Not in big moments anyway or they're not on good teams. And to watch that growth, I'm so proud of them for sticking with it, staying positive, letting us coach them when it feels like, gosh, can't do anything right. Every freshman goes through that. Where you're confident coming in, you think you're just a flat baller. And then you're like, geez, I suck at basketball. I mean, that's the normal progression. Then you realize, no, you don't suck, you're just learning a completely different level and everything's new and so you adapt to it. The same will happen when they go play professionally. There's a learning curve there too. The speed's just different. So I couldn't be more proud of this group. For Timea to sit for three straight months, not have one live rep for three straight months and then come in to the middle of the PAC 12 play and compete the way she's competing, win a Freshman Player of the Week Award, I mean, it's been remarkable. Lilly has started at times, Adlee has started at times, all of them have made huge contributions. So it's been a joy to watch the progress as a teacher and a coach. And so I've loved every second of it and I'm just sitting over here on the inside just grinning ear to ear. Proud of

them and happy for them and all the people that love them and care about them too.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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