

# Pac-12 Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Thursday, March 2, 2023

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

**UCLA Bruins**

**Cori Close**

**Emily Bessoir**

**Camryn Brown**

Postgame Press Conference

UCLA - 73, Arizona - 59

THE MODERATOR: We would like to welcome UCLA Coach, if we could start with an opening statement from you and then we'll take some questions.

CORI CLOSE: We had a saying in our program, sometimes you, sometimes me, always us. And I just think you never know whose night it's going to be and that's been a theme all year long, and I think that's been a key to our growth is that we really don't care whose night it's going to be. Some might struggle. Well, there's someone that has that one woman's back.

I'm really proud of the toughness and the selflessness. We talked about defense and rebounding was going to carry us. That had to be our anchor. We were plus 19 on the boards. It's just huge. I thought Emily was just a rock star on the inside on the boards and her defense on Reese.

Then Camryn Brown, I mean, what can you say about just how many more possessions we got, when we were executing together, how she was facilitating us. She had nine points, six rebounds, four assists. I just thought the teamwork and the selflessness was the key to this game. I thought our ability to execute both to start the game and to start the third quarter forcing them to call a timeout, I think those were really pivotal momentum moments for us. But it really does come down to how tough were we and how together were we. Today we were the tougher, more together team.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you. Questions?

**Q. Emily, you've had two of your best games of the season here in the tournament. Where has this come from? You missed all of last season, but just to be**



**playing this well this time of year, having your first career double double, how much does it mean to you? And, coach, talk about how much she's grown this year as a player to play this well in this tournament.**

EMILY BESSOIR: Well, I don't know where it's been all season. (Laughing.) Just kidding. I think a lot of people coming back from an injury, like when you get cleared to play your sport, that's where actually like it really starts because you've missed a whole year, and Camryn can speak to this.

I think throughout the whole year, like, I'm still trying to find myself. I'm still trying to find my game. The team has been such a huge support and I think now I'm really glad that things are coming together, if that answers your question.

CORI CLOSE: I do think the mental side is really harder than the physical side. I think she was ready to go. She had done the work. She's really a diligent worker. But I think that the fight in your own head to trust whether you're back from your injury, but also to go, what can I do, what can I become, and sort of the dare to dream again about what kind of player they can grow into.

I saw that in Cam too. The mental side of finding that like attack mentality again. I just think, Emily and I, just in the last couple weeks have had a lot of really good conversations about aggression level, going for it, knowing who she is, what she's earned. I think that you always have to go back to your body of work. Emily's really, really talented. I knew that if she could fight through it mentally, she could fall back on her body of work.

**Q. Coming into the game, Cate Reese, she's a really tough matchup. It just seemed like you guys did a pretty good job, just kind of crowding her, making things difficult for her, 0-6 from the field. Both Emily and Camryn here had possessions guarding her, threw a lot of different looks at her. What was the game plan defensively coming into the game and as it went on how did you see that implemented?**

CORI CLOSE: I think that they deserved the primary credit



for making all of her catches hard, but also our team deserves credit. That was the biggest shift we wanted to make from a month ago when we played them was our guards digging in and making some of those catches. As soon as she started to dribble, we wanted to swarm the ball, and that was going to take different matchups.

That's where I really think the selflessness comes in. So that importance of if you were on Pellington or Fields or someone else that we had to be ready to not only guard them and their strengths, but then we had to give support on the inside.

So that was the biggest adjustment we made is that we brought much more help as soon as she decided to dribble the ball. So they first deserve the credit, but I thought our whole team was really tuned in to how we were going to make things tougher for her. We watched the last several possessions of the game when they were at our place a month ago, and they went to her and Pellington. Pellington's so good down the tunnel, and Reese is so good when she's able to sort of wheel and back you down. We just had to make some adjustments to not allow them to get to that comfort zone.

**Q. Cam, can you take us through that one play where Kiki just throws you the touchdown pass?**

CAMRYN BROWN: So we were doing a press break, and I'm like, okay, I know I'm going long. Then I went long. I knew they switched, so I was like, I don't think Kiki's throwing the ball. And then I look up in the air and I'm like, oh, wow, it's coming. So I'm like, okay, I can't let her get the turnover, so go grab the ball, and then obviously, okay, I'm open for a layup, let's go finish it, and then got fouled and got an and one and just had fun with that.

CORI CLOSE: And made her free throw.

CAMRYN BROWN: I did. Hey, I was proud of it. I think I was more proud of making the free throw after than I was the initial layup, but yeah.

**Q. Emily, when Cam is contributing offensively and really doing what she can do, when she's having the kind of game she is, just how does that energize the team and make you better as her teammate?**

EMILY BESSOIR: Yeah. I think that play you just mentioned we all on the bench we were jumping up and down. I almost got lightheaded.

But it's huge for us because Cam does so many great things and sometimes the defense sags off of her, but she's a threat and when she runs and takes off or when

she shoots her shots, we know she can make it, and she knows we have her back and we know she has ours, so that just gets us fired up.

CORI CLOSE: But I also just want to give a shoutout to Christeen Iwuala, Brynn Masikewich, Lina Sontag. They're going to get a lot of the shine, but some of our ability to rotate and just get a couple minutes here, a couple minutes there, get a rebound here, make it difficult here, and just always being ready. I want to give them credit, because you talked about Cate Reese. It's just, it was not only the guard help, but being able to rotate lots of different people, and we had a little bit of foul trouble for a short period of time, and being able to really trust them.

Sometimes those minutes get overlooked and I don't think we're sitting at the table right here without those selfless and productive minutes, especially defensively from those other forwards.

**Q. Cam, yesterday Coach referred to you as the team's quarterback. What is it like to play this role on the team, especially in high-stakes games like today?**

CAMRYN BROWN: I enjoy it. I love putting my teammates in the best positions for them to succeed and for them to have success. So I think it's fun to be out there moving the pieces and be like, okay, Reese just hit a shot, let's see if we can get her another shot, or M's hot, so let's see if we can get her a shot.

I think it's just fun. I think that's where I thrive the most, being able to put some puzzle pieces together and solve problems. I enjoy it, but my teammates really help me shine. What they do good, I look good, apparently, so I just really appreciate them.

**Q. Jade Loville went off in the first half. She's had a, she's gone through a rough slump with shooting. What did you, what adjustments did you make on her in the second half? Because it seems like you guys came out and defended her a little bit differently.**

CORI CLOSE: We just tried to crowd her a little bit more. You can't just -- she's so good at getting her mid-range or even the deep shot off on the sort of lateral glide. We call her a glide shooter. We need to close that gap a little bit. Putting a hand up isn't going to do any good against her. You have to crowd her space. And she really wants to go to that shot. She doesn't really want to go to the rack. So I think we just need to take up that space.

One of 'em happened in transition. So we needed to talk and it's not the matchups that you're traditionally on, but we needed to locate her quicker, and I thought we did a better

job of that in the second half.

**Q. Back on February 3rd there was three straight games where you had the game late and watched it slip away and then obviously what happened yesterday. How good does it feel to have a big lead in the fourth quarter and just put things away?**

CORI CLOSE: Well, I'm excited to see your headline from it that we didn't blow another 11-point lead.

I think that the reality was is that as painful as that three-game stretch was, it really did teach us a lot. We referenced it a couple of times in really pressurized moments. We talked about two things and they're the two things that really cost us the game, is guard rebounding, defensive rebounding, that's what hurt us in that first game, and then taking care of the live ball turnovers, which allowed them to get quicker shots.

And I actually thought our zone tonight was really good for us because it makes them take more time. They were just, they're so good downhill that even if they were to get a two, they were scoring quicker. The zone just made 'em play east to west a little bit more and took more time.

So I thought that was a contributing factor too, that they weren't able to create more possessions in that last two and a half minutes. So I think that this, especially with such a young team that we have, really Charisma is really the only one that's been a whole season of this kind of environment. I think those really painful lessons, as painful as they were, they have created some different habits and some different reference points that we're drawing on now.

**Q. For both the players, what did you guys feel was the key to the two spurts at the beginning of the game and then coming out of halftime to get you those advantages on both ends of the half?**

EMILY BESSOIR: I think our mindset was really huge in this game. We knew what we were going to do and we all locked in. We just had the confidence too because last game against them was really hurtful and we learned from that and we knew that we've grown so much since then.

So I think our confidence was really there. We knew when to take our shots. We knew what to do on defense because if our shots don't fall, our defense is still our anchor.

CAMRYN BROWN: I think we really just focused on get stops, get rebounds, and run. We were able to start the first quarter with that and the same as the third. So just for us to like really focus on get a good stop, make sure we

secure the rebound, and run. I think those were definitely the sparks that we needed to get our offense going and just be able to play the game that we wanted to play.

**Q. You had this quote yesterday. A lot of teams are competing to beat us. We're playing to be us. How do you feel the team and Emily and Camryn did in that department today?**

CORI CLOSE: Yeah. I think that's a huge thing, knowing your team's identity. If I'm being candid, it's taken us a little while to figure out, okay, what exactly is going to be our identity and how do we become a real complete picture and not just a bunch of talented individuals. That's been a process and maybe taking a little bit longer than maybe I thought it was going to take.

But I think we're getting there. I think that's what "competing to be us" really means is what is our identity, how are we at our best, and how are we playing better together as a unit.

That's what I told 'em right before we went out before the game started is that a team that's woven together cannot be broken, and no islands allowed in this game. You can't go into yourself, you can't do anything else. We got to be a team that's woven together and we're stronger together.

So I think we did really well. I talked, we talk about the tougher more together team. We talk about defense and rebounding and passion plays. We were a little bit, we're five short of our passion play goal, but our defensive rebounding was superb. And that has to be where we find our identity.

And even through the spurts when offense is hard, I think that's the key factor is that we don't have to do that. I think watching all the games yesterday, offensive is hard to come by because every team in this conference is so good defensively. So really proud of how we competed to be us because we played to how we are our best.

**Q. (No Microphone.)**

CAMRYN BROWN: Yeah, I could tell she was a little frustrated. I didn't want her to feel down in that moment like because I knew she was making some mistakes that she normally didn't make. I felt like she thought that she was letting us down in those moments. I grabbed her, and I was like, Londynn, you've done so many great things for us so many other games, and you're going to do great things tonight, so I just need you to take a deep breath, I need you to reset, and you're good.

I just wanted to really speak to her, like you're doing great,

like don't let these couple mistakes, these couple of fumbles, a turnover or two, like defer from like all the good work that you bring to the team and all that you've done for us.

We have a saying like sometimes you, sometimes me, always us. Maybe it wasn't necessarily her night tonight, but I was like, I need you to be ready for another moment in this game or the next game or the next. Like, we don't know when it's going to be her time to shine again. I just didn't want her to get down because she may have not had the best game today.

**Q. You don't know who you're playing tomorrow, but could you just give a quick scout of both Stanford and Oregon?**

CORI CLOSE: Well, night and day differences, right? Oregon, obviously Endyia Rogers and Paopao really hit their stride the last couple of weeks, and Rogers was phenomenal last night. Obviously Paopao was Player of the Week last week, and so really guard-oriented, going to try to really spread you out and shoot the three.

And then you've got the opposite when you're talking about Stanford. You're talking about going inside, pounding the ball to the paint, and making sure that they really keep other people out of the paint.

So really two very different scouting reports and different ways to attack it. So I have such a great confidence in our coaching staff and in our video team that we'll be ready for whichever team we get a chance to do and we're just trying to earn another day.

Thank you all, as usual, for being here. We really appreciate you taking the time and energy to support this great tournament.

CAMRYN BROWN: Lastly, I want a shoutout to Coach Tasha and Soh for their great scout today, definitely got us prepared to play our best game today.

THE MODERATOR: All right. Thank you.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports