

Pac-12 Conference Women's Basketball Championship

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Oregon State Beavers

Scott Rueck

Bendu Yeaney

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Postgame Press Conference



special. We've had some obviously great moments. Our Stanford game, that was a heck of a performance and that was awhile back. You think of several. The Oregon game at home was very special. Having two shots or a shot to beat Utah was very special. So we've had some fantastic moments.

But finishing games in the last week basically we've just gotten better and better. The leadership has just gotten better and better, the freshmen better and better. So as we go, this group has a chance to be, in my opinion, very special. Very special, with the people that are joining us next year, with the people that we have, it has similar vibes to previous years at Oregon State. It's just forming. It's forming. So we're in the early stages of it. Sometimes losing leads to lots of winning. I think that's what everybody's expecting.

Q. You mentioned their defensive disruption felt like they kind of sped you up with the press early in the second half. From your perspective, in what ways did that change the game or change the way that you guys were able to run your offense?

SCOTT RUECK: Well, I mean, they took us out of plays at times. They turned us over in the backcourt a couple times pressing us after rebounds. Then they did a nice job. Sherrod is so fast. I mean, she's so fun to watch. I'm a fan of hers. I always have been. It seemed as the game went on she got faster and she elevated. So then that led to transition points for them. So they capitalized on our mistakes. I haven't seen points off turnovers, and I'm not wearing my glasses at the moment, but that, in my opinion, was a key stat in the game.

They got to the free-throw line a few times off of those transition points or opportunities, I should say. So overall I thought we handled things pretty well, but there were just a couple runs that just went against us. That was tough.

Q. This is a season where you saw a lot of improvement although it wasn't what you wanted. But how do you view your growth this season from seasons prior and just summing it up as a whole?

Colorado - 62, Oregon State - 54

THE MODERATOR: We welcome Oregon State. Coach, we'll take an opening statement and then we'll take questions.

SCOTT RUECK: I thought Jelena and Bendu did a great job tonight. I was really proud of the fight that this group had. They had the right mindset entering the game. Played extremely hard throughout the game. It was very physical, of course. Battled through it.

Colorado had several runs that were created by their defensive disruption to pull away from us and keep us at bay, and then clearly shot a lot of free throws tonight and made a lot of free throws. It was too much for us to overcome. So give them a lot of credit.

But I couldn't be more proud of this group for just sticking with everything this year in a year that the wins weren't what we wanted, the win total anyway. From that point of view, obviously a disappointing year. But this team had no quit all year. Not one game did this team quit, and that was evident in the last couple days here. So I thought that it was just another inspiring performance by our team and they deserve a ton of credit.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, coach. Questions?

Q. What are the biggest, given how young this roster is, what are the biggest lessons that you take away from this game? And talk about what this team looks like, the future of this team, because from the outside looking in it looks pretty bright.

SCOTT RUECK: I thought we have played our best basketball down the stretch. What we did Saturday was



JELENA MITROVIC: Yeah, I did see improvement in myself, but that was just with the team. As we improved as a team that helped me to improve as an individual, and I just tried to help my teammates as best as I can, whatever that is, passing the ball or shooting from outside or just getting buckets inside.

I worked hard in offseason and I was hoping to show that this season and I'm hoping I helped this team as much as I could have. But, yeah, I just worked hard. That was the only thing.

Q. Bendu, sixth year you decide to take a shot at Oregon State. What are your thoughts on how it all turned out for the season for yourself?

BENDU YEANEY: It was the experience, obviously. We were up and down sometimes, but it was fun. I'm happy. I'm not happy about what, how it turned out, but I'm happy that I came back home. I'm happy for the experience. I'm happy I was able to play with the freshmen and the sophomores and juniors and obviously the seniors on this team. I think that we grew as a team.

Hopefully I helped them with their leadership for the years to come. But I'm just proud of this team. It was something that I always wanted to do and I'm happy I was able to do it.

Q. Watching Adlee Blacklock these last two days she plays with a swagger. She hit a couple shots in the first quarter and was so amped. How much better can she be these next couple years and just the way she plays with all this energy and swagger about her?

SCOTT RUECK: Well, she's just a baller. She's a gym rat. She loves the game. She's been living for these opportunities her whole life. It's evident. That's why that passion comes out of her and that's why she has confidence in herself because she's earned it. She's paid her dues. This year she paid her dues. Didn't get a lot of time early, needed to grow defensively, and really did, and really focused on that and just stuck with it and stayed determined.

I think playmaking ability, she missed the summer with a, she was injured, and so didn't get to join us until October. It really set her back. So she was starting the year from behind. That added into it. So her conditioning got better and better because she had missed so much.

So a player like her kind of the sky's the limit how good she wants to be. She's got point guard handles, she's got point guard vision, and she's just a deadly shooter. And now she's become a PAC 12 defender as well. As the game

slows down, we can use her in more and more situations and teams have to defend her.

Tonight it was interesting. She's playing against Frida, who is somewhat similar. She was purely a shooter as a freshman and now you look at her and she's making plays off the bounce. Her development has been so impressive over the years. Adlee has the same opportunity.

Q. Talking about specifically when Talia was injured, you find out she will be out for the remainder of the season. It'd be really easy, given the close losses, for this young group, Jelena, Raegan, Adlee, the list goes on and on, to get down on themselves about it. Can you talk a little bit about what the conversations whether like when at Talia got hurt and what that young group gave you in these last four games to put together this run?

SCOTT RUECK: Yeah, I mean, obviously you're losing a great player and someone that we played through so much, like just as we were preparing for the season. She's our most experienced player and has played the 1, 2, 3. So a lot of stuff went through her.

Then you remove her, well, that means we've got to spread it around and more people need to be playmakers. When the final decision was made, we had already had basically a run through at USC. She couldn't, that was the first game. We found out 10 minutes before that game she couldn't go. So the team really had to scramble that day. We had a four-point lead with two minutes to go and people rose. So when somebody goes down, everybody has to rise.

So there wasn't much discussion about it. It was just, okay, here's what we have to do and I think it was obvious to everyone. Clearly, I mean, we've had people really step up in her absence, which those are big shoes to fill on both ends of the floor, and the team did that.

So the most remarkable, I just told 'em in our meeting room, the most remarkable thing about this season is to suffer not just losses, but painful losses, repeatedly for stretches this year and this team just kept coming. They just kept playing.

So nothing, I mean, I just look to these two and Noelle and the just the countenance of this group, they stay positive through all the adversity. So there was one more thing, there's no doubt that they, that it wasn't going to get 'em down, that they were just going to keep fighting.

Q. Beers is a difficult matchup physically, but Vonleh did a good job against her, I don't think she scored

until the fourth quarter. Can you talk about what was going on there. And then also is there any chance at all that you would be under consideration for a WNIT?

SCOTT RUECK: I'm not sure about any post-season at the moment. I haven't even let my mind go there. Other than this tournament.

In regards to Rae, I mean, it was very physical underneath and that was probably the key to this game. If we can establish ourselves inside earlier -- and we had six points in the paint, I think it was Bendu layups in the first half. So we couldn't get -- I mean, they did a good job pushing us out bottom line is what I'm saying. So they established position. We had a hard time catching it deep and had a hard time getting shots off against 'em inside. So it was an extremely physically-called game. Then Rae got, of course, foul trouble. So that hurt us as well and limited her just a little bit more than we would have wanted.

But the plan was to go inside. They were able to single cover us inside and slow us down and that was probably the key to the game overall.

Q. We all see the potential in this team and what it could be a year or two. What is your level of confidence given, you know, these next few months there's always a lot of movement in the teams, that you can keep this thing together, keep your team together. Do you feel like these guys get along, like each other and want to be here for the long haul?

SCOTT RUECK: It feels really good to me. It feels normal to me. Normal means the first 23 years of my career. Pre-COVID, pre-transfer portal, where I had four total transfers in 23 years. This group feels like that. But, I mean, anything's possible.

So in this day and age, you know, I show up and I work with what I've got and do my best every single day and whatever happens happens. My hope is obviously everyone stays. I love this team.

Q. There's a lot of teams in the conference or a couple teams on this conference that are on the bubble here. Earlier Tara and Kelly were talking about eight teams from the conference should probably get into the NCAA tournament. For some of these teams, like an Oregon that's got 14 losses, can you kind of just talk about why the teams from this conference that are on the bubble should get in and do you agree with that number eight from the conference this year?

SCOTT RUECK: Well, I mean, we finished 11th and we just -- is SC a tournament team? We just beat them, right.

We just beat Arizona the other day. I mean, you don't think we would win a NCAA Tournament game? Our net's 55. And we're 11th. And so why not 11? I mean, are you kidding? I mean, to me, every one of us could win games in the NCAA tournament. This team has, I mean, I'm talking about me, us, our team has what it takes to win a NCAA Tournament game. Without question. And more than one.

I mean, you got the ball tied with Stanford on their home floor. You got a shot to beat Utah. What are their seeds? So we've been there. We've been battling all these teams. In this conference every single team is prepared for the post-season because the conference is coached so well. It's so unique. You've seen every single thing.

We've called more -- it seems like every PAC 12 game comes down to a sideline-out-of-bounds play somehow. It kind of defies logic. But every single game comes down to a sideline out. We've been in every possible scenario that you could be in. Sideline out with no timeouts. Oh, geez. End line, they don't have a timeout and you're down three. I mean, everything's been down advanced. And now we're back here with no timeouts.

So there is not a scenario that is possible in the game that we haven't been through. And that's probably true of every team in our conference. So this is a veteran group, extremely well coached, amazing guard play throughout and amazing post play throughout. So there's not a PAC 12 team -- I mean, the way Arizona State finished the year you don't think -- I mean, they could probably win a tournament game, too. So there's not a PAC 12 team that couldn't be, that wouldn't be worthy, in my opinion. Everybody's really good.

THE MODERATOR: All right, that's a good place to finish.

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