

Pac-12 Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Wednesday, March 6, 2024

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

California Golden Bears

Coach Charmin Smith

Leilani McIntosh

Ioanna Krimili

Postgame Press Conference

Cal - 65, Washington State - 44

CHARMIN SMITH: Just really excited to be earning another day here in Vegas. Really proud of the win. I think we came out and were dominant from the start, and it was a convincing win, a good win for us, and we're happy to be moving on.

Q. Your kids play so hard all the time. And it can be challenging to play hard when you're right there and you can't always close games. You come in. It's a tough conference. You don't have a great seed. They just play their butts off all the time. Why do you think that is?

CHARMIN SMITH: I think we have a really good group of special young women that care about one another and care about this program. They want to leave it better than when they came in, and we're fighting really hard to make this a special season.

You've got to compete. One of the toughest conferences in the country. And we just have to try to bring it every single second, as you said.

Q. Even since last season, the defense has just come such a long way. How have you seen that improve to get to the point where it's at now?

CHARMIN SMITH: I think today was a really good example of what I want us to be defensively. I think we've struggled being that consistently, and so that's what we're working on, is just doing the right things consistently so that we can have these performances that we're really proud of.

Q. I know this is the end of the road with Pac-12 but



your general impressions of playing here in Vegas, and maybe the last time?

IOANNA KRIMILI: It's obviously the last Pac-12 Tournament. We're here and we want to come out every game and give 100 percent. And I think it's really cool, the last Pac-12 play, why don't make some history, you know what I mean?

I think everybody's very excited. You can see even in the hotel, talking to my teammates, everybody's here, everybody is so excited to be here and compete. We feel very lucky.

LEILANI MCINTOSH: It's the last year of the Pac-12 but it's my last year of playing with this group. So I think they love me enough to play hard and continue to be competitive, and I'm trying to just give everything I can out there.

CHARMIN SMITH: I think my take -- I'm really sad to see this conference, this be the last of the conference. It is just the best conference in college athletics.

And I just want to give a shout-out to the Pac-12 staff who stayed committed and made this such a special tournament. And there's so many people that are still 100 percent invested in doing their job and showing up for us, and we really appreciate it because this is a great experience for our student-athletes.

Q. Leilani, with this being your last year, as you mentioned, what's been different about this group? We've heard all season from you guys about how special this group is, but from the time you started here until now, what's the difference really been this year?

LEILANI MCINTOSH: I think we just continue to grow together and kind of take our losses as lessons and understand that we all just want the best for each other. We all have the same end goal.

I think in past years it was kind of like up and down and we let the downs really take us down. I feel we've used the



downs to really project us upwards. I think that's what's been different.

Q. I just wondered, they made a couple runs there in the third quarter and then another in the fourth quarter. You guys both hit some big 3-pointers. And it was also 26-8 in second-chance points, which was a big difference just on the effort part of it. Could you speak about hitting those 3-pointers at important times and just the effort you guys put out tonight?

IOANNA KRIMILI: We knew that Washington State is a really good team and obviously they're going to have some runs. But we have enough experience. And Lei, me, we played in college for a while now, to know that we need to stay calm, we need to trust our shooters. And that's what we did.

And I think also Michelle (phonetic) got some really big rebounds. When we don't hit 3s we know Michelle and our post players in general, we'll get the rebounds and shoot again. That's a really big part why we got the win. And just take off (indiscernible) ourselves and our teammates helped us a lot.

LEILANI MCINTOSH: I think Charmin and the rest of the staff is, okay, they had their run. Next play, what are we going to do? I think that's been a lot of the story of our season is, what are we going to do next, how do we bounce back? They just had their run, what are we going to do? I think we showed up today.

CHARMIN SMITH: Those 3s are run-stoppers, run-stoppers for sure. Did you hear me on that one, I said you better make that?

LEILANI MCINTOSH: She told me to pull it out, pull it out.

CHARMIN SMITH: You better make that one.

LEILANI MCINTOSH: She did. She did.

Q. Charmin, you get to go up against your mentor and your old coach again. I feel like you should do your Tara impression for us.

CHARMIN SMITH: You know, Lindsay, I don't know why you'd ask me to do that. (Laughter).

We love the G.O.A.T. And we're excited, third time. It's going to be the charm. We're going to give it all we have. Shoot our shot. It's March. Try to make it magical.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

