

Pac-12 Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Thursday, March 7, 2024

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

California Golden Bears

Coach Charmin Smith

Leilani McIntosh

Marta Suarez

Postgame Press Conference

Stanford - 71, Cal - 57

CHARMIN SMITH: Obviously we're disappointed. We really had a game plan of coming out and showing some toughness and fight, and I think we did those things. But unfortunately we just went cold the second half and couldn't knock down shots. And you have to continue to score when playing Stanford.

So couldn't come up with the win, but really proud of the way that we showed up and the fight and the toughness that we displayed.

Q. What did they change defensively? We know Tara's very good at halftime adjustments. What adjustments were they making because you guys were hitting a lot of 3s particularly in the first half?

CHARMIN SMITH: They went into a regular 2-3 zone. We had wide-open looks that we knock down at a really high rate, and they just didn't want to fall today that second half. That's all it was a regular zone, and they left us open, and we weren't able to capitalize.

Q. This being the third time you faced Stanford this year and the closest you've played them so far. You mentioned the game plan to play really tough against them. What do you think you guys accomplished differently to really shut down Stanford in the first half there?

CHARMIN SMITH: We talked about bringing the fight to them, and I thought in the first two games we were very passive. We let them do things. We let them dictate. We were reactive.

And in this game I thought we were the opposite. We were



the aggressor. We dictated. We got some of their best players in foul trouble. We were aggressive. We were attacking. We were scoring. It's exactly what we wanted.

Q. Leilani, what's your takeaway from this game, and disappointment in the loss? But you guys are such a different team than you were when you guys were here a year ago and the year before that.

LEILANI MCINTOSH: I think we've shown a lot of growth even just within this season. I'm proud how we came out and competed. Like Charmin said, both times we played Stanford we let them have whatever they wanted. And I thought they had to work for everything today. I'm proud of how far we've come.

Q. Just being around here today, this week and understanding it's the last of the Pac-12 and everything, how has it kind of hit you? What do you think you'll take most after experiencing all this season?

CHARMIN SMITH: I think it's really sad that we let something so special go away. I think it's very sad. And we're trying to make the most of this last Pac-12 go-around. It's going to be weird. It's going to be weird.

But I am thankful that we are in a Power Five conference. If we can't be in the Pac-12 I think the ACC is a pretty good basketball conference and we're going to have a lot of fun, competitive match-ups. And we'll figure out how to travel across the country all year long.

Q. Do you think you're a tournament team? If so, what's your best case -- make your case to us?

CHARMIN SMITH: 100 percent I think we're an NCAA Tournament team. The NET is a whacky thing. It is very whacky. And I think people have to really look at people's schedules and what people have done.

We've played some really good basketball and we have some good wins. If you want to talk about the NET, then we have three Top 25 NET wins, and 12 of the 16 so-called bubble teams don't have any. And we've got top



50 NET wins that eight of the 16 so-called bubble teams don't have.

So we put ourselves in a position where I think our resumé is really favorable. Two of our losses, to Texas A&M and Gonzaga, were without our leading scorer. We've done some work here.

I 100 percent believe that the Pac-12, while South Carolina is arguably the best team in the country, I 100 percent believe the Pac-12 is the best conference from top to bottom. And I think we deserve more teams in the tournament. And I think we 100 percent should be one of them.

Q. You just said you're a tournament team. I'm curious, with this conference -- and there's so many unique different styles of play -- how well does battling those teams prep you guys and the other teams for the tournament?

CHARMIN SMITH: Not only are these teams phenomenal but these coaches, in terms of how we game plan and scheme -- we are a conference in which we try to take away each other's strengths when we play.

I think the Pac-12 historically has had a lot of success moving into the NCAA Tournament because a lot of other conferences, people just do what they do. And we'll watch and we'll be, like, wait, you think that's you guard Cam? That's how you guard Kiki?

People just do what they do and it works when you do it extremely well. But that's the strength of our conference is that we'll game plan and we're going to make you have to go to option B and C in order to win a game. We have phenomenal coaches in this conference.

Q. How tough was it with Stanford when option B is Kiki Iriafen?

CHARMIN SMITH: Yeah, say that. We really tried to pack it in. I think we got tired in the fourth. Michelle went out. That really hurt us. We didn't have the same type of pressure on her with Michelle being out, and she started getting some of those jumpers, which are deadly.

I think Kiki, I think, is most improved. She earned that. She is a force to be reckoned with. They have a great, whatever -- I'm not saying Batman/Robin -- those are two phenomenal post players.

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