

Pac-12 Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Thursday, March 7, 2024

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

Stanford Cardinal

Coach Tara VanDerveer

Elena Bosgana

Kiki Iriafen

Postgame Press Conference

Stanford - 71, Cal - 57

TARA VANDERVEER: I didn't think I would be very happy at halftime sitting here. But second half our team really stepped up. And I thought Kiki really led the way with just rebounding, staying in the game, not fouling, knocking down shots. I thought she had a great game.

Elena really stepped up big, too. She was working hard defensively. Got the ball inside. Knocked down some shots. So we were able to turn things around.

And I thought Talana had a really good game. This is the strangest stat sheet I've ever seen with only four people scoring. I can't imagine we ever saw that before. Elena with four assists, Kiki with five assists, took care of the ball.

It was honestly a weird game. I think some of it was just people were excited and we were a little haywire in the beginning of the game. I'm like what team is that? But credit Cal, they played very hard. They're very aggressive. They played, I thought, a really good game.

Q. Kiki, you've been doing it basically throughout the year, stepping up different times. I've only got to see you here in Vegas. Florida State game, almost very similar where Cam gets in foul trouble and you just take over sort of lead the team to victory. Something about Las Vegas that gets you fired up?

KIKI IRIAFEN: I think just tournaments are very exciting, the idea of you only have one game. You have to prove yourself in one game.

But I think my teammates got me the ball really well. They're always pouring into me, giving me a lot of energy, a lot of confidence. But I'm just happy about the W and



we'll be ready for Oregon State tomorrow.

Q. Elena, we've heard Tara challenge you, that she wants more from you in the starting lineup. You matched a career high today, again, from Florida State, interestingly. The shots that you were taking today, do you feel like you need to do more of that, more of what you did today?

ELENA BOSGANA: Absolutely. I feel that I missed some shots that I could make, too. But I think I did what Tara asked me to do in the beginning of the game and before the game.

I've been talking a lot with Tara about what I need to do more to help the team win. And I think I tried to do it today.

Q. Kiki and Tara, you mentioned Kiki in the beginning, and she has really just developed little by little every year and is having kind of a breakout year. Just how have you seen her progress? And, Kiki, what does it feel like to be in this moment on this kind of stage, playing the best basketball of your career?

TARA VANDERVEER: Kiki's development is about pure coaching (laughter) -- just kidding. She works really hard in practice and a great opportunity, and she's just grabbed it. She has a lot of confidence and we have a lot of confidence in her.

She welcomes coaching. It's, like, how can I get better? And I think that's something that's really helped her a lot.

Her face-up shot is spot on, just really strong. Her rebounding, another double-double here -- 18 boards, 28 points, 11-for-14, five assists. What else? That's just an awesome, awesome stat line.

And played through -- it was a very physical game. She played through that.

I think a lot of credit goes to Kiki's character, who she is as a person and how competitive she is. And I cannot be prouder of someone -- I'm so glad to be her coach.



KIKI IRIAFEN: Oh, Tara. That's so sweet. Thank you. (Laughter).

Q. Scott Rueck was saying when you get the bye it can actually work against you because the other team gets momentum and used to the gym. Do you think there was any of that going on tonight in the first half?

TARA VANDERVEER: I think Scott's got a point there. I think the bye is a good thing, but we were very disjointed in the beginning of the game. I think our team puts pressure on themselves. And I just really encouraged them to relax and play and just do what we've been doing all season.

Q. When you have a first half like that, how do you approach halftime? Is your message the same delivery, or does it just depend on the circumstances when you're real disappointed with the first half?

TARA VANDERVEER: What do you think halftime was like?

KIKI IRIAFEN: I think Tara didn't even have to say much. I think we all collectively got on each other, and we're, like, we got this, 0-0 at halftime. This is what March is all about, so we can't hang our heads.

Have to lock in, come back together and do what we need to do. And Tara just echoed that. I think collectively as a team we got it together to make sure that we can win this gam.

Q. Kiki, do you think Cal's defense did anything unique against you guys in the first half from seeing them play against you so many times this year? Did they do anything that stood out? And, Tara, how do you feel about just the state of the team's offense right now?

KIKI IRIAFEN: I think defensively Cal, they did a really good job doubling, even tripling us. Sometimes it was hard to even pass the ball out or find my teammate. I think defensively on the post players, they did what their game plan was.

I think in the second half, we adjusted, we were more relaxed and not so much in a rush or frantic. We were able to get Elena and our guards some good shots.

Q. Tara, what did the zone do for you guys when you guys came out in the second half?

TARA VANDERVEER: Well, I think probably more than anything I was trying to protect Cam just so that she could stay in the game. And we're a different team when Cam's

on the floor.

And also I think in some ways it's just a change of pace. We've been working on it, and we worked on it the day before we came here. We don't play it that much.

I also think Elena is really good in it. She's got long arms and we could be big a couple times. So it was a good change of pace, and I think they struggled against it.

Q. Kiki, your improvement, your development, this season that you're having, have there been moments this season where you've sort of felt it, where you felt like, oh, I can tell I'm a better player than I was two weeks ago or two weeks before that? I'm curious your own view of your development.

KIKI IRIAFEN: I think I've been trending like this year. I think early on in our preseason it was good for me to get those games against Indiana and Duke. And then in our regular season -- Florida State, yes, in Vegas.

And then our preseason, Tara's big game, having a great game against Oregon State, I think that was just a lot momentum.

But as Tara said, I think the biggest thing is just my confidence. I really played very fearlessly out there. Because of that I'm able to do what I can do, I'm able to give it my all I'm not worried about whatever outcome there is. And also that's just my coaches pouring into me -- you got this, you got this, you got this.

So I think it's been a great year. I'm super grateful for my teammates, everybody around me.

TARA VANDERVEER: Kiki, it was supposed to be my big game but it was your big game, girl. Stole the show.

KIKI IRIAFEN: It's Tara's big game, but yep.

Q. To the point about you playing fearlessly, how much of that do you think is you used to have to go against Cam in practice all the time. It's probably everyone else is a lot easier to go against. How do you think battling her, especially when you were younger, made you a better player?

KIKI IRIAFEN: I think you're so spot on. Cameron is the best defensive player in the country. Having to have to go against that every single day -- luckily we don't of to do that anymore -- but having to go against that in the preseason and in my prior years was really helpful for me.

She's really long and she's an athletic big. So having to

get around her, trying to shoot over her, I think that helped me shooting over other bigs. Gain, I think she's the best defensive player in the country. That was helpful for my game.

Q. This game tomorrow, obviously you haven't thought much about it just getting through this one, but it's the first time that Cam and Raegan Beers will be both on the court this season. What do you feel the keys to that match-up will be, and what do you have looking forward to that?

TARA VANDERVEER: Raegan Beers is a great player, and I think it will be a great match-up. And they have a terrific team and we're going to have to play very well. And I know there's a lot of orange in the crowd. So thankfully we just played up there where there's a lot of orange in the crowd.

But I have confidence in Cam. I don't think Cam had her A game today, but I have confidence she'll bring it tomorrow.

And the combination of Cam and Kiki, they really play with each other so well, and they help each other. And it's kind of -- it's two people you've got to go against.

Obviously I hope that we come out and play really well. But I have total confidence that Cam will do it and Kiki too.

Now Elena is building on her confidence of a great game in the tournament. This is the most that Elena's ever played in a Pac-12 tournament, and I thought she did really, really well.

Q. Tara, obviously there's been a lot of time to process and mourn what's happening with the conference, but were there any particular emotions or any particular thoughts you had on being in this setting one last time for the conference tournament?

TARA VANDERVEER: Well, Kiki and I were actually walking back from a meal or something, and she asked me how I was feeling about it. I said I'm in the moment. I'm loving coaching this team. I'm really excited to prepare for whoever we're playing. And I guess I'm kind of like that ostrich with his head in the sand. I'm not even thinking about anything beyond tomorrow's game with Oregon State.

I like being in the moment. I think it's helpful for me. And it's unfair to our team unless we are really focused on doing the best job we can today and tomorrow for them.

Q. For you, the first time I ever covered Oregon State versus you guys, Coach Rueck kind of described your

guys' match-up as a chess match, that every time he faces you you counteract each other. Do you agree with that statement, that when you face Rueck and this Beaver squad it's a chess match? And what is it about his coaching style that makes these games so close and entertaining to watch?

TARA VANDERVEER: We kind of, in some ways, have similar teams. And we both play what I call scouting report defense where we play more positionally. And I think he does a great job. They have really a talented team, and they had -- I think they're down 12-1 in the fourth quarter and to come back, I think that says a lot about their team.

I told our team at halftime. I said, hey, this is what tournament teams do. And credit to Scott and the great job he does and obviously their players. So as long as we're both playing chess and we're not playing checkers, we'll be all right.

Q. Elena, there's quite a few players in this conference that are from Greece like you are. What's that like for you to kind of just play against those people and sort of have some of the people from your country here?

ELENA BOSGANA: It's amazing. It's amazing to play on the same team with a Greek player, Stavi. I feel happy. We're a small country, but here we are traveling the world and playing basketball. So, yeah, I'm happy about that.

Q. Tara, would you like to make an NCAA case for Cal?

TARA VANDERVEER: I'm sorry?

Q. An NCAA case for Cal.

TARA VANDERVEER: Lisa is here. She knows basketball really well. I can't imagine that you're going to play a whole lot of teams that are a whole lot better. I think our conference is so strong top to bottom. I would hope that they would get a definite good look.

They really have every position and hopefully Onyiah will be okay. I'm not sure what happened with her. But they're a very tough team and they really brought it today.

Q. How do you feel like Talana responded since the Arizona game and just battling the knee soreness and everything? She came out, hit a few big shots tonight.

TARA VANDERVEER: She's not 100 percent. I think she just is a warrior and she's doing the best she can, but I think the fact that she didn't play in a couple of games has given me more confidence in Jzaniya, and Jzaniya stepped

up, and Chloe. They'll have to be ready to go. Oregon State has a freshman point guard. So whether it's Jzaniya or Chloe, they're going to have to help Talana out.

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