

# Pac-12 Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Thursday, March 7, 2024

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

**UCLA Bruins**

**Coach Cori Close**

**Charisma Osborne**

**Angela Dugalic**

Postgame Press Conference

UCLA - 67, Utah - 57

CORI CLOSE: Utah made some great adjustments from our game two weeks ago. Give them credit. They really took advantage of some of our switches in the first half. And then when we stopped switching, they really found some 3-point shooters in the second. Want to give credit to them. They're a really good team.

Lynne does such a great job with their team and their program. Hats off to them. And can't wait for them to make a deep run in the NCAA Tournament.

At this time of year we always say in our program the reality is that the tougher, more together team wins. And I thought both teams were pretty darn tough. But we found a way to win every quarter. And it might have looked different. It might have been a little chaotic, but we found a way to make enough winning plays together to win each quarter. At the end of the day, that's all that matters.

So really proud of our selflessness and our response. Angela's a great example of that. Angela had a really rough first half. And if you don't get to neutral, as we say, and ask yourself what does the team need from me right now, you're not able to respond like she did. And we responded.

We had some frustration out there. I thought the way that Lauren just kept handling double teams, didn't matter if it was getting fouled and she didn't matter if she got rewarded. Bottom line, she was going to sacrifice for the team and she was going to take double teams and she was going to make winning plays. She responded to the adversity.

And this one just led us (gestures to Osborne), from the



very first quarter, I thought she hunted for her shots. She was aggressive and what she does defensively for us is unmatched. And bottom line is we found a way to be the tougher, more together team and found a way to win.

**Q. Cori and Charisma, I talked to you guys at the beginning of the year. You said that Angela was a player that was going to surprise people and be big for your team. She was huge tonight. How have you seen her continue to progress into her role this season?**

CORI CLOSE: I remember when we had early games and we had shoot-arounds at, like, 7:45, Angela's, like, will you meet me at 6:30; will you meet me for some extra form shooting, whatever she was cleared to do when she was coming back from her injury. I think what you saw tonight is a manifestation of all the work in the dark.

We have a phrase that the work done in the dark always eventually comes out in the light. And I just think her versatility. I thought she made some huge rebounding plays, huge plays around the basket, but obviously those two deep 3s late in the shot clocks were really, really big for us.

But that was deliberate work over a long period of time when no one saw what she was doing. And I just think she's barely scratching the surface. So the best is yet to come for Angela. But really proud of her work and how she stayed emotionally level.

CHARISMA OSBORNE: Yeah, I think Coach Cori said it.

CORI CLOSE: See, you shouldn't let me go first.

CHARISMA OSBORNE: But like she said, Angela has put in so much work. And obviously everyone doesn't see every single thing she does. But we see it when she's after practice shooting doing extra shots or before practice.

I'm super proud of her. And I think our team has so much confidence in her. And I think she's starting to feel that in herself which is really good at this time.

**Q. Angela, Lynne called you the X factor in this game.**



**What openings did you see and what's working for you now at this stage of the season?**

ANGELA DUGALIC: Our team is so deep. All 12 players, you have to guard us. We all have different things that we're really good at. You take away one thing, we've got another thing.

I mean, my teammates and my coaching staff give me so much confidence. And I think that's what I struggled with coming back from my injury, just trusting myself, trusting my instincts.

It's still rocky here and there, but I think today was like -- I feel like -- I know this is weird, but like my eyes are wide open and it was a different feeling.

Even when I'm not having a good game, I know what my role is and. If Charisma is having a good game, I'm going to get her open. I just want to stay on the floor and help others.

But that just goes -- everybody on this team leads in different ways. Like Kiki is a silent leader but her actions are incredible. We have different voices. Cam is very directive, knows what she's talking about. We call her Google all the time. But I'm surrounded by really good people and people who believe in me.

CORI CLOSE: But she has a teachable heart. At halftime before we came out, she said I need two things to focus on. Give me a couple of things to focus on. What do I need to do? That teachable spirit is what helped her respond.

**Q. Charisma, how is the leg?**

CHARISMA OSBORNE: It's okay. Just a little banged up. That was an aggressive game, for sure. But I'll be fine for tomorrow.

**Q. And Coach talked about you coming out aggressive. Could you sort of sense that Utah was giving extra tension to Lauren Betts in the paint? And did that contribute to you coming out being aggressive and having the big game that you did?**

CHARISMA OSBORNE: Yeah, I think definitely from the jump you could tell they were being aggressive out there towards Lauren, but I think I was being aggressive to begin with. Doesn't matter -- I think we had some good match-ups and I've been practicing my pull-up a lot. I just tried to get to that.

**Q. Cori, when you were talking about Utah -- two quick**

**ones -- when you were talking about Utah earlier, Lynne was saying that she thinks their style of play is really hard to play against. In the tournament, when opponents aren't as familiar with them, that that could really come to fruition. I was wondering if you agree with that or see that play out?**

CORI CLOSE: Absolutely. Watching them in non-conference, we happened to be in Connecticut -- we played Florida State and they played South Carolina. And watching their style, there's very few teams that play that way. And they spread you out so far.

And their ball reversal is so good. They have multiple people that are shooting the 3. But they also have an inside presence, both off the post feed but also the way they attack off the bounce.

So I think that they really are poised, if they can shoot the ball well enough and get good ball reversal -- the biggest thing for them is how well they played defensively tonight. I think that's really what allows them to take advantage of their offensive skill set.

That's what I give them the most credit for. I think they're going to be a really, really tough out in the NCAA Tournament.

**Q. With you guys winning eight games out of your last nine and the one you lost was the crazy Oregon State game?**

CORI CLOSE: Don't remind me, please.

**Q. Very well fought game. What do you like the most about your the way your team's playing these past weeks?**

CORI CLOSE: I think we're built on the right things, even though I would like to see us play a little more fluid offensively. Our defense has been number one in the Pac-12. Our rebounding has been pretty unflappable for the most part. We didn't start out the third quarter very well rebounding the basketball. But I think we did a great job.

I think it's really easy to grow on the offensive end when you know you have an anchor in defense and rebounding. And I think that's a huge piece for us. And so I think that's what's really led to our consistency right now, even though I think we still have some growing to do on the offensive end to be a little bit more consistent on how we're getting easier shots together.

**Q. Angela, what were the things that Cori told you at**

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## halftime and how did you reset for the second half?

ANGELA DUGALIC: I think one was composure, just like -- I don't know. I just needed something, someone to tell me, okay, you got it and calm down. I'm already calm. (Laughter). It's, like, a lot of emotions. Difficult person.

CORI CLOSE: The bottom line is we have a phrase: You have to talk to yourself rather than listen to yourself. I could have said, the sky is blue and everything is peachy keen and everything would have been okay. (Laughter). Inside joke.

But the reality it wasn't what I said. It was that I didn't want her to get in other own head, her own loop. It was just about replacing that.

**Q. Charisma, you came out of the gate just in your groove. Reminded me of the Cal game. Then you went out midway the third quarter to get treated on the sideline. Coming back you knocked down your first jumper and your first look. What was it like getting back to neutral?**

CHARISMA OSBORNE: I think just shooting my shot with confidence. That's been a big thing I've been thinking about lately. I think I was open and that's literally my favorite shot to go to my right and on the baseline -- or second favorite shot. The middle is probably my favorite. But I was just super confident shooting it. Obviously I made a couple in the first half. So that helped for sure.

CORI CLOSE: Way to give away the scouting report.

CHARISMA OSBORNE: That's okay. They can't stop it.

CORI CLOSE: Good answer. (Laughter).

**Q. Of course you play USC, a team you beat early in the season and a team that you lost to in the Galen Center. What are some of the things that you're all looking forward to; tomorrow, some of the things that stand out and how y'all have changed since those two match-ups?**

CORI CLOSE: I think just both teams have gotten better. I think we've gotten more of an identity. We know who we are more by this point. We played each other in the first two weeks of the conference season two weeks apart.

There's so much growing that's taking place. It's really going to come down to which team can play to their identity most consistently. Both teams have really good strengths to play to, and obviously we're going to be trying to take away theirs. They're going to be trying to take away ours,

which team can do that on a consistent basis through the ups and downs of the game. We call it controlling your R. The response. I think that's the team that's going to come out on top.

That's why some people don't like conference tournaments. I love them because it's like a dress rehearsal for the pressure and the moments that you're going to feel in the NCAA Tournament. This is going to be like an Elite Eight/Final Four level game, and how awesome is that, and two great teams from Southern California that not only want to win and be a part of prominence in their own institution, but both programs want to be part of growing the game of women's basketball. So I'm excited for the battle.

I think both teams are better than when we played each other in January, and it's going to be a great, really, really fun game.

ANGELA DUGALIC: Like Cori said, it's so great for women's basketball. You have two Elite Eight teams facing each other. First game in Pauley sold out. Second game in Galen sold out. So just that atmosphere, people investing in women's sports. It's great. It's going to be such a good game, I think. USC is so good, and it's going to be really good.

CHARISMA OSBORNE: I'm excited. I've been waiting for this game for a while now. I think the second time we played them we didn't really play our best. And we know that. So I think this team is ready, and I know that it will be a super competitive game just because we're rivals; and then on top of that, both really good teams. I'm really excited for tomorrow.

**Q. One of the other coaches, might have been Adia, was talking about how, when Pac-12 teams go into the NCAA Tournament, they do a really good job of taking things away from other teams. Maybe more so than what teams from other conferences do. And that is part of the reason for Pac-12 teams being as successful as they have in the last few years.**

CORI CLOSE: Agreed.

**Q. Could you reflect on that?**

CORI CLOSE: There's two parts of it. There's such a high level. We've been in those moments so many times. It's such a gauntlet. I feel bad saying that because everybody talks like that this time of year, and they're all campaigning for their conference. But our numbers don't lie. That is a reality for us.

Secondly, the diverse styles of play and styles of coaching, all at a really high level, but you've got some teams pressing and playing up and down and the high pace of play. You've got some that want to control it in the half court. You've got zone. You've got player to player. You've got so many different things that you have to prepare for. We've got teams that play small ball. We've got teams that want to pound it inside.

So I think that you have just had to adjust quickly. We're the only conference that our weekends mirror what the NCAA Tournament does every single week. So we're practicing that prep cycle all of the time.

I think that the elite status of the coaches and the players in this conference, the diverse styles of play and how we have to be prepared night in, night out is a combination that lends to great success in the NCAA Tournament.

I just want to say thank you to all of you. This is obviously a really mixed bag, having this be the last Pac-12 tournament with so many amazing teams and such an amazing year for women's basketball.

Thank you to the media for how you have raised everybody in this conference up. And most people were in bed during our game today on the East Coast. If you're not telling our stories, people don't know. And that's been the case over my 13-year tenure in this conference, and I just really want to say thank you to the media.

I want to say thank you to the Pac-12 people that have worked so hard behind the scenes. It's just been so sacrificial and a labor of love the way that they have supported these women in their rise.

Lastly, the alumni. The alumni of the 12 schools that we are experiencing right now, they have blazed a trail that we now walk in, and I just think, as this journey and this amazing experience and the Pac-12 comes to an end, I think it's really important to be humble about the shoulders in which we stand on and say thank you to all the people that helped us get there. So from the bottom of my heart, thank you very much.

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