

NCAA 2024 Women's Basketball Championship

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Lisa Peterson

Selection Show News Conference



LISA PETERSON: Before jumping into questions, I just wanted to mention that this is my fourth year on the committee, and I've never been in a room that was so highly debated. We went back and revisited all of the teams that we put into the bracket. It's really, what we've been saying all year, is that women's college basketball, there's so much parity happening. And it makes it really exciting for the game.

We spent a lot of time mostly on turns. So when you see a seed line, I know you don't see the numbers and everything outside of the 1s. But we spent a lot of time on those turns to make sure we got it right.

We also spent an awful lot of time on the last four teams in. It was something that was debated over a couple of days as we finished watching the rest of the tournaments play out.

And just really excited about this tournament. We have so many really good teams that are going to be partaking. And we can't wait to see who that champion is at the end.

Q. I wondered if you could speak a little bit more about that, about the parity, and just how quickly we've gotten to this point. I'm guessing this was the hardest tournament you've ever had to seed. But last year was the hardest tournament. And what does that mean for the future of the game? And also why do we have this parity? What can you attribute to it?

LISA PETERSON: I think a couple things. One is the transfer portal. And I think that you are seeing teams that haven't traditionally been powerhouses in women's basketball, they have institutions that are now putting a lot of funding into women's basketball. And they're making it where it is a possibility for you to get to the national championship at that institution.

I also think NIL money is changing how people are viewed, how there's other opportunities -- maybe you're not going to the same places you would have traditionally before.

But I also think that we have players that have been now coming into college basketball that have been playing since they were 3 years old. We have coaches who are really changing the game with how they coach.

And there's a lot more emphasis that's happening. I think now it doesn't matter if you don't go to the four schools that you always heard of back in the '80s and '90s, that you can go to any school and you can win a national championship.

Q. Obviously one maybe one of the toughest decisions was the fourth 1 seed. And Texas and Stanford are in there. Can you take us inside what ended up giving Texas the nod for that last 1 spot over Stanford?

LISA PETERSON: Absolutely. And as I said, this was one of the most highly debated things we did because you definitely want to make sure you get that 1 line right.

What it came down to was Texas had to beat three tournament teams to win the Big 12 championship, and they also went 9-1 in their last 10 games.

Stanford, yes they had a tougher non-conference schedule, but when you're trying to differentiate, you look at the different principles that we have or the different key factors that we have, and they went 8-2. They actually had their worst lost in the last 10 games.

Again, when you're trying to slip a piece of paper between teams, that's what it came down to. It seems like Texas is playing really great right now. The good news is we'll get to see them play it out on the court, hopefully.

Q. First off, who were the four that were just outside the field of 68, is my first half of the question? The second half is, when you look at Oklahoma, they couldn't host the first two rounds. Did that affect it at all? And if they were the four, they would still be playing Indiana as the five -- from that standpoint?

LISA PETERSON: I'll take your last part first. We knew that Oklahoma couldn't host. But, no, we did not factor that

in when we were making the decision.

The reason that Oklahoma was not on a seed line that you would be hosting had to do with how they ended the regular season. They had the loss in the semifinals of the Big 12 Tournament was one factor. And just how they looked in that game was one. But then it's also kind of what other teams have done. So, no, them being able to host was not why.

And then the first four teams that we had out -- as I said previously, there were really about seven or eight different schools that we talked about. But the first four specifically were Penn State, Washington State, Miami and Villanova.

Q. I wanted to ask you about Columbia, a lot of bracketologists had them barely out of the field, but you put them in. What convinced you that they should be in your field?

LISA PETERSON: One of the things was they won 21 of their last 23 games. They played an incredibly good Princeton team. We actually watched that game together as a committee. And we thought it was more about what Princeton had done than what Columbia hadn't done.

Great regular season. They tried to challenge themselves outside of the league, and just really felt like they deserved to be in the tournament.

Q. Wanted to ask you about Virginia Tech and how you kind of dealt with the Elizabeth Kitley injury or not when you decided to give them a 4 seed and getting to host.

LISA PETERSON: Yes, definitely. So they had obviously a great regular season, and we had them in various spots throughout the first top 16 reveals. But then obviously after Liz went out we saw two games with them after her injury. And, again, we were unsure if she's coming back or not, but we were able to see what they looked like without her.

Again, you can't forget the body of work that they've done, but you also have seen what they did in the last two games. So felt like the 4 line was the best spot for them.

Q. Now you have two brackets with the NCAA, with the new WBIT and another committee selecting teams. Was there any overlap in the conversations in talking about selections? And were there any hotly contested teams between them?

LISA PETERSON: Great question. No, we did not have any overlap in our selection process. They're not even actually in the same spot that we are to do our selection.

So no, there was no overlap. But I'd be really curious as to how their selection process went.

Q. With Albany, too, there you have a pretty fierce concentration of talent. I know that you're somewhat hamstrung by having to make sure top 4 seeds from the same conference don't overlap. But were there any discussions about having such a heavy conference right there -- or heavy region, rather?

LISA PETERSON: No. So, again, we go by the bracketing principles. And as you said with the four different conferences. And then we try to stay true to the S-curve.

It just ended up working out that way based on where you can put teams. If you look at the overall balance of the different brackets or the different regions, there wasn't a drastic difference. But I can completely see where those first four, it looks that way.

But, no, it's all based on the bracketing principles and trying to stay as true to the S-curve as possible.

Q. You kind of just answered it, but was there any consideration -- I mean, obviously Caitlin Clark has been such a huge draw -- of not trying to work it so that Iowa would last as long as they could, but how conscious are you of the outside discussions and outside interests there is among some of the specific teams?

LISA PETERSON: No, we just really tried to -- we seed them as we see -- we just do numbers. And then that process is done before you get into the bracketing. And so, again, just following the principles that we have to follow, that's where those teams shook out.

But, no, we're not trying to get certain match-ups or do anything like that. To be honest, I know what it looks like now, but when we're in there, we don't see them that way, we're just putting them in number order.

Q. Could you speak a little bit to Vanderbilt's growth over the last year, and what convinced you to put them in the tournament, and particularly in that first 4 spot versus a regular bid?

LISA PETERSON: Yes. So what Shea Ralph has done at Vanderbilt is pretty incredible. I watched them many times throughout this year. And I'm really excited as to where she's got that program going.

We talked about them -- there was a lot of teams that we talked about as your last four teams that were in. And I think that with Vanderbilt it was their number of losses that

they had in comparison to maybe some other teams or the quality of losses that they had. But it was, given the different teams within the bracket, just where they were. And really great growth for them and excited to see what they continue to do.

Q. Two ACC-related questions. What went into the decision to leave Miami out considering some of the wins it has over tournament teams? And were there discussions in terms of leaving Notre Dame as a 3 seed alongside NC State? What went into that thought process?

LISA PETERSON: So I'll take the last part first. Notre Dame ended up on the 2 line because of what they did towards the end of the season. They beat five top -- NET top 25 teams to win the ACC Tournament, or at the end of their regular season and to win the ACC Tournament. So that's what put them on the 2 line over NC State being on the 3.

And then as far as Miami, that was, again, a topic of conversation that lasted over multiple days. And it really just came down to the losses that they had and how they looked in those losses. Miami was a very up-and-down team throughout the season -- flashes of brilliance and then some when they struggled.

It was really just trying to slip a piece of paper between these teams, and they just ended up on the outside.

Q. Can you guys consider putting out the actual seeding of who is 1 to 68 for the women's side like the men do?

LISA PETERSON: I think that's above my pay grade, but I'll pass it along for the next year's committee.

Q. Because of the bracketing principles and moving teams around and not having the same teams in the same conference in the same bracket, is UConn out west a casualty of that, in the sense that you had to keep some SEC teams and some Pac-12 teams not in the same area?

LISA PETERSON: Absolutely. That's exactly why.

Q. You mentioned that you told us who the first four out, but said there were seven or eight teams in that discussion. Can you tell us who the next four out were?

LISA PETERSON: Definitely three. Saint Joe. Washington, Mississippi State. Toledo was talked about after they lost their conference tournament. But those are

the ones we had on the board.

Like I said, that conversation lasted over two days and was down when we were continuing to watch conference tournaments today.

The other question about Miami, I wanted to double-check my notes, but one of the things we looked at, and I don't know if we talked about it here, but when we looked at strength of schedule, now that there are conferences that don't play double round robins, we really looked at what someone's strength of schedule was within their conference as well.

And Miami also had the 12th toughest out of 15 in the ACC. So that also played a factor in that. I just wanted to make sure to mention that as well.

Q. How important was the Pac-12 title game in determining if USC or Stanford was a No. 1 seed?

LISA PETERSON: I think if you saw the theme within the committee, certainly how teams are playing lately definitely played a theme throughout the bracket. So I would say that it was pretty significant.

Q. I just wondered, you are sitting in this room for a couple of weeks. You talked to everyone. We get you for 15, 20 minutes. What do you think we should be asking you about? What do you have notes on that you prepped for that you would like to talk about?

LISA PETERSON: We hit a lot of them between the ESPN show and here. I know that the highly debated thing was going to be the Texas/Stanford. That was a conversation that was had. And then last teams that were in. Those were some of the biggest ones.

And first four teams out, I also know the impact that that has. So those were some of the big themes that we had that we wanted to talk about.

Just want to mention, the other stop I had before I got here, during this tournament we're going to have 9 million that go through the turnstiles during the tournament, which is really incredible.

Also, if you look at beginning in the second round of this tournament, all games will be on ABC or ESPN, which those of you who have been covering this game a long time truly understand the impact of that.

Q. I know Princeton has been kind of inching up the seed lines over the past couple of years. Curious how you looked at the Ivy League, what Princeton did and

decided to give them a 9?

LISA PETERSON: They challenged themselves in their non-conference. We always get asked, how can the non-Power 5 schools make their headway into this tournament. And one of the things we've always said is challenge yourself in the non-conference, and that's definitely something that they did.

And I think that our committee's really watching games. And they've watched Princeton all year long and just see what a really great team that they are. And just, again, based on what they've done, how other teams have performed, they just ended up on that line.

Q. Can you go over the consideration for Kansas State as a No. 4 seed in its region?

LISA PETERSON: Yes. They played well in their conference tournament. They probably challenged Texas the most in that Big 12 Tournament. And Texas obviously has been playing great as of late.

I also want to pull this up real quick, to make sure that I'm not giving you anything -- their losses, they didn't have significantly any bad losses that they had, and they were pretty competitive within those losses.

They also played a great non-conference schedule, with a strength of schedule of 32. And they're 5-3 in their NET top 25 wins. Those were all factors that played into it.

Sometimes when you see it again, it's based on how that team is doing but it could also be how other teams are playing that that is where you get that balance.

Q. What you just said to Jen's question, does it work both ways that the committee says to Power Five schools, hey, you better play people; you're not just going to get in just because your conference is good, in a sense?

LISA PETERSON: I will definitely say that non-conference scheduling is a factor that we look at significantly.

Q. On both sides?

LISA PETERSON: Yes.

Q. Rick, do you know when we're going to be getting game times specifically for, or seeing which of the teams is going to be playing when in Albany and Portland?

RICK NIXON: I think we'll be getting those later tonight.

That's been the word. I know they're working through that with ESPN and our broadcast team as well. But I'm expecting a little bit later tonight.

Q. How many people on the selection committee, besides you, have the Pac-12 Network? Anyone?

LISA PETERSON: They all have access. We make sure of that.

Q. You know how problematic that's been over the last few years, so I did wonder.

LISA PETERSON: Yes.

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