

NCAA 2025 Women's Basketball Championship

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Derita Dawkins

Selection Show News Conference



DERITA DAWKINS: We spent the last five days here in Indianapolis combing through team sheets and discussing the teams to be selected for the tournament.

We're really excited by the bracket that resulted from our work, and the work that we've done throughout the season watching games, having team discussions, et cetera.

We spent an extraordinary amount of time on every seed line. We did a lot of checking and rechecking of ourselves and came out with a bracket that we're really proud of.

Q. Can you explain what the committee's thinking was on omitting UTSA from the brackets? They're a four-loss team in a really good conference. They're the regular season champs. I know there were a lot of good teams you had to choose from, but just what you all are thinking?

DERITA DAWKINS: Just what you said, there were a lot of really good teams for us to choose from. There were 20 (lost Zoom connection).

We were talking about the conference regular season champs who didn't get their conference AQ. There were 12 of those.

Again, looking at all of the parity across women's basketball, it did make for some really difficult conversations about who was in the tournament and who wasn't.

Like I said, we spent an inordinate amount of time over the last five days combing through all of the team sheets, looking very closely, as I'm sure you're aware our committee members are assigned to conferences and watch them primarily through the regular season. There's also a secondary from our committee and then collectively we watch games. So it comes down to who do we think are the 37 best teams available for those at-large spots that we have.

Q. Wanted to ask you about Virginia Tech. How close

did they come to making the field? And what on their resumé kept them out or what did the teams that made it ahead of them have that Virginia Tech didn't have, that kind of thing?

DERITA DAWKINS: So hopefully, if you don't already, you will have in your hand the championship seed list order. You'll see that Virginia Tech was the 69th team. So were they in the conversation? Most certainly.

Some of the things that didn't help the Hokies were going 4-6 in the last 10 games. Their Quad 1 and 2 record of 5 and 10 and their loss to Syracuse at home. There were a number of things that kept the Hokies out.

Q. I'll go the direction of teams who got in instead of who got left out. What has the Ivy League done to show you guys they deserve to have three teams in the first time in conference history and also the Big Ten having so many teams and also what they did this season?

DERITA DAWKINS: Well, luckily for the Big Ten Conference and the Ivy League, they didn't have to do anything because we select teams, not conferences.

So Princeton, Harvard and Columbia had incredible seasons and were selected to the field based on the merits of their play on the court this year. So that's what happened with those three programs.

Relative to the Big Ten, you all may not think this, but I couldn't tell you the exact number of Big Ten schools because again we don't go to do a conference tick sheet, if you will; we're looking team by team to see who makes the field.

So given the amount of work we've done over the last five days and what Selection Sunday looks like from the committee work to media responsibilities or whatever, we put together the bracket and haven't gone back to do any calculations of how many from there or here or anywhere else.

Q. What impact, if any, do you think the committee's



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decision to put UCLA as the number one overall seed and not South Carolina will have on scheduling decisions that schools make going forward?

DERITA DAWKINS: I have no idea because I think how schools choose to make scheduling decisions differs from school to school, differs from year to year based on the rosters they think they're going to have. So I don't know if it will have any impact. But I can't say that it won't.

Q. In your team interview, you talked about the interactive effect of Notre Dame dropping down to a No. 3 seed. Could you give us some more details of those interactive factors and if there were other teams that experienced something similar and dropping into a standing that they may not have expected a month or so ago?

DERITA DAWKINS: When I talk about the interaction effect, it was the things that happen with Notre Dame, like losing three of their final five games. But then also, when you look at TCU and Duke in terms of what they did do in that same period of time, so those are the things that, in combination, led to Notre Dame getting the 9 seed.

Q. I'm calling from Kansas City, so I would like to ask how the committee viewed the Ayoka Lee factor for Kansas State. Was her sitting out the Big 12 Tournament essentially the factor for the committee moving them to potentially a No. 4 seed to being a No. 5 seed?

DERITA DAWKINS: The factors were about the play of the team. So the team that was put on the court to play those games is what determined where we seeded Kansas State. They were 5-5 of their last 10 games. Did that have to do with Ayoka Lee's absence? Perhaps. We can't say whether it did or didn't. What we can say is, in the last 10 games, they were 5-5.

Q. I wanted to ask what went into the decision for the committee placing Duke and North Carolina in the same bracket pod?

DERITA DAWKINS: So the way the committee does its work, we select the teams. That's one process. Independent of that, we seed the teams. Then we put them in the bracket, staying as close to S-curve as possible.

So that's where those teams earned -- that's the spot they earned. So again, this is new for women's basketball this year.

But again, if you look, you'll see what the overall seed is for

a team. And if you follow the S-curve, it makes better sense what you're seeing there. So it wasn't about us putting them in the same pod; we put them in the spot they earned.

Q. What you said about not looking by conferences. Could we take them individually, what you liked about Harvard, Columbia and Princeton's resumés, and then how much what you saw in the Ivy League tournament factored into those decisions?

DERITA DAWKINS: We had to watch the tournament to see within the whole the field where those teams would be, what seed they would earn. Harvard obviously being the AQ and leading the Ivy League, then got the higher seed, if you just look at those three teams in isolation.

Columbia being at 41, their best win was over Harvard. But again, with Harvard being the AQ, those three teams, again, had some similar records, which is why you find them so closely seeded at 40, 41 and 44.

Again, you said you cover the Ivy, so you know what it looks like in terms of what their overall regular season looks like and how they meet, et cetera. But like Columbia's best win was over Harvard at 35 in The Net, 34 in the final, I believe. And so that's why you see them back to back. And then a little distance between them and Princeton, which their resumés support.

Q. Could you go through what the discussions were between Texas and USC for those last No. 1 seeds, and, especially, did you give any consideration to the fact that by putting USC as the the fourth No. 1, that that lines up with another potential rematch against UConn in the Elite Eight just like last year?

DERITA DAWKINS: To the last part of your question, no, there was no consideration given to that.

The reason they are in the order they are is they have a common opponent in Notre Dame, and the committee felt like the Texas game at Notre Dame was more competitive than Southern Cal's game against Notre Dame.

When you look at the worst loss, Texas -- I'm sorry, competitive in the loss against Notre Dame -- Texas's worse loss net-wise was to Notre Dame at 5, while Southern Cal's worse loss was to 24, Iowa.

Q. I applaud you guys for actually revealing the overall seeding, which you've never done before. What led to that decision of, hey, now you guys actually see where everyone is seeded, as opposed to before when you had no idea other than who was overall No. 1, if you

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know?

DERITA DAWKINS: So each summer the committee looks at how we do our work, what we base things on. The teams have always been seeded 1 through 68. We just didn't publicly reveal them.

As we look to be more transparent, this is an opportunity to share more information about the seeding. I think it probably also helps some folks to understand where teams find themselves in the bracket as well.

Q. When you were looking at Virginia Tech, just comparing them to -- I don't know how many teams you're comparing them to, No. 68, or 64 through 68, but, I guess, what was that comparison situation like with Virginia Tech and however many schools that were, okay, in terms of we like them better than this school because this school has this on its resumé or this school has that on its Net ranking?

DERITA DAWKINS: Yes, in looking through our 11 criteria and combing through the team sheets of multiple teams, Virginia Tech just came up one spot short of our field: Their non-conference strength of schedule at 152; seven to 12 versus top 100 Net, there were things, relative to the teams that made the field in the at-large category, they just didn't get into that group of 37.

Q. Who was No. 68 that they were getting compared to?

DERITA DAWKINS: No, no. So the 68th team is not automatically the last at-large team.

Q. Who was the last one or two that they were getting compared with?

DERITA DAWKINS: That would be Iowa State, Princeton.

Q. Those are the last two?

DERITA DAWKINS: Iowa State, Princeton, Washington, Columbia.

Q. I knew those were the last four in, who was the very last one that it came down to Virginia Tech versus which of those four?

DERITA DAWKINS: But I'm telling you, those are the last four in. So Virginia Tech was being compared to them. Got me? Because those are the last at-larges that were in. Virginia Tech would have been -- got me?

Q. I didn't know if you knew who was the very last of

those four, of those last four in at-larges, who was the last one that Virginia Tech was getting nosed out by?

DERITA DAWKINS: So Princeton is at 44. So Princeton was the 37th at-large team into the field.

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