

# NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - FDU vs TCU

Friday, March 21, 2025

Fort Worth, Texas, USA

Schollmaier Arena

## FDU Knights

**Stephanie Gaitley**

**Abaigeal Babore**

**Abby Conklin**

Media Conference



THE MODERATOR: We'll open it up to the student-athletes now.

**Q. Can you two talk about the experience of being here in Ft. Worth and getting to participate in the tournament and then you guys played an incredible game and had the lead after the first quarter. What went into that tactically for you?**

ABAIGEAL BABORE: This experience has been, for me, once in a lifetime. I'll never forget this, being with these girls.

We wanted to have a balance of having fun but also focused on getting the job done. And we went line dancing. That was really fun. We got to be in the Texas experience. I've never been to this state before so I got to check that off my list. But also, coming together during practice and just focusing on what we want to do defensively.

Obviously, the score didn't show, I think, how hard we played. Obviously, it got away at the end. But I'm super proud of this team. I'm super proud of the girls. And I think that we had a lot of focus and we had a lot of heart and I think we kind of went out there and we threw the first punch and that's an experience I'm always going to be grateful for.

ABBY CONKLIN: I would say we're proud of each other. Good days, bad days, but we all stuck together and took it five minutes at a time.

**Q. Talk about, obviously, you guys showed you weren't intimidated. You took a charge AT somebody much bigger than you. You took another one later than that. Talk about the attitude and the ferocity you had during the game.**

ABAIGEAL BABORE: It started in the summer when we'd go after each other in summer session. Having that toughness within us, coaches have done a great job of letting us play during practice so we'd get the physicality.

TCU - 73, Fairleigh Dickinson -51

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by head coach Stephanie Gaitley and student-athletes Abby Conklin and Abaigeal Babore.

Coach, we'll start with a statement from you.

STEPHANIE GAITLEY: I was reminding the kids in the locker room when I had the first team that went to the NCAA, we were just so excited to be there and just got caught up in the moment and never really, I thought, were competitive in the game.

With this team, there was just something that told me that we were going to be competitive. Obviously, we got outmatched talent-wise, but I couldn't be more proud of what we did today. Obviously, what we've done all year.

I told them they'll have some time to reflect on it because we've made Hackensack history, so to speak, and I laugh because at the end of the game, I thought, wait, we finished 29-4. That was my senior year too, 29-4.

There are so many things that I go back on.

We played a really good TCU team. Mark's done an incredible job here in turning this program around. They've got really talented players. You can see their experience really paid off. They were made for this moment. And I just, again, want to acknowledge our kids for being the best versions of themselves and doing an incredible job and making this one of the most special years that I've ever had as a coach. So thank you.



For me, I like taking charges. I don't mind doing that. To me, it's an energy changer and anything I can do to provide for the team, I'll do it. If it's putting my body on the line against someone who is 6'7", why not? When are you going to have the chance to do it again, so why not?

I was hoping they called it over a block, but that's just 1 through 15, all of our girls will put our body on the line. It started with coaches encouraging us and us taking it and saying, why can't I do it? Why can't I be the one to step up when the team needs me?

THE MODERATOR: Ladies, thank you for your time. You're excused now.

Open it up for questions to Coach.

**Q. Coach, can you talk about the challenge for preparing for a team like TCU with the different offensive weapons that they have and how they play defensively?**

STEPHANIE GAITLEY: Size was a major issue, like at the post. And then the fact that they can spread you out so much because of their shooting. I knew that would be difficult. I mean, because usually -- you know, we're very defensive oriented and usually there's one kid, we can say we can be in the lane and help.

It's hard to do that with TCU because they spread you out. They shoot the 3 better than anybody. On top of that, they've got a 6'7", very experienced, very solid post player who is very, very good. So Mark walked by me, said I had some sleepless nights getting ready for you. I'm like, okay, wait. What about us? I guess I didn't go to bed.

So, I mean, you know, for us, it was a challenge but I think we took the challenge on, head-on, and I think TCU is going to make some noise in this tournament, just because they are a hard match-up.

The biggest thing is staying out of foul trouble. If Prince stays out of foul trouble, that's a big issue because they're a different team when she's off the court.

**Q. Prince had two fouls early on. I mean, that was a chance for you guys. You had your biggest lead during that point. Talk about how the game changed. Then when she came back is when they took the lead for good?**

STEPHANIE GAITLEY: Exactly, 100 percent. So her and T, Teneisia, basically picked up their two fouls early. It was going to be, who gets the third first? Who's going to sit on the bench? Because T makes a big difference with us as

well.

We went back with T with having to because we felt that we could kind of just get some points at that spot when she was out. So we rolled the dice on that situation.

We tried to take it at her, like we called T's number, but she's such a big presence, you know, and she does a great job. She leads the nation in blocked shots. Not just because she's 6'7". I don't want to say there's a lot, but there's a number of 6'7" kids that don't have the IQ to be able to stay out of foul trouble and block shots like she does.

It was a difference maker, her being able to stay out of foul trouble in the second half. That made a difference.

**Q. You mentioned how well they shot the 3. Today was your toughest day of the season on 3s. How much did that hurt?**

STEPHANIE GAITLEY: I think their length had a lot to do with it. Our kids hesitated because they have great size at each position. You're coming off a screen and thinking about it. By the time you think about it, they've recovered.

I think that was a little -- I don't want to say intimidating because I don't think our kids were afraid to shoot it. They were hesitant because they didn't think they had space. We were saying in time-outs, if you have the open shot, take it. Don't think. Take it. I think we were hesitant, and I think we rushed a little bit. I've got to credit their defense. They're a solid defense. They have a lot of weapons offensively, but they're a solid, solid team defensively.

**Q. Stephanie, just you took a time-out with, like, 1:13 left, and it was a longer time-out because it was the TV time-out. The camera showed you guys huddled up, arms around each other. It didn't appear to have any tears, but there were smiles. What was that moment about? Was it just about savoring it?**

STEPHANIE GAITLEY: I felt that for the crowd because I knew the four-minute time-outs were so long, and I hate when the coaches take the time-out when they're down 20. Like what the hell are you taking the time-out for?

I said to the official, can I do 30 seconds? She said no. But I wanted that time to tell them how proud I was. I wanted that moment to bring them together, to say look what we've done. And so as much as I probably pissed off some people taking that time-out, it was worth it because I wanted those kids to realize and then come in together and smile and say you have done an incredible job, and I'm super, super proud of you.

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you so much for your time. Congratulations on a great season.

STEPHANIE GAITLEY: Thank you.

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