

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - California Baptist vs UCLA

Friday, March 22, 2024

Los Angeles, California, USA

Pauley Pavilion

California Baptist Lancers

Coach Jarrod Olson

Kinsley Barrington

Nae Nae Calhoun

Media Conference



now. We're very tight bonded with each other, so I think going into post season play it just helps us a little bit better knowing we can do it. We been winning and striving forward so I think it's a good start.

KINSLEY BARRINGTON: Yeah, we were really close knit and I feel like we just have fun when we play. I think we have shown that in the regular season play and hopefully can transition on to the court tomorrow.

Q. There has been a rise around women's college basketball this season. What do you think means for the visibility of your program?

NAE NAE CALHOUN: I think it means everything. Like I said before, it's like we're finally putting CB on the map so people can know who we are, especially being a mid-major school. Knowing there is a lot of media going around, we can show how we play basketball, make sure like for the next generations that people know who CBU is and then just starting from there.

KINSLEY BARRINGTON: Yeah, I think it's a great opportunity for us to showcase like what we can do and what we have done in previous years. Puts our name like she said out on the map. Just gives us a good rep on CBU name.

Q. This question is for Nae Nae. So you were named to the WAC all-defensive team this year. What does that honor mean to you, and does it give you any added confidence coming into this tournament?

NAE NAE CALHOUN: I wouldn't say added confidence. I've been growing up just playing defense. That's been my number one goal, especially this year, just to defend.

If I can make noise on defensive end it can get all my teammates riled up and get us going, especially on the offensive end.

So that was just like an extra bonus that I made the all-defensive team. Just putting it on to the floor tomorrow, making sure I'm locked in defensively, and hopefully that gives us a spark for the offensive end.

Q. Just there was that adjustment period coming up to D1 where you won a conference a couple years ago but couldn't participate in the tournament. What's it like finally being in here now?

NAE NAE CALHOUN: I think it means everything, especially for those who were here and that didn't -- wasn't able to make it to the tournament. For us to finally make to the tournament and just put on for CBU and those that didn't just means everything to us.

Q. What about playing UCLA? I mean, not having to travel that far for this matchup?

KINSLEY BARRINGTON: I think it's cool because hopefully feels like a home game for us. Everybody back home is trying to come out, so really exciting for us because that doesn't happen a lot first round, so really thankful for the opportunity to just go down the road and play.

NAE NAE CALHOUN: This isn't just for us, CBU women's basketball. It's for our community, for everyone who supported us during the whole time.

For us to be here and playing UCLA, they can all just travel with us and feels like home game.

Q. So you're coming obviously off a strong regular season with only two losses, winning your league. How do you think that success will translate into the post season?

NAE NAE CALHOUN: I think we have good mojo right



Q. What about the matchup going against you UCLA. They have a talented point guard in Kiki Rice, but also with the back court with Charisma Osborne but plenty of size with Lauren Betts. What's it like going up against those three players?

NAE NAE CALHOUN: I think we're approaching it like any other basketball game, especially with how we played in the regular season, pre-season. Just approaching it just we play basketball. They do exactly what we do. They're just at a higher level.

So just approaching it like that, approaching it every game just back-to-back, so kind of just approaching it that way.

JARROD OLSON: Well, I don't really have that much to say, other than Jay Bramer in the back, high school friend, which is great.

That's really about it. If you guys have questions, just go ahead and ask. Fire away.

Q. Three years ago we couldn't say this, but welcome to the NCAA Division I women's tournament.

JARROD OLSON: Thanks, it's good to be here.

Q. Just what's it like finally getting here? I mean, you had the great season three years ago but couldn't do it because of the transition.

JARROD OLSON: Yeah.

Q. But just finally, making that step.

JARROD OLSON: Forgive the -- this is going to be a long-winded answer, but like on Sunday night when we had the selection show we had quite a few people come and watch.

You know, then we kind of found out where we were going to go. I was kind of -- at first I was kind of like not real excited about coming to UCLA because it's so close. You kind of imagine you're going to go to that thing it's going to be somewhere far away.

When I got home my wife was just kind of like, all right, you're going to be in a bad mood and ask you're going to the NCAA tournament? I was like, all right, I better get my act together.

What I kind of really started thinking about was what it really means. I really just had to like take myself out of the equation. This is going to sound like a little holier than

thou, but just realized it wasn't about me because the school, it's just such a big deal for them.

The fact that it is so close that we're going to play, we've sold over a thousand tickets to come watch the game. It's the first time that we've been there for basketball at CBU, and I think just it kind of culminates a long journey and validates a lot of really hard work that's gone into over the last 25 years by a lot of different people on campus.

And just seeing our name on this bracket next to UCLA just made everybody that has gone to CBU, you know, as a student or has worked there, has played women's basketball there, played any sport really, just kind of validated all the work that it's taken to go from NAI school to Division II school to Division I school.

And, yeah, the fact we were so close, you know, we actually earned it. Couple years ago weren't able to go. That's probably kind of -- getting kind of swept under the rug from the standpoint that it's such a big deal for the school.

But, yeah, I'm definitely glad to be here. That's the short answer to the long answer I just gave you.

Q. Are you hoping this matchup with UCLA maybe in the future? Because I think you played USC this season.

JARROD OLSON: Last year, yeah.

Q. Okay. But maybe more for the regional rivalries with the USCs the and UCLAs?

JARROD OLSON: Well, I think in order for it to be a rivalry we have to beat them at least once and I don't think they're too worried about that just yet. Just happy to be on the same floor with them.

I think every -- scheduling is always just kind of weird. Sometimes we've looked at playing some of those games. We have talked to them in the past about possibly playing, but never really worked out.

Maybe that's something we would look to in the future. Maybe they'll come to our gym next time.

Q. Hey, it's happened.

JARROD OLSON: Why not, right? Yeah, let's do it.

Q. Just what about the matchup of going up against UCLA with Rice at the point, Osborne, and plenty of size in the middle with Betts?

JARROD OLSON: Yeah, they're really big. It's going to be a tough matchup for us. We haven't played anybody quite like them. I was telling Anne in practice the other day we have four guys that kind of practice with us pretty regularly. For the most part I'm usually telling those guys to like, hey, can you just like not jump so high? You're probably bigger than somebody we're going to be matched up with.

This week I'm like, guys, you're not big enough. You're bit athletic enough. Yeah, we'll just do our best. We're going to play Lancer basketball they way that we normally play it. We are going to move the ball, shoot threes. We'll go out there and just do the best we can. I'm looking forward to it.

Q. Your offensive program is really strong. You're ranked 12th in the nation. How are you planning on using that strength against the strong Bruin defense?

JARROD OLSON: Yeah, they're the best defensive team we have seen, so I think it'll be pretty challenging. Hopefully we can get the game moving. We like to shoot a lot of threes. We depend on ball movement a lot of times to get a lot of shots.

Hopefully we will be able to somehow pass and catch and see a few go through the hoop early and get a little bit of confidence and see where that takes us.

Q. Nae Nae, she mentioned the impact your team has had this year, not just on the school, but the overall community itself.

JARROD OLSON: Uh-huh.

Q. Can you expand on that and how much the community has jumped on board with this year's squad and is that possibly motivating you guys to move further throughout this tournament?

JARROD OLSON: Well, Nae is from Riverside which is where we're located. She came to CBU just to be on the hometown team she was at Hawai'i before and then transferred.

I think it just goes to show what kind of impact you can have using sports to kind of influence in a positive way and just kind of give back to the community that you're from.

Like I said, we've sold like 1000 tickets, a little bit over. For people that are coming there will be four or five busses of people that are typical fans coming out to the game. That's not normal for us.

That's kind of a big deal.

So for us, it's just been really cool just to be able to kind of like share this moment, like I said earlier, with everybody that's kind of done the work and done -- and supported us over the years.

Just to be able to see them come out here and watch the game, and hopefully we'll make them proud with the way we play. It does mean a lot to us that they come out here and support, because I do think we have a team this year that's kind of resonated with the people in our area.

I think it starts with Nae because she's from Riverside. Just the way they play, too. And, I mean, I don't know. You only met two of them. Just we have a team that they -- it's a great bunch of young women and they really get along well, not only with each other, but they interact really well with each other, and they have been. Before and after games communicating with people and sharing the moment with them.

So it's not just about us, it's about the whole CBU community.

Q. How many numbers of that 2021 squad are still with the team?

JARROD OLSON: I think zero. I think we have four coaches. (Smiling.)

Q. Former players reach out this week?

JARROD OLSON: I think that's probably been one of the highlights for me. Winning the WAC tournament last week and everybody realizing, oh, they're going. We've had a couple girls that -- like one of them Caitlyn Harper, grad transfer. Played at Purdue the last two years. Nicole Avila-Ambrosi went to South Dakota. So we had girls that left, right, to maybe move up or whatever.

It was cool to kind of see them just kind of like check in. A lot of times when people are transferring you think that is a negative thing. They definitely took the time to reach out and show support.

Then just all the alumni. I had a couple people from my first team at CBU which was 12 years ago -- we weren't even eligible for the Division II tournament at that time -- that were texting me like, hey, we're going.

They felt it, right? It was not just like the team that's going this year, it was every team was going.

So I thought that was really cool. Just to kind of like how it kind of broke down some barriers and united a lot of

people, too.

Q. You led a team to the D-II Final Four.

JARROD OLSON: Yeah.

Q. Will you carry any of that D-II tournament experience over to this?

JARROD OLSON: I mean, I guess I would just say I hope so, but it's just basketball, right? I mean, there is a lot of stuff that goes into it the week prior. There is the fancy name plates and the nice hotel. Probably different than the Division II.

At the end of the day, basketball is basketball and Saturday at 6:30 I know the game is on ESPN2 and a lot of people watching and a good crowd.

But it's just basketball. So I think whether we're coaching at Pauley Pavilion or playing in my driveway with my three kids, like I just love the game. I'm going to try to win. Just try to have a little bit of fun with it.

So, yeah, it's just basketball.

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