

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

Saturday, March 23, 2024

Los Angeles, California, USA

Pauley Pavilion

## UCLA Bruins

## Coach Cori Close

## Kiki Rice

## Charisma Osbourne

### Media Conference

UCLA 84, CBU 55

**CORI CLOSE:** I first of all want to say how important it is to be able to play at home, how thankful I am for the work that goes into getting that great crowd tonight.

It was electric and fun, and to do that when there is no students on campus, kids are gone for spring break, all of those factors, and the way that our administration, support staff, marketing, athletic communication, I'm sure I'm leaving people out, worked to get that crowd, I just want to say how thankful we are.

Credit to Cal Baptist. I think they're so well coached. They know who they are. I thought we did a pretty good job limiting their three point looks. At halftime I think they were 1-9, but they got off, what, 14 I think or 12 in the second half.

It's going to be the No. 1 thing for our game against Creighton. So just really want to give credit to them for just how well-coached they are. They only lost three games all year for a reason. Credit to them.

But really proud of these two right here. I think even though we were taking good shots I thought in the first half for the most part, I think we fell in love with the three for a little bit for a period of time, but we were taking good shots and we weren't being rewarded, and these two steadied the ship.

They kept hunting for the right shots. Charisma had nine rebounds in the first half. I think her senior leadership was so huge. Obviously how she had 15, 15, and 9, do I have



that right, was just huge for us.

And then Kiki I thought beginning of the game especially was just the only one hitting jump shots. Then we were able to get her out in transition a little bit more. She was able to get downhill in those situations. They really steadied us.

Bottom line is every game is going to require something slightly different. If you want to earn another opportunity you got to step up to whatever that game presents.

They stepped up and made that happen, and I'm proud to be able to prepare for another game.

**Q. Coach, ladies, congratulations on the win. Kiki, two-part question for you. From the eye test just seemed like an incredibly fast paced and physical game. Your thoughts on the physicality? Second question: You guys went into the half with a 12 point lead. What was working really well in the second half to allow to you pull way so much?**

**KIKI RICE:** Yeah, definitely was a fast, physical game. They have a lot of quick guards and they play like basically five guards the entire time, so we knew we would have to really get out in the perimeter and be ready to defend.

I think at halftime we felt good. We knew we weren't hitting our shots but we felt like those were going to fall in the second half. Just continue to do the things that were working for us and we felt like that was getting the ball into the post to continue to put an emphasis on guarding by yourself, defending without fouling, then really just keeping to attack in transition.

I think we came out beginning of the third quarter and did those things really well.

**Q. Charisma, did you know you were one assist short of a triple double? And Kiki, did you know you could've given it to her with that three pointer in the last minute?**

**CHARISMA OSBOURNE:** Yeah, I did know. But it's okay.



She'll make the next one.

CORI CLOSE: We were all trying to get her the opportunity. It was great to have her get that one in the corner to Londynn. They were trying to put us in a situation where they had to choose between the pocket pass to Christeen or the fill-behind person.

So, you know, I think she would rather have the win any day.

**Q. Charisma, coach mentioned it, you had nine rebounds at the half. In the second half though felt like you really found your shot. What led you to feeling more comfortable? And I just want to remind you, like you kind of opened the quarter with that shot, that jumper, you got your own steal, led to the Kiki and-one. What led you to just feeling so comfortable?**

CHARISMA OSBOURNE: Yeah, I think just letting go of what happened in the first half and being more confident in the second half. We have like reset routines, so I did mine and just kind of let it go. I knew that I put in the work to make those shots, so that kind of just was my mindset.

I think everyone pretty much had that mindset going into the second half.

**Q. And then just one last question for you, Charisma, early in the season you told me that you forewent the NBA, WNBA to come back here because you felt like this team was special. After your first win in the tournament, like how are you feeling about this team now?**

CHARISMA OSBOURNE: Yeah, my feelings haven't changed. I think we are really special and we have so many different weapons offensively and defensively. Tonight you guys saw like we didn't even have Lauren playing tonight and soon hopefully we'll get her back, but we're so talented and I know that this team can really go far as long as we keep doing what the coaches are asking us to do.

**Q. Can you talk about the boost that Gabriela gave you tonight in that start, her toughness, just more minutes she got the bigger impact she had in the game?**

KIKI RICE: Gabs did a fantastic job today. Stepped in at the 4. That is not really what she has been playing, most of the season, but one thing about Gabs is she's always willing to do whatever it takes to help this team win.

I think she's been studying the plays at the 4 figuring out

what she needs to do. She came out and rebounded well and was calling for the ball and was really aggressive, and I think that really helped us.

CHARISMA OSBOURNE: I really just love how she's like, get me the ball inside. Every timeout, they can't stop me and I think the team saw that and even Coach Cori emphasized that at halftime. I love that confidence she had in herself.

**Q. For the players, it felt like the Cal Baptist student section seemed pretty loud. Did it feel abnormal being at home but having to almost face a road environment at times, especially when they went on that I believe 10-0 run at some point?**

KIKI RICE: Yeah, definitely brought a lot of fans, but I thought that made it a great environment. To see their student section where the Den is for us normally it was definitely interesting.

But, no, it was fun. I think they did a great job bringing their fans here, and we also had a lot of great fans. So just that environment made the game that much better to play in.

CHARISMA OSBOURNE: I think it kind of reminded me the Oklahoma last year. They had a good amount of fans so kind of was a little similar to that. Makes it fun when the other team has fans and the crowd is going back and further, we're going back and forth.

**Q. How do you all stay anchored without Lauren and how did the four-game stretch in the middle of the season inform what ya'll did today?**

KIKI RICE: Yeah, I think the stretch where we didn't have Lauren definitely helped us today because we knew how we needed to play without her.

But I think it was still great to hear her voice on the sideline and just how supportive she was. She'll be back soon.

**Q. You guys talk about Gabs' confidence. How much of this --like you guys been together for two years now. The chemistry has grown. How much has like the last two years of experience helped with those types of things in the crunch?**

CHARISMA OSBOURNE: I think it's helped a lot. We know each other really well. Like I know what Kiki's go-to moves are, what she likes. She's really good in transition and getting downhill.

I think just over the last two years just working together a



lot talking and just with anyone on the team, like we all know what each other does really well and try to put each other in those positions.

**Q. Coach, Kiki kind of alluded to this, that Gabs was starting at the 4, which she hasn't really done this season?**

CORI CLOSE: Right.

**Q. It kind of seemed like you guys were using her in the same ways you use Lauren. What can you say about Gabriela's versatility.**

CORI CLOSE: I think it starts with Gabs' toughness and heart. It's always more important to Gabs to win than to do anything that she's comfortable with.

She showed a little bit of everything tonight, right? She showed herself on the rebound, in the post, hitting couple threes, off the bounce. So I just think it's really about her attitude.

Now, that's a good matchup to do that because they're playing three -- or four guards. And so even though she's playing the 4, she's playing against a guard, which is a favorable matchup for us.

They were really flooding the paint, but she was getting out and running so hard in transition that it's going to be hard to double team in that scenario. I thought she did a great job pressing them in transition and forcing them to flatten out their defense so that we were able to get other things as well as her touches in that area.

Gabs has been warrior. You see she's just maturing in her confidence. She texted me last night and was like, okay, can you send me the plays of the 4 you think we're going to use the most?

Then I checked in with her this morning. She's like I'm ready coach. I'm ready. She just loves this so much. She is so proud to wear those four letters. Such a competitor. She is tough. You look at over her first to years and the most pressurized moments and who was really comfortable in those moments, Gabs always rises the to top.

As she's adding to her toolbox and her skillset, and then having that mentality, boy, the future is bright for Gabs.

**Q. Cori, I know this week urgency and like punching first was a huge emphasis for you. How well do you think they executed that tonight, and are you confident they can kind of carry it over into Monday, too?**

CORI CLOSE: Well, if they want to play, if they want to keep playing, they're going to have to, right? I think that's the name of the game in this tournament. There is can you respond quickly, can you grow significantly, can you execute a brand new scouting report with a completely different set of expectations and responses that are going to be needed.

You know, I think that's the key to making a deep run in March, is can you do that, can you have that kind of consistent urgency and understanding that every possession matters. That's not a cliché. That's like reality.

If you don't treat it that way, probably it'll be your last game. I just think it's very simple: Do you want to keep playing? Then you better punch first and punch often and better stay locked in for 40 minutes.

I thought we were B+ in that area. We had some lapses that we needed to be better about. I thought we responded quicker. Both timeouts I had to call we responded out of those and made big runs out of both those timeouts.

And my challenge to them in the locker room was, can you do that on your own? Can you do that a little at a dead ball or after a free throw? Can you connect and make that responses quicker and not wait for a timeout to make those things happen?

**Q. Lauren, what happened there? What's her availability going forward for Creighton?**

CORI CLOSE: Yeah, I'm hopeful. Nothing major. I'm hopeful we're going to be able to get her back, hopefully on Monday. I don't know yet for sure. We are hopeful we're going to be able to have her on Monday.

**Q. Coach, when asked about Gabs you were talking about toughness. Wondering your thoughts on toughness of Londynn tonight. Felt like she stretched the floor for you, took a nasty fall, got back in the game, shortly after made some plays defensively. What did you see?**

CORI CLOSE: Yeah, I mean, Londynn is just so feisty. My challenge to her is making plays whether she shoots well or not. Obviously when Londynn is cooking from the three-point line, I think 1-7 in the first half, I always love the response back, right?

Making some steals on defense, you know, getting in there, attacking off the bounce, setting up something for somebody else. I had just gotten on her pretty good. She had had a turnover and missed assignment on defense

and then came back in and made that big play, big three.

I just love her competitive response. Londynn is a huge piece for us and I really was hoping to get her going more. I felt like we weren't getting her enough quality threes. I thought she got them tonight and just didn't make them.

But I don't want her to lose heart. I know what she's earned and I know who she is and the time she puts in. I want her to feel confident. If it's your shot, you shoot your shot.

**Q. Coach, I think it was 2019, before the pandemic, ya'll have faced Creighton before in this building. What is going to be familiar about this meeting on Monday and what's going to be different? Obviously both teams are completely different.**

CORI CLOSE: Yeah, well they have five seniors and they're incredibly experienced. You know, watching that UNLV game, wow, they were so disciplined. He's one the best coaches, Jim is one of the best coaches in the country. I've watched him year after year after year.

You know, so they're going to give us everything. When that bracket came out, I said, wow, they're going to be a big challenge. I've already been studying some film on them preparing. I've had to prepare for all three opponents, possible opponents this weekend.

You know, they just set and use off-ball screens as well as anybody in the country. They just keep coming. It's going to be really important that we communicate away from the ball. We switch a lot of ball screens but don't usually do that off the ball.

They're going to put us in some difficult situations that way. I don't think they've change that had much. I think I they're extremely experienced and very, very well-coached.

I do you have one last thing. 9000 here today. Can we beat that Monday? Can we get the buzz out? We can't beat that if you guys aren't continuing to help us build that story. It's really important to us, so thank you in advance. Let's keep the buzz going and pack this place Monday.

Thank you.

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