

# NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - Texas A&M-Corpus Christi vs USC

Saturday, March 23, 2024

Los Angeles, California, USA

Galen Center

## Texas A&M-Corpus Christi Islanders

Royce Chadwick

Alecia Westbrook

Mireia Aguado

Media Conference

USC 87, Texas A&M Corpus Christi 55

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Texas A&M Corpus Christi.

We'll begin with an opening statement from coach.

ROYCE CHADWICK: Very proud of my team. I thought we fought hard all night long. I really think USC is the best team we've played all year. Their length really gave us problems in the first quarter. I thought we rebounded in the second quarter and came back and fought, did the things that we needed to do.

SC is so explosive. Third quarter I thought they just exploded. You turn it over once, they hit a three. You turn it over again, they hit a three. Now you're starting to whittle away.

We have a very good basketball team, tons of talent. You have to pick your poison with them about which player you're going to let have the shot. None of those options are good.

We missed something like 40 shots, and they blocked 14 of 'em. That's a pretty good number for getting your hand on a shot. I thought it changed our game immensely with all the blocked shots.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the student-athletes.



**Q. What were your impressions of JuJu Watkins?**

ALECIA WESTBROOK: Amazing player. We knew how big of a task it would be before coming in the game. We tried to slow her down. We tried to limit her shots. She had a good game. We did our best to try to limit those.

MIREIA AGUADO: She's a really good player. We know that. Everybody knows that. But once we step on the court, we got to think that everybody's the same. We just tried to guard her the best that we could, so...

**Q. The second quarter you came back, were able to find your offensive rhythm. What was the key to that?**

ALECIA WESTBROOK: Yeah, I think we just got settled into the game. Playing in a big of a stage, it was kind of like a shock moment. I think we just settled, talked to each other, let them know we're here, we got this, tried to play hard and keep fighting.

MIREIA AGUADO: Yeah, I think it came from our defense. Probably first quarter we were a little bit nervous. First time in the NCAA. But then we were like we know what we're capable of. Then we started playing from our defense.

**Q. What did it mean to have your fans support you guys?**

ALECIA WESTBROOK: It was amazing. We saw all the blue and green out there. We spotted them out quick. It was amazing to have them there. They changed the game for us.

MIREIA AGUADO: They've always been here this season to support us and we love them.

**Q. They blocked eight or nine shots in the first quarter. How much was that a challenge you had to adjust to?**

ALECIA WESTBROOK: Yeah, I mean, they're tall. I'm trying to think what to say. Nobody in the Southland is as tall as they are. We kind of fixed it in the second quarter.



But, yeah, they're tall (smiling).

MIREIA AGUADO: Coach told us, If you go down there, you're probably going to have to use more than one move. That's what we tried to do after the first quarter, so...

ROYCE CHADWICK: I think the thing that I'm most proud about our team, blocking the shot is a missed shot. That's one thing. But what it does to your thought process, when you get a shot blocked, is a whole different deal.

You shoot a shot and miss it, that weighs on your mind. You shoot an air ball, it's a little heavier. You get a shot blocked, now you got to regroup and come back.

That's what I'm the most proud about what we did. We regrouped, refocused. They came back and said, Okay, I'm not going to let this define me that you blocked my shot, I'm going to come back and play.

That's the resilient team that we've been all year. I think that's going to bode well for these young ladies for the rest of their lives. That resilient thought process when things aren't going your direction.

THE MODERATOR: Ladies, thank you.

We'll continue with questions for coach.

**Q. How far do you think this USC team can go?**

ROYCE CHADWICK: When you got good guards, great guards, and when you get in a tournament situation, forwards can do things and centers can do things, but great guards can carry you.

I don't think JuJu was hot today. What does she do when she's hot? It's not just her. Forbes is an unbelievable talent. Padilla can shoot the lights out. Marshall can do things in and around the paint. We just found out they have people coming off the bench that can block shots.

They have the whole thing. You got to get a break when the going gets tough. I think they got the tools. They got the coach. She's seasoned and knows what she's doing. I don't think they have a limit.

**Q. Your first time seeing JuJu in person?**

ROYCE CHADWICK: Yes.

**Q. What did you make of her?**

ROYCE CHADWICK: She's next level. We may have played against a couple of future WNBA-caliber players

this year, but she's as hard to guard as anybody we played all year. Forbes might be number two. Forbes might be number one. I don't know.

They're so hard to guard because they're so versatile. They shoot the three, have a midrange. Our whole thing was to try to keep them from getting to the rim. We were going to live with what they did pullup-wise. They made us pay for that.

They're really, really, really good players. They seem humble, seem like really good people. We'll be cheering for them.

**Q. When you're the 16 seed playing the No. 1 seed, what do you say to your team before the game to motivate them?**

ROYCE CHADWICK: Obviously what we did didn't work, so...

We tried to talk to them about playing every possession. If it doesn't go well, forget it and move on to the next possession. If it does go well, don't gloat about it, go to the next possession.

We wanted to fight till the end. We wanted to make sure our fans were proud of the effort that we gave. We had times where we came over and said, We're not getting the calls. You didn't expect to get calls. You can't go out there expecting something to happen. You got to go out there and make something happen.

I thought they fought. I thought we gave everything we had all night long. Paige Allen shook hands. I thought, We're a little undersized at the jump. Alecia goes up, we're giving up a couple inches there.

We weren't the biggest team on the floor, but I thought we played with big heart. That's what we were after, to come out and see what happens. You never know. Maybe a couple people have bad nights. We have good guards, we have good Southland guards. They get hot and get going, we could put on a show.

It didn't work out, but I was very proud of the effort and heart and desire our team played with.

**Q. This run has been something you've been building towards. You had two regular-season titles in the last five years. To finally get there, what does this do for the program?**

ROYCE CHADWICK: It takes a while to change your culture. I think we got our culture changed now where

when we step out on the floor, we are playing for championships in our mind. That's half the battle in this day and time, that you got to believe in what you're doing.

There were no championships. We won some basketball games, but we had no championships till Alecia Westbrook got there and Paige Allen and Violeta Verano. Now we're in a situation where we think we can compete for Southland championships every year.

This experience is really good for our fans, good for our players. It's something that these players will cherish for the rest of their lives. They had the opportunity to come to L.A. and play USC. That's why USC needs to win the whole thing, so that we can say, Yeah, we played them.

It's just a wonderful experience. College athletics is not supposed to be how much money you can make, NIL. It's supposed to be about the experience and the people that you get an opportunity to interact with.

We are old school NCAA. We don't have a lot of NIL people on our team. They're playing the game because they love the team, they love their teammates. Alecia turned down NIL money to stay and play with us. Now she's got thousands of dollars worth of memories that she can cherish for the rest of her life, whereas she could have had some money doing NIL things. Just very proud of my team for being first class.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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