

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - Mississippi State vs California

Friday, March 21, 2025

Los Angeles, California, USA

Galen Center

Cal Bears

Coach Charmin Smith

Media Conference

CHARMIN SMITH: Excited to be here, looking forward to competing tomorrow. Watching a ton of film on Mississippi State it's eight-9 game. We know we have our hands full. We're excited and I think we'll be prepared and ready to go.

Q. After like all of the travel you guys have had to do this year, was it kind of a relief to get assigned to Los Angeles? Do you think it gives you guys at all an advantage in this particular match-up?

CHARMIN SMITH: I told the team, wherever we end up, we're excited, we're happy we're dancing, that we want to be an 8 seed, no. Are we excited that we've already oversold our block of tickets and we'll have a ton of fans here in So Cal, yes, that's exciting.

It was a really short charter flight for the first time. So there are definitely positives. Like I said, we're happy to be playing in the Big Dance and just really looking forward to it.

Q. You've had lots of runs in this tournament as a player, as an assistant. Could you compare and contrast your experiences now that you're doing it for the first time as a head coach?

CHARMIN SMITH: It's very different. As a player, you're just so freakin' clueless to everything that stresses you out as a coach. You just expect to go. Of course you're going to win. Nobody can beat you and you just keep moving on. You just have no idea what goes into all of this, and then as an assistant coach, it's still not all on you, right?

It's a different type of pressure, maybe if it's your scout, you're like really like oh, come on, I've got to have a great game plan and that type of thing. If it's not your scout, you're allowed to look ahead just a little bit and planning for



the next scout.

As a head coach, this is completely different. It's very different and I'm enjoying every minute of it, and I'm so just proud of this team for getting us here and everything that we've been through this season and a new conference that forced us to take five trips cross country in this season I just love this team and I'm really, really proud.

Even to go back to my head-coaching tenure and the journey that I've been on with Michelle (phonetic) during this time, we have a lot to be proud of and a lot to be excited about and I just want it to keep going. But, yes, it's very different as a head coach.

Q. Could you talk about the match-up tomorrow and what you expect?

CHARMIN SMITH: They're a really good team. Sam does a great job. I'll start with inside having someone with that type of size and that type of efficiency is a big deal and something that we have to prepare for and sometimes we look and we're like, oh, Michelle, you know, huge advantage there.

And they've got someone with formidable size here that we've got to be ready for. Jordan is really explosive on the perimeter. They're really good. And they have weapons. You can't leave Powe open. She's a lethal shooter.

So I know that defensively they can get after it. So we've got to be ourselves. You heard our players talk about, when we're the best version of ourselves we feel really confident and what that means is we've got to take care of the ball. We've got to knock down shots when we're open and be locked in defensively to guard people and protect the paint without fouling.

Q. On the balance you've emphasized playing turnovers in the process and what you guys have started to attack it throughout the course of this season. I was curious with the way if Mississippi State starts turning you over how you emphasize not overcoaching them saying we have to make it through these mistakes knowing our plan of attack will



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eventually win out in the end?

CHARMIN SMITH: Yeah, I mean, some of it is we are who we are. And we've won a lot of games against some really good teams with turnovers that drive my sport supervisor crazy, he hates turnovers, but we can also do some things really well. I think we're locked in. I think we've spent however a week to ten days here really emphasizing ball security, taking care of the ball, getting shots up and being able to attack offensively. I think we'll do well. I think our players are ready for this moment. And I think playing in the ACC against some really good defensive teams have helped prepare us for this moment as well.

Q. OPEB versus OEM metrics, keys for the game. What have you been coaching for Michelle? What's the specific feedback to that match-up to ultimately get an advantage there?

CHARMIN SMITH: The one thing that stays consistent for Michelle every single game is defend without fouling. We need her on the floor. We are a much better team when Michelle is on the floor.

Sometimes it doesn't even mean that she has to score. You know, she commands attention defensively that frees up our shooters. She's great when she's in defensive ball screen coverage that we need her there for Jordan and Russell off the bench. She's got to be on the floor.

And if she can finish over (indiscernible) and put pressure on her and potentially get her in foul trouble, I think that's a bonus, but I'm just happy when zero is in the game for Cal.

Q. I know you and Coach Gottlieb from USC go back. Mean anything to be in the same building with her in this site? Have you guys passed in the hallways and talked?

CHARMIN SMITH: I just wanted to see if she was in her office I think they already practiced she wasn't there. Lindsay and I talk pretty much every day. It's slid more to texting over the last couple of days instead of talking. But I'm really happy for her and what she's been able to do at USC. I think she feels the same way about what we're doing at Cal and we each just want to win tomorrow.

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