

# American Athletic Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Tuesday, March 8, 2022

Fort Worth, Texas, USA

Dickies Arena

**USF Bulls**

**Jose Fernandez**

**Elena Tsineke**

**Elisa Pinzan**

Postgame Press Conference



Sydni Harvey right out of the gate, she hadn't been shooting the ball, she hits two threes and then a follow where she got fouled. So you saw a lot of good things.

But I'm proud of this group. The one thing our program has been very, very consistent. We've been in this league for nine years, we've played for a championship five and now the other four we've been, you know, in the semis.

So whoever we play tomorrow is going to be a really good game. I think Tulane is fighting to get into the NCAA tournament and Houston, we've been very successful twice against them this year. But, you know, we're going to get both of their best punch to get ready.

**Q. Elena, you scored 18 in the second half. 10 of them in the fourth quarter kind of. You were taken out midway through the third quarter, then came out really aggressive scoring three straight baskets. What was your mentality down there the stretch of the game?**

ELENA TSINEKE: My mentality was like I was just trying to forget what happened the first half. I got upset with myself that I had two stupid fouls. So I said there's a lot more time to go and the team needs me. So I just wanted to be good for my team.

**Q. And what was working for you? You made a couple layups that were pretty acrobatic pretty impressive. What was working for you down there on that end?**

ELENA TSINEKE: I was just feeling very confident in myself. My team has helped me a lot, they hyped me up. So when they hype me up, I just keep going.

**Q. And Coach, Elisa in the second quarter you guys are down 10, but knocks out a couple big threes, gets a steal and layup to tie it up. How big was that there?**

JOSE FERNANDEZ: Well, Elena was on the bench with two fouls, so was Bethy. I believe Pinzan was the only starter in the game at the end of that, at the end of the half. We just needed to get to halftime to regroup, make adjustments and talk and figure some things out. But you

South Florida 63, Memphis 53

JOSE FERNANDEZ: Any time you play in these tournaments, I want to give a lot of credit to Memphis. I think they've had a very good basketball year. If you look at our conference, we've had the three coaches that are new to this league all won their first-round games. So I think Katrina has done a wonderful job with that group.

You know, for those first three quarters I thought they were just getting downhill on us. We weren't providing help on the backside with the dribble drive. Once we started to get to the elbow and we took a couple charges, and they turned it over a couple times.

But I told our guys, you know, we've been in a lot of close games and we played a very, very tough schedule, one of the best in the country. So we've been in moments where a baseline out of bounds or a sideline out of bounds or you've got to get stops or it's a tie game. We've been in a lot of games where we've had a lot of meaningful possessions. And I think, you know, here at the end of the year that's really helped us in close games. And especially here, tied up at half and then tied up going into the fourth quarter.

Now at the same time you've got to have some players make really make baskets. I thought Elena was really, really good in the open floor finishing around the rim. You know, when E made those three free-throws when she got fouled and then on a ball reversal she was open for three. She knocked it down. So games like this you've got to have some players make plays and step up.



know you don't get to halftime if she doesn't make that three and makes that layup because it ended on I believe a 5-0 run; right?

**Q. And, Coach, you had a pretty deep rotation in the first half, 10 players played. Foul trouble, stuff like that. But then in the second half it was much tighter. You stuck with the starting five from last year. Kind of what was the reasoning behind that in the second half?**

JOSE FERNANDEZ: They've played in a lot of big games. So, you know, and that's -- that five knows, you know, you lose a little bit of offense in there with -- with Dulcy on the bench but I thought Shae really protected the rim and did a good job defensively. But these guys, those four -- you know, with Bethy and the three perimeter guys they have a lot of experience. They played in a lot of meaningful games. So that's why we did it.

**Q. And Coach, Maria was out there warming up pregame. Is that a sign that she may be healthy at some point during the tournament or --**

JOSE FERNANDEZ: Right now, it's day to day with Maria. You know, she suffered a really bad injury in the Houston game. So it's great that she's on the trip with us. And we'll see.

**Q. Congratulations on that win. Energy and timely scoring was mainly from the two players right here. Coach, do you think that set the tempo for the entire team through the fourth quarter because that's when you took those big leads?**

JOSE FERNANDEZ: I mean, you got -- you don't win the amount of games we've won if you don't have really good basketball players. Very fortunate that we do. I thought the way that Pinzan's been playing the last two weeks, she's back to herself. And it's really good because when she -- when she leads out there and gets the stuff that we need to get into, you know, we're a much better basketball team.

You know, I think El is one of the best wings not only in our league but in the country because, I mean, she's got tremendous work ethic. She's really good.

**Q. And following up on that, what are your comments on your second-chance points tonight? They were significantly big for you when compared to Memphis?**

JOSE FERNANDEZ: Well, second chance, I thought we got some key offensive rebounds from our perimeter guys in there. But with Dulcy and Shea and Bethy, those guys,

we've always hung our hat on defending and rebounding. So we'll get ready for tomorrow. Get back to the hotel, get some rest, and get ready for Houston or Tulane.

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