

American Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Friday, March 13, 2026

Birmingham, Alabama, USA

Legacy Arena At The BJCC

UTSA Roadrunners

Coach Karen Aston

Ereauna Hardaway

Idara Udo

Postgame Press Conference



UTSA 54, East Carolina 44

THE MODERATOR: We are joined on the podium by UTSA coach Karen Aston, Ereauna Hardaway and Idara Udo. Coach, let's start with comments by you.

KAREN ASTON: First of all, I'm super excited for our team, just the little things that I think sometimes they just don't know what they don't know and, you know, it's fun to see them enjoy the experience of turning into a team and looking forward to tomorrow.

I thought our team was extremely tough today. It wasn't always pretty, but I thought we were very, very tough and we fought through a lot of adversity in the game. I thought we got better as the game went along.

We had a lot of turnovers against them the first time we played them and I think we kind of had a little mental side of that in the first half but I thought we turned it around.

And, yeah, I'm just super proud. Super proud to still be playing tomorrow.

Q. Coach, what does it mean for you to be playing for the American Conference Championship for the first time in your tenure? What does it mean for you to have that milestone?

KAREN ASTON: I'm just excited for the players. Any time that you see a group, like I said a few games ago, when Jerry was asking me questions in the post-game media, you watch this team grow up before your eyes and they're in a position now to win a championship, and it's because they decided.

It wasn't anything that I think we did. I think that they decided that they wanted to do the things that it took to be a contending team. They've grown enormously. They've grown all year long, and I said that repeatedly. It's been fun to watch this team grow.

But where they took off a week or two ago, it's pretty amazing to see.

Q. Idara, what about you for you, having spent sometime in this program --

KAREN ASTON: Ereauna, Ereauna.

Q. I just wanted to get your reaction to have the opportunity to play for a championship.

IDARA UDO: I'm blessed and honored. Like Coach said, it's just a really special moment for our whole team. I've been with Coach since I got here, so it's just been really fun to see this team grow and get closer and closer every year.

I'm really blessed and excited for our team, like I said.

Q. Karen, three wins in three days certainly isn't easy. What did it take, I guess, mentally and physically to get to this point and what is it going to take to get it done tomorrow?

KAREN ASTON: Mentally I think it just took the players deciding that they wanted to make a run in this tournament, and I think it started before we traveled to Houston to Rice.

They sort of flipped a switch and made some decisions to be a little bit tougher and do some of the hard stuff a little bit better.

They've just -- again, I say this all the time. Teams and players are not on your watch sometimes. They're on their own, and when they grow up and when they mature is a process, and you don't ever know when that's going to happen, especially for young players.



So I think some of them, the light has just kind of come on.

What I appreciate the most are the two beside me and Cheyenne included, that they were able to have the patience to allow the young players to grow. I think that everybody that's followed our team all year long can see the evolution that's happened in the last month or so.

Q. Hey, congratulations, guys. Ereauna, I want to ask, what was going through your mind right before you hoisted that three-point shot and how did it feel when it went in?

EREUNA HARDAWAY: Literally everybody was yelling at me shoot it! Shoot it! Just shoot it! It felt great seeing it go in.

Q. How far do you think that was? About 30 foot? 30 feet or so?

EREUNA HARDAWAY: I actually have no idea. I have no clue where I was on the court. No clue.

Q. How does it feel, Ereauna, to get to the finals and have a chance to reach the NCAA Tournament?

EREUNA HARDAWAY: It feels great. This is my first time, too. It's my first rodeo getting to the finals. I'm excited. I have the best teammates and coaches around me, so I'm excited.

Q. Idara, what do you think it's going to take to beat Rice tomorrow?

IDARA UDO: What I think it's going to take is our team just being where our feet are, just continuing to do the stuff that we been doing, hustle plays, staying together, being locked in defensively.

I think that's what I think it's going to take for us to win.

And most importantly, having fun. That's what we've been doing this whole tournament.

Q. Ereauna, how are you feeling physically after three games in three days?

EREUNA HARDAWAY: I feel great! Knowing that we're going to the championship game, I feel great. Nothing else matters. I feel great.

Q. Coach, what about the resolve it takes to win three games like this in three days? I don't know of a UTSA team, women's team, has ever done that in a conference tournament to win three in three days like

that. It's happened before but I'm not sure on consecutive days. What does it take physically for a team to get that done?

KAREN ASTON: Well, I mean, they practice all the time so it's not -- they would probably rather play games than practice, so I think that they've been able to -- I think Idara hit it on the head.

First of all, they're having fun and I think they're enjoying the moments together. I think when a team like that clicks for them, then they don't want it to be over.

So they forget about certain things like whether they're tired or not or whether they're sore and they just enjoy the moments. They're enjoying the time in the hotel together. They're enjoying the bus rides.

It's just like this team has flipped a switch and comradery, it's just one of those that I guarantee you that when it is over at some point, they're going to be really sad because they finally turned into a real team and when you do that, you don't ever want it to be over.

You just want to keep playing. I think they'll be fine. I think that they're enjoying the moments and they'll be excited to play tomorrow.

Q. Coach, what can you say about what Ereauna has meant to your team down the stretch tonight and really through the season coming over her first year here?

KAREN ASTON: Yeah, she saved us to be honest with you. Any time that you have unexpected transfers, those kinds of things, and you bring in a freshman point guard that you know needs mentorship, then you're asking a lot out of someone to come step in and get to know a whole new team and mesh with them.

She's allowed herself to be uncomfortable and allowed herself to grow. In the process of that, she's also taken it upon herself to mentor Adriana and really has taken that job seriously, and I appreciate that.

She will leave and Adriana will remember that and pay that forward. I think it's obvious that we wouldn't be where we are without her. It's been fun to watch her grow into, they call her granny for a reason. That's her nickname, and I think it's just been fun to watch her evolve as a leader.

I don't know what her experience was from a leadership standpoint where she was before, but I think I have seen her really grow in that area. It's been a joy to coach her.

Q. We saw at the end of the first half Cheyenne Rowe



took a hit to the face. Looked like she got banged up pretty good. What did she show you with how she continued to play through the second half, and how is she doing?

KAREN ASTON: Yeah, just leadership. She wasn't going to come out. I think they were worried that it might be worse than what it was, but she's not going to not play.

We had a chance to finish a game out and she just who she is. She's been a leader all year long and that right there is who she is, which is leading by example. She's going to show up. She's going to play. She's going to play through hard stuff.

That's what she does every single day in practice.

Q. Idara, this was keys to you guys particularly in and around the basket defensively?

IDARA UDO: Just priding ourselves in what we do. We pride ourselves in defense. We worked really hard on our defense and perfecting it, so I think just honing in on that.

Also attacking the glass and making sure we cleaned up the boards. I think we did a really good job of that tonight. So, yeah, I would say that.

KAREN ASTON: I do want to mention I think I say this often about the young ones growing up, but Damara Allen found a way to help our team win today. She had ten boards and a lot of that will go unnoticed.

Mia made a game-saving play at the end saving a loose ball. That's what I'm talking about. That's the evolution of those guys, that they're willing to make plays that sometimes don't show up.

The rebounds show up in stat sheets, but you don't get the, you know, the social media attention when you get ten rebounds like you do points. But I appreciate what these guys are doing for us.

Q. Karen, what can you tell us about this match-up with Rice and what are you expecting to see on the floor between your team and their team tomorrow?

KAREN ASTON: We just played them so we'll look at the game that we just played and see what we can do better. I thought we got off to a good start and then we kind of probably didn't finish very strong, so we'll look at that, look at maybe what they did in the second half.

But, I mean, we kind of all are who we are at this point. We know each other. We know everybody's plays.

Everybody knows what everybody's doing so it gets down to what Iggy just said about the last part of this game was won by hustle plays, loose balls, those types of things; Making free throws.

Those are things that come down when you're in a championship game like we will and Rice is obviously a very good team. We'll show up and do our best tomorrow.

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