

American Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Saturday, March 14, 2026

Birmingham, Alabama, USA

Legacy Arena At The BJCC

UTSA Roadrunners

Coach Karen Aston

Ereauna Hardaway

Idara Udo

Cheyenne Rowe

Postgame Press Conference

UTSA 64, Rice 40

THE MODERATOR: All right. We are joined on the podium by head coach Karen Aston. We've got Ereauna Hardaway, Cheyenne Rowe, and Idara Udo.

Coach, let's start out with some comments for you and then we'll open it up for questions.

KAREN ASTON: Well, obviously I couldn't be any happier for our school to have the opportunity to go play in the NCAA Tournament, and most importantly our players, staff.

I told them before the game that I just appreciated how they approached the tournament and how they stayed in the trenches no matter what.

Everybody really stayed on one page and I think that's difficult when you have a group of 25, 30 people to keep them all headed in the right direction. This group has done that and I think that they played with purpose all week long and in particular today. I thought we played fantastic.

Kudos to Rice for their run through the tournament. Terrific team but I do think you our team played really, really well today and I'm super proud of them.

Q. Let me start with a question about the game against Rice a week ago. Did that have anything to do with tonight's performance?

KAREN ASTON: I mean, I would like to think that just the fact that we beat them on their home court and it was a



confidence builder going into the tournament in general.

I'm not sure that it had -- it might have buoyed us into the tournament because of how well they played and they got some validation when they won that game on some things that they decided they wanted to do and they validated themselves when we beat them at their place.

But I believe tonight was about this team wanting to win, and I don't think they cared what was on the jersey of the team we played tonight.

Q. Coach, you felt all along this year even with all the adversity you faced that this team could do something special like this. What made you think this team was a championship and NCAA Tournament team?

KAREN ASTON: These guys who are sitting up with me for sure. They're strong leaders. They're very, very competitive. They play with purpose. They practice with purpose.

I thought that if we could get the young guys and obviously get healthy, I think a piece of it was Idara getting healthy, healthy enough to help us down the stretch. It took time because of the injuries and Ereauna getting to know our team and our system. That took some time.

But I think when you have a system in place that you do feel like people believe in, then you can turn the tide at any point. I think the turning point was the young players that decided to grow up a little bit and I thought that was the biggest difference for us.

Q. Karen, congratulations. You got a whole bunch of fans down here in San Antonio excited for you and your program. You have a loyal base, a fan base here. What's your message to all the fans back home who are cheering for you guys tonight?

KAREN ASTON: Yeah, just appreciate the support that they've given us really just all the time. We have -- I call them the die-hards. They show up to everything we do. They're always supporting us. There's a lot of fans that we



-- they go to the radio show, they're always everywhere we are, and they don't seem to care if we have had a bad night or a good night.

They're fans of our young women and they're fans of our basketball program and I'm excited that they're going to get to experience this with us. I'm sure we're planning Selection Sunday tomorrow night and I hope that they can come be a part of it. It's a big deal.

Q. Cheyenne, what does this moment mean to you to be a championship contender?

CHEYENNE ROWE: First of all, I got to say I've always thought this team could be a championship contender. Never a doubt in my mind.

But to me, this moment is surreal. I never thought I specifically would be here, but my teammates always believed in me, my coaches believed in me, the athletic trainers, the academic advisers, Everyone believed in me.

Without them I don't know if I would be where I am right now, so I have to thank everyone for that.

Q. Ereauna, when you chose to come here, did you ever envision a moment like this? How has this year played out compared to your expectations?

KAREN ASTON: Can you repeat that louder?

Q. I was just asking, Ereauna, when you know you chose to come to UTSA, did you ever envision a moment like this, and how did this year compare to your expectations?

EREANA HARDAWAY: Yeah, first thing I said to them was let's go back to back. We didn't get the regular season but we got the tournament, so I'm happy.

Q. Coach, I wanted to ask, last year you had the player of the year in the conference and you guys did so many great things last year. You cut down the nets in your home arena last year after winning the regular season. How did this moment compare for you compared to last year? You lost a couple players to the pros and you lost a lot of good talent in other ways. How did this one compare, this feeling compare to last year?

KAREN ASTON: I think any time you win a championship it's never the same, really. I think this has been rewarding in a completely different way than maybe any team I've ever coached because of how they put this together late in the year and just how they came together.

It's just been -- and I've said this all year long. I think everybody knows that we have an expectation of winning and I think I've said this to you, I've said it to a lot of people, I have never gone into practice and not like being around this team.

We lost some games maybe we shouldn't have lost but there's a reason for that and there's a reason for the time that they needed to grow and it's been a really fun group to coach. There's never been times that I thought they didn't care.

It was just a process and it's extremely rewarding to see them, as young people, stick with something and get rewarded. That doesn't always happen, first of all, and I think it's just a huge learning tool for them in other places in life. They stuck with this and they didn't have to.

Q. Hi, Idara, can you possibly walk me through the sequence where you got an amazing number of rebounds and finally completed that basket plus the foul? That seemed to define all week, in my opinion. How would you best describe that sequence to us?

IDARA UDO: I would describe it as getting a rebound, putting it up with not the right angle, dropping back in wrong angle again, it coming back to me, and then just kissing it off the glass at the right angle the third time and then getting fouled and getting the and-one. That's how I would describe it.

Q. Could I quickly follow with -- I'm sorry, I have been back and forth on the set, but how did you ladies flip the switch like this and win four in four days and qualify for something this team hasn't done since 2009?

IDARA UDO: I think just belief in each other, belief in our coaches, and belief in the work we put in. This is a really hard working group of girls who faced a lot of adversity and pushed through it staying mentally tough and mentally strong and trusting in the path and trusting in the plan.

Q. Idara, when you were first being recruited by UTSA and signed with UTSA, you really bought into a vision of where this program could be. What made you believe that this program could be a program that's won conference championships in back to back years and is now going to the NCAA Tournament?

IDARA UDO: I didn't who Coach was at all or what she's about, but one day she came to my practice and offered me the same day. Didn't even have a conversation with her.

I think just throughout my recruitment process I felt such a sense of trust with my coaching staff and just knowing that if I came here knowing I would be in good hands, my mom knowing I would be in good hands.

From the day I got in here I was shown that Coach rewards hard work, so just coming in and working hard every day and everybody buying into the vision and buying into the things we could do. I think that's what it really was.

Q. Karen, you touched on how special this moment is for the program. It's been since 2009 this program has been in this spot. You've been in this position before. Can you just kind of tell everybody how special this moment really is and what to expect in the coming week?

KAREN ASTON: Well, it's why you do what you do, and I tell the players this all the time. It's why they work in the summer. It's why they show up starting in June. It's the purpose, to have a chance to go to post-season play, in particular the NCAA Tournament is -- I think the WBIT was really well done last year but it's a different feel. It's a different experience.

We have so many young players. It's amazing they're going to get the opportunity to feel this, to feel tonight and also to feel that experience, because I think you don't understand what you're missing until you do it. I think it's going to fuel them, motivate them to understand why they're doing what they're doing on certain days and, again, I can say it until I'm blue in the face that it's a great experience and something you want every kid to experience, but now they can tell each other. They can tell young players that come in the program why instead of me having to do it.

I think that's worth a lot and this particular group and my seniors a, you know, it's their last shot. I told them today when they had shootaround don't take it for granted. You don't ever know this is the one shot that you get and I think they took that to hard tonight because they played like they took it to hard.

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