

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: Regional 3 Semifinal - Notre Dame vs TCU

Friday, March 28, 2025

Birmingham, Alabama, USA

Legacy Arena

TCU Horned Frogs Mark Campbell

Sweet 16 Pregame Media Conference

THE MODERATOR: Coach will give an opening statement and then we'll have questions.

MARK CAMPBELL: What a neat opportunity that we have in front of us. Just had a great practice this morning. Got a good sweat in the arena. Got up a whole bunch of shots.

Kids are really, really excited, but we've been grinding ten months to hopefully have a chance to be in this position, and we're really excited about tomorrow and to get out there and compete against Notre Dame.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. What did you learn from the two Baylor championship games that's helped you prepare this week to be able to beat a team again that you beat earlier in the season?

MARK CAMPBELL: Yeah, for sure. Those Baylor games were high stakes. You know, both of them had championship on the line. One was for a league title. One was for a conference tournament championship. That was two different situations, winner take all.

This group has delivered in those moments all throughout the season. So tomorrow is another one of those big opportunities.

But this group to get to this point, to be 33-3, they have delivered on the big stage and in the big moments.

Q. Sedona had 20 and 20 in their first matchup. How important is it going to be to get another type of performance like that from her tomorrow?

MARK CAMPBELL: Let's make sure she does that again. She was incredible in that game. Impacted the game all



over the court, and she's so unique. She has the ability to have a 20 and 20 on any given night. We're going to need just an incredible performance from Sedona tomorrow.

Again, she is one of the most unique players in college basketball because of the way she impacts the game on both sides of the ball.

Q. Two questions for you: The first one is how much do you watch that first game tape knowing they were missing their two post players? How much can you glean from that for tomorrow?

MARK CAMPBELL: Great question. You definitely go back and scrub it and study it, but that was a long time ago. Both of us are a lot different than then, but it's just good to go back and see defensively what we were trying to do and how you want to tweak it and change it.

Then offensively just studying the stuff. So there is some stuff you could take away from it, but it's really a new season. That's so long ago. The journey of their season and having some of their main players back and they're playing really good basketball.

We've done both. We've studied that game and scrubbed it, but then we've gone back and studied their last five games to get to this point to make sure we have a good understanding of what they're doing now, what they're trying to do.

I think we have a good game plan and a really good understanding of where they're at right now.

Q. You guys seem to be the poster child of using the transfer portal. So many players that you have added that have been huge for you. Is this sort of the new way that women's basketball is going, to find people in the portal as opposed to looking to high school kids to recruit to go that route?

MARK CAMPBELL: Yeah, for sure. Great question. I can't speak on other programs. I can speak on our journey. Inheriting a 1-17 team, it's really hard to win with high school kids. You're in such a deep hole, you've got to



get old, and you've got to get talented, and you have to do that quickly.

So for us I think it's 12 portal players. We've signed six last year and six this year. Between those two classes, we've been able to assemble one of the best teams in the country, and it didn't take long to do that. That's where the portal has changed college athletics.

I'm not saying that's the only way that you need to do it. That way has worked for us to get the program up and running. We have some high school kids coming in next season that we signed. So that blend.

I think the portal is not going away. I do think our program -- it's really hard to take kids out of the portal and get them to become a really efficient basketball team and to get a great locker room, and I think we've been able to do that as well as anybody in the country, and we'll continue to do that.

So, obviously, the portal is open now. As we're going through March Madness, we're also navigating the portal and the players that are in that and making sure we continue to add the right pieces. Our staff works really hard to try to get the basketball piece right, but also try to just get the personality and the locker room right.

Yeah, it will be fun to see what we can do in this next cycle.

Q. You know, when you think back to your time at Oregon, Oregon State, are there pieces of advice or moments or conversation that, I don't know, you've reflected on that help inform how you guys are preparing for this Sweet 16 run or being in the second weekend of an NCAA Tournament?

MARK CAMPBELL: Oh, absolutely. I think this is my fifth Sweet 16 that I've been able to be a part of. I mean, probably the greatest advice, it's so fun and exciting. You're at the pinnacle of your sport, and there's distractions everywhere. You have to stay locked in and block out those things and keep the main thing the main thing.

It's so easy, because it's just so cool to be in this moment. Especially for our school and our program. It's the first time ever, right? So you want to enjoy the moment because it is really, really special and it's really hard to get to this point of the season, but from getting to do it a bunch of times, you have to stay locked in.

We're old, and we have a group of kids that this is their last go-around. It's their last chance to make a deep run, and so their maturity, their focus level of understanding the

moment has been incredible. Really this whole season they have been so locked in.

That's one of the things I'm excited for them and know they'll be ready for tomorrow.

Q. I feel like Taylor could be an X factor for you tomorrow. I know minutes could be tight. When she is on the floor what are some things you can do to kind of get her going and maximize her minutes on the floor?

MARK CAMPBELL: Yeah, Taylor has been great all season and is such a huge part of it. It's almost like she is one of the six starters that we've alluded to kind of all throughout the season. Her and Donovyn have gone in and out and Agnes have all collectively had such a huge role. You know, to win tomorrow, you're going to need everybody.

So Taylor is so versatile. She has the ability to really shoot it and make plays off the bounce for us. Then defensively she's long. The first time we played these guys, Taylor did a tremendous job defensively. I know she's ready.

Again, she's another veteran. I think it was Elite Eight. All these kids have played in so many March Madnesses. I think last year with USC, had a deep run and played an important role. So she'll be ready to go tomorrow.

Q. You had kind of touched on the difficulties of bringing in a transfer class that large. How did you and your coaching staff approach that? Was there a learning curve that you learned last year? Is it different from bringing in a six-person freshman class?

MARK CAMPBELL: Yeah, for sure. Really good question. There's a huge difference between six portal kids and six freshmen. You know, the portal, a lot of the kids we brought in are 20, 21, 22 years old. Your freshmen are just moving away from home for the first time and trying to figure out college life and the grind of college athletics. The portal kids have been there, done that. They understand what they need to do and what they're signing up for.

It is really tricky in regards to -- and we value culture. I think in the portal era the best thing I could say with how we've navigated the portal is we have doubled down on culture, we've doubled down on team-building activities, and investing in that group.

You get nine months together, and it's so hard. You can't just throw a group of people, whether it's basketball or

something else, together and expect it to magically work. You have to truly pour into that group. So we did all sorts of stuff during the summertime and in the fall and team retreats and team meals and small groups to make sure we build continuity, that there's true relationships that are established.

That process takes time. That's not a go out on one Saturday as a group and all of a sudden they become a family. So we've been very intentional with this portal and how we can have a great culture in the locker room.

So six portal kids and six freshmen are a completely different process. We had the No. 1 class in the country at Oregon when we had six kids that were all freshmen, so it's been neat to see the journey of that, what that looks like, and then the junior of what the portal looks like.

We've navigated both landscapes really well.

Q. Kind of sticking on that relationship-building front, I wanted to ask about Hailey Van Lith. We've been able to watch her throughout her college career, but I'm curious who was the Hailey that you first got to know when she first got to your program, and who has she kind of become today in this tournament?

MARK CAMPBELL: Yeah, man, you guys have great questions today. It's just been neat to see the whole evolution. Really I've known Hailey since she was 15, and to watch her whole college journey and to be fully aware of it and to observe it from the outside, you know, her first four years and understanding her family and her and then getting one last ride and getting to do it with her.

Her evolution, I think there was, for good reason, was kind of a wall up when she first got here. I can't speak for her. My guess was probably there was a little bit of a protection wall that was up. To see that come down and to see her pour into her teammates and her teammates pour into her, Hailey has just allowed me to really get to know her and coach her. She's been vulnerable with all of us. Once she realized there was a real safe space for her, it's been so neat to watch her blossom.

There's two elements to Hailey. You know, there's the basketball piece, where she has flourished as a play-making guard and a point guard, and she broke our single-season assist record. She has a chance to break our single-season scoring record. So you got to watch the true Hailey on the basketball court be herself.

Then there's the Hailey as a leader, as a fun-loving kid, as an incredible competitor. To watch that Hailey emerge and be herself. This nine-month process and getting to do it

with her and for it to work, I kind of got -- you've got to be attached at the hip with these portal kids because it happens so quick. This nine-month process, to have trust and a true relationship, if you can get those right, the basketball piece will take care of itself.

So I am so proud of her and happy for her.

Q. You said to win tomorrow you're going to need everybody. On Sunday both Agnes and Donovan just had incredible games. Donovan didn't miss a shot. How do you keep that momentum up and make sure they're having their best game?

MARK CAMPBELL: Yeah, I mean, Donovan and Agnes last game to get to this point against Louisville were phenomenal. I think each of them had the best game of the season.

But for the people that have followed us, it's not a surprise. When you see how tight and cohesive this group is, the belief they have in each other, the trust -- for Hailey to have ten assists and to be willing to drive and kick and make the right plays so that Agnes and Dono can stick those shots, she is only able to do that because she completely believes in them. That is this group.

There's so much trust on our team right now, and that's been built from the journey of this season. So our offensive weapons, it's really hard. Every team has tried a different defensive scheme to try to slow this group down. This group trusts each other and has been able to pick it apart, regardless of what that is. I know Notre Dame is going to have a great game plan. It's up to us and our staff and our kids to figure that out and be able to make the right play for each other, but I have full confidence that we'll do that tomorrow as well.

THE MODERATOR: OK Coach Thank you.

MARK CAMPBELL: Thank you guys. Go Frogs!

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