

# NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: Regional 3 Final - TCU vs Texas

Sunday, March 30, 2025

Birmingham, Alabama, USA

Legacy Arena

## TCU Horned Frogs Mark Campbell

Elite Eight Pregame Media Conference

THE MODERATOR: We are ready to begin. Coach Campbell will make opening comments and we will take questions.

MARK CAMPBELL: Well, just super excited and grateful that we get a chance to compete Monday night for a chance to go to a Final Four and just to have another practice with this group of players and be able to just continue this journey that's been magical and special.

**Q. Mark, you got a chance to watch Texas live yesterday, your first impressions?**

MARK CAMPBELL: There's not many holes. They're incredible. They have size and great post play. They have depth, really athletic, have one of the best point guards in college basketball. And they're a 1 seed for a reason. So we're going to have to play a heck of a game and Coach Vic and his staff obviously do a tremendous job with their system, style of play.

So it's going to be a heck of a game but we got our work cut out.

**Q. Mark, going off that post play comment, what are your impressions of Taylor Jones and Kyla Oldacre?**

MARK CAMPBELL: Oh, incredible. Taylor Jones is an athletic, strong, versatile post player and the depth they have at the post position, they got a lot of big bodies that they can throw at you. They're a load. They're a load down there. They wear on you.

So that's something that we're going to have to manage and deal with as best we can and try to keep those kids off the glass and don't let them have deep post positions.

**Q. Coach Geno and Kim Mulkey were outspoken in**



their press conferences about the super regional and how that goes. Do you have any thoughts about their opinions on it?

MARK CAMPBELL: No, I've been focused on every ounce of energy trying to figure out how to game plan for Notre Dame and I got 48 hours to try to figure out how to slow down this Texas team.

**Q. How much does the familiarity of having played Texas last year when you were both members of the Big 12 help, despite the fact there are lots of new players on both sides?**

MARK CAMPBELL: Yeah, Coach Schaefer, his system and what they do, he doesn't really change it. He's really good at it. It helps to be familiar with his system but we have a whole new team and obviously they have new players. So you can look at some film a little bit from last year, but really you're just scrubbing this year's team and trying to figure out what we gotta do to have a chance to beat these guys.

**Q. Todd Golden of Florida was talking yesterday about how much Randy Bennett meant to him. I say for you your time back at Saint Mary's, have you heard from Randy throughout this run and how much did he influence your coaching philosophy, your offensive principles, how you want to run a program?**

MARK CAMPBELL: Randy, I talk to him often, talked to him all throughout March. That's my mentor. That's who showed me how to run a program. Our principles, a huge part of what we do and is based on my time at Saint Mary's. Obviously they're one of the best pick-and-roll teams in college basketball, so we've taken that.

And then just the culture and how you build programs. They have such a -- you go back to Saint Mary's in the off-season and all the former players are there training and working out.

A huge part of what I do is because of Randy, and I'm thankful he took me under his wing when I was just getting started in coaching. It was a long time ago but I was



probably 24, 25. I still call him when I got questions and decisions that I need to make. He just has so much wisdom.

He's such a humble man. He's been at Saint Mary's for 24 years now I think it is and has turned down a lot of powerful opportunities. Todd Golden is a part of that coaching tree and played for Randy. I know he's loving getting to watch his former players and former staff kinda blossom.

**Q. Mark, how important was it for you to get Hailey Van Lith to come in here and run this offense and how big of a trickle down effect does she bring with her toughness on the court?**

MARK CAMPBELL: Yeah, Hailey is a program changer. She was the perfect piece at the right time with the players we had returning. The system and style of play that we run obviously were pick-and-roll based and you need dynamic play-making guards.

I've known Hailey since she was about 15 and knew how talented she was as a playmaker and she had never been used in that way.

So it was a perfect match. We needed Hailey and preseason I said our goal is to unleash Hailey Van Lith, and that's come to fruition.

But Hailey's competitive spirit, I think you got to see it at the highest level yesterday on both sides of the court. She was impacting the game. Those two guards, Miles and Hidalgo are as good a backcourt as there is in the country and I think they went 6 for 29. Hailey was a huge part of that.

And then on offensive end her play-making skills, especially in the second half, she carried us.

So getting Hailey here truly is a program-changing player, and to do what we need to do in our system, you have to have a dynamic play-making guard that can manipulate pick-and-rolls and create the dominos for us. So it's been a perfect match. Forever grateful for Hailey. It's just been a really, really fun ride and we don't want this thing to end yet.

**Q. Coach, Vic talked yesterday about how special it is to have two teams representing Texas at this stage. What is it like for you to be not only represent Texas but also we talked about early in the season about having records set at TCU this year with fan attendance? How big is this for college fans from Texas?**

MARK CAMPBELL: It's awesome. I mean, it's the biggest stage in our sport, chance to go to the Final Four. And to play Texas, who is just down the street from us, one, it's just awesome for our state, because our state has some of the best women's basketball high school players in the country, incredible coaches in Texas. It shows you don't have to leave our state to go compete at the highest level.

I have nothing but great respect for Coach Vic and his program and what he's built and what he's done since he's taken over there. So it's going to be an incredible battle, and excited to go tip-off tomorrow night.

**Q. Mark, can you go back in time a little bit to when you took the TCU job in how many people told you you were crazy to go there, you're never going to win big and the whole tryout thing, I don't know how many showed up and how many you kept from that?**

MARK CAMPBELL: Yep, I don't know how many people know this story, me and my family, we took the job at TCU sight unseen. Had never been to Ft. Worth, had never been to TCU's campus. I'm a big man of faith and this opportunity came about and the best way to put it, I just had total peace about the opportunity that was in front of us.

So we were at little Sacramento State and just had the best season in school history there and somehow Jeremiah Donati found me. So when I was studying it from afar, I thought TCU was a sleeping giant in women's basketball. If you just dove into it, it's private, it's 11,000 students, it's small. Fort Worth is this incredible city. Campus is beautiful and resources. It's neat.

So we took a leap of faith and accepted the job. My first time on campus was, you know, flew in the day before my press conference. To see what's transpired, two years, it's actually two years from today -- no, last week, was my two years from when I got hired. You had the "underfrog" stories when we had the injuries. We had four walk-ons that came to the tryout that we kept. That's kind of the reality. In life you're going to face adversity, you're going to have trials that you gotta work through and overcome and navigate.

But I think last year, laid a foundation of toughness and resilience and fight for our program that's carried over now that we added the talent level that we have to the foundation from last year.

That combination is why we're 34-3, we're in the Elite Eight. So it was no fun, but I'm thankful for last year, thankful for that journey and Ella Hamlin is the one underfrog that's been a huge part of our team and still a

part of it. It's been a magical two years.

**Q. Coach talk about the story about how you met Hailey. Did your paths cross in Washington?**

MARK CAMPBELL: I was associate head coach at University of Oregon and Hailey was a prodigy growing up in a small town in eastern Washington, Cashmere and everybody knew about Hailey and at that time we were rolling, number 1 team in the country and recruiting Hailey really hard. Developed a great relationship with her and her family, and ended up going different ways over the last five years. I ended up taking my first job at Sac State and Hailey went to Louisville.

When she went in the portal then reached out when I was at Sac State. Didn't think we could get her but asked the family if they needed help, had any questions. They navigated that process.

When she went to LSU and ended up in the portal again. That story is pretty neat. Without knowing it, Hailey told her dad, I want to talk to Mark. And at that time Corey was like, You sure? They just had open tryouts this season and had to forfeit games. And Hailey said, Yeah I want to talk to Mark.

So I had a chance to talk with Corey and Hailey and they came out and visited and, you know, the rest is history.

It's just neat. It's a moment that's really come full circle due to relationships that were built many years ago.

**Q. I read an article on Caitlin Clark last year and learned that it can be hard to coach a superstar, so what was your approach when you decided to bring in Hailey Van Lith?**

MARK CAMPBELL: Hailey has been incredible. The journey she has been on and for my coaching style and our culture was a perfect fit. She had a major chip on her shoulder. She also had the Olympic opportunity that was in front of her. So she had to turn the page from her LSU experience quickly and start getting ready for Paris.

She is the ultimate competitor, ultimate winner, and so she -- we have been attached at the hip. All our film sessions, we do individual meetings together, but she has this incredible basketball IQ, incredible feel for people.

And she has this warrior spirit so she is able to in nine months navigate the locker room, build relationships with her teammates, they absolutely love her and be able to learn this brand new system. She has worked so hard to study it, to figure it out, of what we need from her in order

to win. Then she'll run through a freaking wall for you while she is trying to do that.

So there has been no difficulty. She has been such a blessing and it's so fun to navigate this process with and each player is different, you know?

But this Hailey at this time has been incredible.

**Q. Coach, can you talk about the growth of Sedona? You had her back in Oregon, couple years ago before, what she is doing now for you guys, she is the oldest of the old frogs, so to speak?**

MARK CAMPBELL: Sedona, it's been six years that I've got to be a part of her and see her grow and develop. I think last night was her most dominant physical game as a post player. She is so skilled. If she was allowed to, she would love to shoot 15, 17 footers all game, and she is so skilled she can, but there is also games where you need to give us a low post presence and bang and be physical. She got to the free-throw line 12 times last night, drew 9 fouls and competed on the court.

Sedona's growth, her maturity, her evolution as a player, it's as much as any person I've ever been around in the college game.

So it's really neat to see that evolution, and same thing, similar to Hailey. Sedona's maturity -- that's what's made this whole thing work you guys, and not just Sedona. So Hailey, Sedona, Madison trio, the only way the portal will work with these elite talents, they all have to lose themselves and be willing to be all in. Sedona is the most selfless personality, and she is a superstar, and she is all in. However many shots she gets, she doesn't care. Hailey has never asked about how many shots she gets; she doesn't care. Madison Conner doesn't care. The big three find joy in each other's success, and Sedona is such a humble spirit that way.

Early on, young people in their college career are in a wrestling match with themselves. These three have let that go and that's why the magic has happened and that's why we have been able to do what we've done.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports