

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: Regional Semifinal - Maryland vs Stanford

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Spokane, Washington, USA

Veterans Memorial Arena

Stanford Cardinal

Tara VanDerveer

Anna Wilson

Lexie Hull

Lacie Hull

Sweet 16 Media Conference



our strength can be our weakness where she's a super aggressive player in a good way, but just obviously we need her to stay in the game.

Q. Earlier Kevin McGuff was in here talking about how he feels like these days when you go recruit, there are not really any more post players, every post player wants to be a guard. Is that why Cam is shooting a lot of threes?

TARA VANDERVEER: Cam loves playing with her back to the basket. She's great in there. She's fine mixing it up. She's very physical.

I think it's just more of how we play, how we can take advantage of her strengths. We have post players that like to play in the post. Cam does, Fran Belibi, Kiki, Brooke Demetre, they all work, I think, really well with their back to the basket.

I think basketball, one thing is involved a lot, we've gone to more of a face-up game. Some of that has to do with the officiating. When they have their back to the basket, teams can be really physical against them. A lot of times we like to face up, that's when the defense has to take their hands off.

I'm excited about all of our post players' versatility.

Q. Can you talk about what Lexie and Lacie Hull have meant to your program over the last four or five years, seeing them grow from when you recruited them to where they are now, what they mean to you and the program.

TARA VANDERVEER: Well, I would hope it would be five years, but I'm being realistic, over four years.

Honestly, you don't have enough paper or ink to write all the good things I could say about both of them. They're just quintessential Stanford student-athletes. They're twins, they compete academically. One was a .398, one was a .399. It's amazing what they've done.

I tease their parents I'm mad at them for not having triplets.

THE MODERATOR: We welcome Coach VanDerveer. Do you have an opening statement?

TARA VANDERVEER: We're just very excited to be here, just looking forward to the games. Just been a great tournament so far. We just want to keep playing well.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open it up to questions.

Q. I got a chance to cover Cameron throughout her high school career. I couldn't help but notice how much of an impact she's having in the tournament so far simply in terms of staying out of foul trouble compared to last year. How have you seen her emphasize on growing that part of her game?

TARA VANDERVEER: Cam has had a great sophomore year. I think she's really improved. She is an incredibly talented player. Just great hands, runs the floor. Just really plays hard.

You know, if a player came in perfect, what would my job be? There are things that we're asking Cam to improve on.

One of them is becoming more versatile. She's shooting her three, playing outside, playing more than one position, which she basically played one position all last year and the beginning of this year.

I think her defense, she was named Pac-12 Defensive Player of the Year. She blocks a lot of shots. Sometimes



They are incredibly special young women. I don't have a bad day with Lexie or Lacie. It took me about a year to tell them apart. I still can't tell with some of the little baby pictures.

Their games are both phenomenal games. They are not just incredible players but they're incredible teammates. They bring a sisterhood to our team that is really special.

We live in this world, just like the portal world, the iPhone, everything about me and I and selfish stuff. They're incredibly unselfish players. They just do what our team needs them to do. They do a lot of the gritty work, on the floor for the ball, exceptionally competitive. CV and Spokane can be really proud of the Hull twins.

Q. I'm wondering if being here, seeing Maryland, does it bring back any memories of your -- at the time it was your first trip to the Final Four in 11 or 12 years.

TARA VANDERVEER: 11.

Q. Does this setting bring back those memories and put a little bit in perspective of what you've done in the last few years?

TARA VANDERVEER: Well, Spokane, we love Spokane. Obviously the twins are a big part of that. Jeanette Pohlen is on our staff. She's an intern. She played her freshman year here and her senior year in the regional tournament. We went to the Final Four both times, playing Gonzaga the second time.

Playing Maryland, I told our team about it. It was a phenomenal game. Maryland and Brenda do just a great many job. They have an outstanding team. They did then and they do now. It was a big, big win for our program.

I think Kristi Toliver, we held her to about 47, something like that. She's a phenomenal player. We were able to pull out the win, 90-something to 80-something, in the '90s, just a high-scoring game, which I would expect this game tomorrow to be a very fun game, up-tempo game, an exciting game to watch. Both of our teams really are high octane offenses.

But the thing that I remember the most from winning that game was just the starters, it was Jayne Appel, Candice, Jillian Harmon, Kayla Pedersen, Rosalyn Gold-Onwude, before they were waiting in that little room over there to come into the media room, the five of them were just holding hands. They didn't want their season to end.

I hope this team is like that in that they'll do whatever it takes, put their team on their back the way Lexie did last

weekend to get here, that we're not satisfied with being in Spokane, that we, in fact, want to play in the regional championship and want to play in the Final Four.

Q. You played Maryland in November. You beat them by double-digits. They were without two of their starters. Would you expect you're going to see a better version of that team tomorrow night?

TARA VANDERVEER: Yes. I think we'll see a better version of Maryland and I think Maryland will see a better of Stanford.

November is November basketball. We're talking March basketball, which at this point both teams are playing their best basketball. We were without two of our key players, without Ashten Prechtel, she was out, and Cameron Brink let me know two minutes before the game she was sick. She played a little bit, but she was out.

I expect it to be both teams' best games, bring out the best in each other. Again, Maryland is an exceptional program, exceptional talent. You have to really work hard to beat a Maryland team. They're not going to beat themselves.

Q. I was wondering your thoughts on the challenges Maryland backcourt of Ashley Owusu and Diamond Miller will pose for you. The level they're playing at, what are the challenges you see there?

TARA VANDERVEER: Well, both players are really outstanding players, very versatile, they're big, they're strong, they're athletic. They shoot the ball well. They run the court really well. They rebound.

Again, we have our work cut out for us. But we've got I think Lexie and Lacie Hull, Haley Jones, Anna Wilson. Our team is up for the challenge. Again, we're going to have to play hard, we're going to have to play very well.

This is where we're at. At this level, when you're playing in the Sweet 16 to try to get to the Elite Eight, you're going to play against great players, and they are great players.

Q. When you saw Brenda 11 or 12 years ago, she was pretty much known as an offensive style coach, offensive-minded coach. Can you describe if you've noticed her evolution in terms of her strategy on defense.

TARA VANDERVEER: A great question. Brenda is a basketball coach. Basketball coaches, she teaches a game, whether it's offense or defense. She has very talented offensive players. They're big, and they can switch a lot. Their switching defense can be very

disruptive.

They've always had really, really strong teams, championship-type teams. Those teams are not one side of the ball. You can't be all offense or all defense. You've got to play all facets, and they do.

Q. Coming in here obviously as the defending national champs, Lexie and Lacie's hometown. What has been the message to this team to keep the focus on winning, eliminating a lot of the distractions that might come with playing in Spokane?

TARA VANDERVEER: I think there are three things: Maryland, Ohio State and Texas. If that doesn't have our team's focus, then nothing will.

Q. You mentioned this is going to be a high octane game tomorrow, fun to watch. With a team like Maryland who is really at their best when they're running, why don't you want to slow it down and ugly it up? Just curious.

TARA VANDERVEER: I like our team running, too. And I like open-court basketball. I think that's where we're at with the women's basketball game. The more we can play open court, really show the ballet of basketball, the moving, cutting, not have it be a wrestling match, not have it be so physical that you're fouling all the time. People want to watch -- they don't want to watch rugby in a 94 and 50 square wooden floor.

I think both of our teams play really exciting and really open basketball. It's going to be who does it better on that day.

Q. This is a little bit off topic. You've always been able to bring in elite-level talent for your program. This is the first year of the NIL deals for college athletes. Do you have any thoughts on how that might change the approach for your program or how that as a whole will change women's college basketball?

TARA VANDERVEER: Well, NIL is here and it's a great thing for our student-athletes to benefit from their name, image, and likeness.

Our players have great opportunities for that. Stanford is partnering with our athletic department who's partnering with our student-athletes to help them benefit from this.

I think it's something that great high school players are already having those opportunities, too. I think the danger is that, you know, players, to manage school and to manage basketball, to manage your social life, now you've

added a fourth pillar to be a businesswoman.

I think this is where parents, whether it's adults in young people's lives, can help them, to keep things in perspective. As I tell our team, someone like Lexie and Lacie, they're at the end of their careers, not really benefit from four years of NIL. A Stanford degree is going to, I think, be able to leverage much more than maybe an NIL would.

I would tell young people focus on your academics, focus on your basketball, then good things will come along from NIL, as they have for our Stanford athletes, both men and women.

Q. I know you pledged \$10 for every three-pointer made in the tournament. What has been the response since you decided to do that?

TARA VANDERVEER: You know, I didn't really do it for like maybe a response. I just did it to think that I got to do something. This is really so disheartening. We're in here, we can maybe ignore it, but as soon as you walk outside, you turn on television, you see the really just heartbreaking situation that people in Ukraine are in, having been to Ukraine, coached in Ukraine.

What triggered it for me was Nell Fortner was my assistant coach in Ukraine. We were driving on the bus. There was this guy on a horse with a hand up. I said to Nell, What is that? Like she was going to know. She didn't know. She goes, He's just saying party on. I called Nell, said there's no partying right now. We got to do something. Both Nell and I said we'll give \$10. Other people have reached out to me.

I wasn't even really ready. I asked my SID to help. I'm getting it organized now where through our Twitter, through Facebook, we're going to try to kind of have a list of who joins the pledge, what you joined for, whether it's a penny a three for men's and women's. Try to get as many coaches, as many fans. My dentist said, I'm in. People just say, Hey, let's do something.

I put it out there as a challenge. I'm really trying to focus on our team and coaching, but I'm getting help from other people to give it traction and just say as a basketball community, can we do something for what I refer to, when we played the Ukrainian team 10 times, I referred to them as my cousins. I said, These are my cousins. We played them so much we knew them.

Our Olympic team was extremely generous when we left Ukraine, leaving whether it's money or clothing with people that waited outside our hotel room at 3:30 in the morning.

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

Just knowing we have so much, we can give back.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you for your time.

TARA VANDERVEER: Thank you all very much.

THE MODERATOR: Our student-athletes should be joining us here shortly.

We want to welcome our Stanford student-athletes with us.

Q. Lexie and Lacie, tell us about coming home. Did your parents meet you at the airport? Did your dogs? Have you managed to hit any of your favorite Spokane hangouts?

LEXIE HULL: Right when we got home to the hotel, my dad showed up with two of our dogs. Yeah, we spent some time with them, had them up to our room, had them running around, jumping on the bed. Not sure if that's allowed, hotel (laughter).

We had a lot of fun with them. Haven't got to see my mom yet. She's on her way, she's coming. Super happy to be home. It feels like home when we're walking around.

Q. Anything to add?

LACIE HULL: The dogs, that's pretty much been the staple since we've been home. They came again today, that's always great. Really thankful for our parents for driving them down. Yeah, excited to see my mom when she gets back.

Q. Lexie and Lacie, what does Freddie Rehkow mean to you guys? He was your high school coach. Talk about him and what he's meant to you in your growth as basketball players.

LACIE HULL: I think he's been influential in our journey through basketball. He was our high school coach so we learned so much. Those were such developmental years and we're really thankful for his support, knowledge, everything that he's taught us through those four years we were with him. Everything we accomplished was in large part because of him.

Nothing but great things to say about Rehkow. We've been able to see him a couple times since high school, which is always a blessing. We love him and his family. Yeah, just really thankful for him.

LEXIE HULL: Super thankful for what he's done for us, for our family. Definitely learned so much from him over the years. Even now the support we feel from him after every

big game, every thing that happens in our careers, we get a text right away from him.

Super appreciative of him and his family. Their entire family came to our game. Just really thankful for that support from them.

Q. I talked to your mom yesterday. She told me about the early morning trips to Liberty Lake Elementary for free-throw shooting. Tell me about some of those early memories of starting to play the game and loving it.

LEXIE HULL: We used to be really into free throw Elks, free throw competition. We'd go to our elementary school with Miss Peterson, would let us into the gym, and we'd get free throws out before school some days. I think that really started with our love for the game, wanting to be the best we could be.

That carried all the way till now, just finding time to get into the gym and work on our game.

LACIE HULL: I think growing up we played a lot of other sports, too. Our grandpa and our dad both played basketball in college. Having them as role models I think really influenced the love and just appreciation for the game, and the goal to play in college, as well.

Q. Anna, I think you guys just got done with finals; is that true? So at this point how many degrees do you have from Stanford? Because all of you are seniors, are you done now? Do you just get to focus on basketball or are you still juggling new classes because of spring?

ANNA WILSON: I only have two degrees. Obviously I've kind of been going through this year just taking some classes at Stanford that I never got the opportunity to take because of pursuing those degrees. So I've been taking some classes in the GSB and then some more art classes here and there.

My finals, I would say they're pretty easy now that I finished. They're all classes by choice. All the finals are fun and good.

Yeah, but these two also have two degrees as well. They did it pretty quickly. Kudos to them.

Q. How have you guys seen Cameron Brink develop from last postseason to this postseason? How has the growth in her game helped you guys in the tournament so far?

ANNA WILSON: Obviously Cameron is a really special player. We've only got to see her in these two rounds so far. There's a lot of growth for her even in this next game, obviously a new challenge with Maryland and everything.

She's a tremendous teammate and everything. She's going to do awesome. Regardless of how many points she puts up, she's going to play a really pivotal role for us. I'm excited to see what she does.

LEXIE HULL: Cameron, I just know she has grown already so much. I can't believe she's only a sophomore. I think she's playing and filling a role that is extremely important for our team. Even last year in the tournament, playing such a huge role as a freshman. I'm excited to see hopefully next few games for her to finish out her sophomore season.

But, I mean, she plays so hard, so competitive, so tough. I mean, I think she's one of the best players in the country. Super fun to watch, super fun to be a part of her journey here at Stanford.

LACIE HULL: Kind of everything they said is spot on. She's a rock star in high school and a rock star in college. It's amazing to see the growth she's had over just the last two years. I'm super excited to see how the next two go. She's an incredible person on and off the court so we're just really lucky to have her on our team.

Q. I think Tara just said she shared with you that this spot has special history in Stanford lore. 2008 they had a huge win against Maryland to make it to the Final Four. Are you aware of that, you're recreating a little bit of history?

LEXIE HULL: She mentioned that story to us today. Jeanette is part of our team now. We kind of see it in her, how much this place means to her, how much it means to the Stanford program. It's super cool to kind of have it come back full circle, being back in Spokane playing Maryland again.

I think we're just really excited to get playing and are looking forward to the game tomorrow.

Q. Four years ago you played your last game on this floor. I think that was the stinky sneaker game. Talk about the atmosphere of that game and what you're hoping to see tomorrow night.

LACIE HULL: It's crazy to think about that. We were walking through the halls, this looks familiar. It doesn't feel like four years ago we were here. That's crazy how fast time has been flying by. The atmosphere here is great.

We're excited to get playing like Lexie mentioned. I hope the outcome was the same as it was at the stinky sneaker.

LEXIE HULL: I remember the stinky sneaker game, every year it's the game with it feels like the most fans, the game with the most students, always one of the most fun games of the season because you have basically your entire school there cheering you on.

I think tomorrow we'll feel similar with so many people there cheering, so many big supporters of Stanford women's basketball, women's basketball in general.

I think the atmosphere here in Spokane is super awesome. I'm just happy that the regional tournament is here.

Q. Obviously it's your homecoming, but you're also a Washington State person. Are you going to have a big group of people, too? For any or all of you, does having that support at a Sweet 16 level put more pressure on you? We kind of saw Kiana feel the pressure a little bit last year playing at home.

ANNA WILSON: Yeah, I would say, you know, about the pressure part, I'll start there. I think it's basketball. Obviously everyone who's out there will be a little nervous, of course, because the game matters.

In regards to pressure, I don't think it's too much pressure. It's more of like a big opportunity to play the game.

Then, as well, I am from here, but I'm not at home like they are. I have a lot of support in person, from distance. Their people are my people, so it should be a good show out.

Q. I feel like we should ask you about the game. What do you remember when you played them earlier this season? What have you seen on film? Tara was saying she thinks it's going to be high octane, she wants to see two teams that get out and run, high scoring.

ANNA WILSON: Obviously we're both different teams than we were at the beginning of the season. That was back in November in The Bahamas. They had a few players out. Obviously they have those players back, as well as we've grown as a team.

Just as Tara said, really excited about getting out there and playing. We'll see what happens tomorrow.

Q. Want a high-scoring game?

ANNA WILSON: Of course (smiling). But obviously defense will be really important, so...

LEXIE HULL: I'm sure the fans would love a high-scoring game. Really interesting for them.

But like Anna said, I think both teams are drastically different than the first time we played them. I think both teams have grown a lot. We've seen on film just how aggressive Maryland is offensively and how much they want to run the floor.

I think we're ready to get our running shoes on and keep up with them. We're just looking forward to tomorrow.

Q. Lexie, in your press conference after the last game you said your entire body was ready to get to Spokane. Tara just said you put the team on your back during that game. What is it going to take for you guys to get to another Final Four? Will you be able to sustain that level of play throughout the next two games, especially in front of your family and friends?

LEXIE HULL: I think more than anything now that we're here, we want to play as hard as we can here. All of us and our entire bodies want to make it to Minneapolis. We're all going to put it all on the line, put everything on the court. That's all we can really ask from ourselves.

I think the support from our friends and family will definitely help get us there. By having that support, hopefully if there's a down moment, we can turn it around and come out on top.

Just really excited to be able to played with each other and see how far we can go.

Q. Anna, the rare sixth-year player, sure it's gone by really fast for you, but have you started to process the thought, one, maybe three more games could be your very last in a Cardinal uniform?

ANNA WILSON: Yeah, I think this past year probably has been the most emotional season mostly because I know it's coming to an end. I think it's mostly thinking about, like, not being at practice with these people anymore, not being able to play in games with them anymore. Obviously this is a special group, it's the whole reason of why I came back to play.

So I'm honestly just looking forward to playing, being around them for the next, you know, 10 days, wanting it to last for as long as possible.

Whatever energy or whatever effort I have to put out there in order for that to happen, hopefully all of us can bring that. So that's really my thoughts about it, so...

Q. Are you guys noticing a difference in the way things are being run in terms of gender equity? Obviously Ali made a huge impact last year with shining a light on some of that. I'm curious if you guys are trying to keep an eye on maybe what's happening? There's a regional in San Francisco. Do you feel like things have changed? Are they different? Are they better?

LACIE HULL: One thing coming into the gym today was we were mentioning how the signage this year seems like definitely improved. There's a lot of signage in the locker room, pretty much everywhere you're walking. That's been awesome to see.

Honestly, I haven't been paying attention to what is on the men's side. I really can't compare there. I can definitely say I've seen an improvement from last year just based on what I've seen here.

Q. (No microphone.)

LACIE HULL: Just like the March Madness. Even the Stanford in the elevator at our hotel, a sticker on that. Just like little things like that have definitely improved.

ANNA WILSON: I haven't really seen anything from the men's side, which is also interesting, like why we haven't seen that. I think there is more signage. I'm not really sure what the swag -- that was like a really big thing last year, what the swag bags looked like. I'm not really sure we can really compare the two.

Yeah, just more signage really.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you very much to our student-athletes.

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