

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

Friday, March 25, 2022

Spokane, Washington, USA

Veterans Memorial Arena

Stanford Cardinal

Coach Tara VanDerveer

Cameron Brink

Lexie Hull

Haley Jones

Sweet 16 Postgame Media Conference

Stanford 72, Maryland 66

THE MODERATOR: We will start with an opening statement from Coach Tara VanDerveer.

COACH VANDERVEER: I thought we had three good quarters and glad the game is only four quarters.

Congratulations to Maryland. I think Brenda and her team are a tough match-up for us. They gave us a heck of a game. Excited that we were able to survive and advance. We have a lot of work to do between now and Sunday.

Q. Lexie talk about how it is to be in the Elite 8 and come home and play in front of your home crowd. You had a welcoming committee coming out of the game and signed a couple balls. How are you feeling?

LEXIE HULL: We were excited to play today and I think that excitement is going to carry on to Sunday's game. I don't know about you guys, but I felt like we had a lot of people cheering for us tonight, and that feels good anywhere you are.

So felt the love from Stanford/Spokane community and excited to get back here on Sunday.

Q. Can you speak about the defensive effort, what worked so well in that quarter. You guys held them to 10 coming out of the gate.



HALEY JONES: I think we had a great scouting report by Coach Katy. I think part of why we're so good every year is because of the attention to detail we have with our scout. We were communicating, we were closing in on their shooters, we weren't giving them the first option.

I think they usually get quick shots on offense, and we made them look for second and third shots and we were getting on the boards, not giving them a lot of second-chance opportunities.

Q. Haley you started the game you had 8 points in the first seven minutes; you went 2 for 2 from three; and then it was Cam's turn and then Lacie and Lexie got going. You guys seem to be a lot deeper than you were last year. Do you agree? Does it blow your mind to think about how much deeper you are this year potentially?

HALEY JONES: From my time here we've gotten deeper and deeper every year, so I see it every day at practice. No matter who is on what team, a different team wins every time.

So like you said, I got hot, Cam got hot, Lexie got hot, and whoever it is, I think we did a really good job at feeding that hot hand. We do that in every game.

Yeah, I think it's really cool to see everybody getting in and start getting their buckets, and we're all so happy for each other. We're all screaming, look at the bench, they're yelling. On every play we're all cheering for each other, which makes it easier to be happy for one another.

Q. Did it help to see Maryland earlier in the year? In other words, does it help to have seen them a second time? Did that help do you think tonight?

LEXIE HULL: I think playing any team twice you kinda go in knowing more than you did last time. The time we played them in November both of our teams had people out. Coming in tonight we knew it was a different battle and it was going to take more from us.



I think playing them earlier kind of helped us prepare. We had already scouted them once so scouting them again was easier because it was more of a review.

Q. What do you think led to Maryland coming back in the second half and putting a dent in the lead?

HALEY JONES: Maryland is a great team, so credit to them. We knew they're not a team that's going to give up. I think they got hot and we weren't hitting shots on the other end, we weren't getting the stops we were getting in the first half.

I think we have a lot to work on going into Sunday's game just with closing out games. They're a great team. They're one of the top teams in the Big Ten, top teams in the country all year.

So we knew they were going to make a run, but seeing us be able to hold them off and not turn on each other, stay as one cohesive unit I think says a lot about who we are as a team.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you ladies. Questions for Coach.

Q. How much better can this team play still? I don't think that you have come close to peaking, do you?

COACH VANDERVEER: I think we saw some real good spurts, and basketball is kind of a game of spurts. And I think Haley said it well: Maryland is a really good team. I think we can do better. I didn't think at halftime that was our best, and definitely after the fourth quarter I'm glad we were able to play and have another game to show how much we've improved.

Obviously there's just a lot of things that we could do better, but I will come back to your other question. I think depth is the reason we're sitting here today having a game on Sunday.

Q. I want to ask about the defense. What do you think worked so well on that end of the floor for you guys tonight?

COACH VANDERVEER: We were moving our feet better; we weren't fouling. I think we got in trouble in the second half more when we were sending them to the free throw line. I think defensively just I thought Anna Wilson, honestly I thought she should be up here. She had a fabulous defensive game.

For Katie Benzan not to score a point, that's lock down defense. We didn't play against her last time. Anna did a

fabulous job. I don't think we did a good enough job on Angel Reese; she is a great player. We kind of let her get to the basket, and obviously she tore us up at the free throw line.

Other people really worked hard besides Reese. I thought they worked hard. Sometimes we had some miscues with getting the three, but they didn't make a lot of threes on us, and they're an excellent offensive team.

Q. Haley mentioned this, but even when things aren't going your guys' way, this isn't a team that necessarily like scowls at one another. There are a lot of teams when you see them shooting 20% from the floor maybe they're not as kind to one another. Where does that come from?

COACH VANDERVEER: I will say this is a tremendous strength of our team. They are really close. They've been in battles before. They trust each other. They are extremely mature players. They stay with things very well. They're resilient.

If I get on them, they huddle up with each other and say, Don't listen to her, which is probably a good thing. They're a really close team and you have great leadership with the twins, Anna; I thought Haley was out there just ready to play.

I thought Kiki gave us great minutes. I'm proud of how she played. They really care for each other and they want to keep playing.

Q. Tara, you have had three national champs and I know you talk a lot about the team -- I think it was the one that was really deep; you guys had suffered some injuries. Do you think this is the deepest team you've ever coached?

COACH VANDERVEER: I think that in a lot of ways we have a lot of different people, so it's not that maybe you're going to play ten players every game.

It might be the same five plus a different three, depending on what we're playing against.

But people are willing to play their role, and a lot of times -- just look at the portal, you know. Our team has bought into this is my role and I'm going to do it, and I'm supportive of my teammates, as Haley already pointed out.

It's really special. They're about we instead of me.

It's refreshing.

Q. You mentioned that tonight was a chance to show how much you improved. Knowing that you have another rematch in the Elite 8, what are you looking to show that you have improved upon from earlier this year?

COACH VANDERVEER: I don't think it's any secret that Texas likes to play very aggressive, kind of up on you, into your defense. That's something that with -- when we played them in the second game of the year and we had a graduating All-American point guard, that was something we struggled with.

I think we have improved a lot, although the fourth quarter was a good reminder, hey, you've got to play four quarters. I think it's running our offense and doing things you need to do to win basketball games.

Against Texas they execute well. You've got to keep 'em off the glass and you've got to take care of the basketball.

Q. You mentioned Kiki's minutes. There was that stretch in the first half. Cam had two fouls, Fran had two fouls. She comes in and you extend the lead. Is that really where you see the value of that depth?

COACH VANDERVEER: Definitely. It's disappointing when our top player like Cam gets fouled. She was doing so well. She just has to be more disciplined and not foul.

It's great to be able to go to the bench and have Kiki, Fran, Ashten can help us. I thought her defense was very good tonight. Some of it is we need people to help us on both sides of the basketball where they help us defensively and offensively.

I thought Kiki played really well. She was a warrior out there, as was Anna. We got in trouble when Lacie went to the bench. We were up 23 when she went to the bench. We can't have people fouling, and that's been a problem that we have experienced all year.

Q. Tara, I wanted to get your thoughts on that fourth quarter. What happened there and why weren't you guys able to win more comfortably?

COACH VANDERVEER: You know, you really can't print my thoughts, but Maryland is a great team. They have nothing to lose. They're just going to come down. You saw Angel hit a three. I mean, the game was over at that point, but she has made one all year. They're a great team.

Brenda does a great job. You have to keep playing. If you ever watch the NBA, games are not over when you have a

20-point lead, and I really try to tell our team that. We were in foul trouble. We had key people on the bench. I think -- I told our team this: I was disappointed with the fourth quarter. I think our whole team was.

Every disappointment is a blessing. We can live with it and move on. We're playing. I'm not going to psychoanalyze the fourth quarter. I might look at some things, but our team, they're very bright women. They're not going to need me to go over every single little thing, but they know what they have to do coming out on Sunday, and I have confidence they will do it.

Q. Coach, I wanted to ask about the rebounding advantage you guys had. What led to that and how did it help you in the game?

COACH VANDERVEER: You know, we really wanted to focus on rebounding because they're an excellent rebounding team. Angel Reese had five, which is not O-boards especially, but we need to rebound. The fact that we did rebound -- and, again, I think someone like Kiki came in, Fran had seven rebounds, Haley had ten rebounds, Cam in her 19 minutes had eight rebounds. So rebounding is definitely a key, and it's a key going forward.

Again, sometimes I think we can go big with Haley at our 3, which we did a lot in the first half, or we play with her at the 4 and she rebounds there, too. She did a great job for us today, rebounding, scoring, running offense, getting assists. I thought she really stepped up.

Q. Tara, you have to tell the truth. When the bracket came out how excited were you about a rematch with Texas, because Texas spoiled your national championship party when they beat you at home earlier in the season?

COACH VANDERVEER: They did. I don't pay attention to who we're playing. I'm excited to be in the tournament. And I agree with Lexie. Having played a team -- I'm glad we played them and we were up five going into the fourth quarter and we didn't do what we needed to do.

So I don't think anyone on our team has forgotten about that. I know they're better and I think we're better. It's going to be a great game on Sunday and our team will be ready and we will learn from this game and we will move on.

THE MODERATOR: Coach VanDerveer, thank you for your time.

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