

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: Regional Final - Texas vs Stanford

Saturday, March 26, 2022
Spokane, Washington, USA
Veterans Memorial Arena

Stanford Cardinal
Tara VanDerveer
Anna Wilson
Lexie Hull
Cameron Brink
Lacie Hull
Haley Jones

Elite 8 Media Conference

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with questions for our student-athletes.

Q. Anna, when you look at the box score from the first time you all played Texas what jumps out is Rori Harmon's 21 points. How excited are you for this matchup? How angry were you that she got that on you the first time?

ANNA WILSON: I think overall our defensive effort will be better this time around. Obviously that was really early in our season this year. So just kind of looking forward for the opportunity to play.

Obviously she's a tremendous player, needing to be locked in and understanding her tendencies and everything. But, yes, I'm excited to play.

Q. Could you share with us what some of her tendencies are and what makes her good.

ANNA WILSON: I mean, she's a tremendous shooter, like jump shots. I think they also have some other pretty good shooters on their team, as well. Trying not to let her get hot. I think that overall she's really good on ball screens.

Just trying to make her a little uncomfortable the best that I can. I'm sure she's going to make a shot, at least take a



shot. So the goal is just to, you know, play as hard as I can against her.

Q. Everybody but Haley, kind of a weird question. What is something you guys think that she doesn't necessarily get enough credit for? That can be either on the court or off the court or just you guys knowing her.

CAMERON BRINK: There's obviously so much, but I think something that really stands out to me with her skill set is her ability to pass the ball. She's probably one of the best passers I've ever played with. She just does a great job of finding people that are open, so yeah.

ANNA WILSON: I've talked about Haley a few times, at least have been asked about her a few times.

She's just someone who's a really great leader for our team. Obviously she's one of the older but also younger players on our team in terms of, like, age.

I think her experience playing in many different games allows her to bring a sense of calmness to the game. I think that's something that's underrated.

LACIE HULL: Definitely I can echo what Anna and Cam said. I think she's a tremendous teammate. In practice you want her on your team, she's so competitive. Her team is probably going to win. Definitely want to be on her team. I think she's the best teammate to ask for.

I don't think that really is replicated in the box score, but definitely very, very thankful for her.

LEXIE HULL: To continue talking about Haley (smiling), yeah, I think something that doesn't show up on the stat sheet is how vocal she is. Her and I switch a lot on defense. I know she has my back, if I need help. She's always there where she needs to be.

Also someone came up to me yesterday and asked if Haley and I have a special connection because she always seems to find me on the backdoor cuts. Like Cam said, she's one of the best passers I've ever played with.



Always seems to find anyone on our team when maybe they're not expecting it. She sees the lane, the pass. Ends up leading to a lot of good outcomes.

There's a lot of things that Haley does that doesn't necessarily show up on the stat sheet.

HALEY JONES: Thanks for the impromptu love session, guys (laughter).

Q. Lexie and Lacie, there are a lot of times looks like there's opening passing lanes for your opponents. How much of that is your innate timing and length? How much of that is you guys watching film and better understanding how to anticipate those?

LEXIE HULL: I think a lot of it has to do with our coaches really helping us with scout. We go into games knowing some of the plays the other team might want to run, the plays that they're going to want to make. I think that really helps us anticipate those passes and get in those lanes, yeah.

LACIE HULL: I think scout is definitely important. I think overall though our coaches really emphasize the value of defense. I think that that kind of makes a big impact in how we play, how our entire team plays, because you have to anticipate those kinds of passes. I think as a team we play collective defense. I think that's where it kind of shows.

Q. Do you know what your wingspans are?

LEXIE HULL: No.

LACIE HULL: No.

Q. For any or all of you. You've only had three losses this season, one of them was to the team you're going to meet. Are you glad to have seen them in your bracket? How much is revenge a motivator in this game?

HALEY JONES: I can take it.

I think when we think about playing Texas, we played them, what, our second game of the season. I think we've grown a lot since then. I think they're a completely different team, and we are as well. We're really excited to see our growth against this type of pressure going through the rest of the tournament.

I think last night was a quick taste of it. Texas is going to come 10 times fold of that. We're excited to see our growth with it. Yeah, we were all a little bit excited to see Texas on our side of the tournament. I think it adds an

extra chip on the shoulder to go into the game.

The entire tournament, you have to take it game by game. You can look ahead, but you've got to play game by game, focus on whoever is next. Since it's Texas, we now kind of get to dive fully into it, into that kind of revenge mode, chip-on-the-shoulder mode, just come out and try to throw that first punch tomorrow.

Q. Cameron, I got a chance to ask your teammates a few days ago about the growth they've seen in you from last year to this year. What is the biggest development in your game? How have you seen that apply in the NCAA tournament this year that wasn't there last year?

CAMERON BRINK: Yeah, I think I've grown a lot. But I think I've improved my shot, my outside shot. I think I've kind of been better about fouling. That's definitely always a focus for me.

But, yeah, I think me staying in the game is really important. I just need to do it for my teammates. It would be a letdown for them if I get in foul trouble tomorrow. Yeah, I still have a lot to work on but I think I've improved a lot.

Q. Anna and Lacie and Lexie, do you have a favorite defensive performance in your time at Stanford? Last night Tara talked about you held Katie to zero points. For the twins, do you have a favorite defensive performance or moment?

ANNA WILSON: Man, I think maybe --

Q. Maybe they should answer first.

ANNA WILSON: Maybe you're putting them more on the spot.

LACIE HULL: I think Tara would probably answer the same way. When we played WSU I think it was last year, one of the Leger-Walker sisters, really talented player. Anna was guarding her. I think she came in with 20 points per game, that was her average. Tara is like, Anna, you're not coming out if she doesn't score. Anna was literally in until the end of the game. There was probably like two minutes left, Tara is like, Anna, do you want to come out?

She's like, No. She doesn't want to let her score.

I think that was just incredible to see because the determination and focus she had, she's one of if not the best defensive player in the country. So I think that was a very good example of how hard she plays.

LEXIE HULL: I'll add, I was thinking of the exact same game. I think game after game after game, Anna locks down people defensively. It's hard to pick a certain game because it's every game you see her working. I mean, you don't want her to defend you. I don't want her defending me in practice. I don't think anybody does.

Yeah, I think it's hard to pick because it's everything that she has such a defensive effort.

Q. (No microphone.)

ANNA WILSON: I would say probably one of the Pac-12 tournaments that people didn't think we were going to win when we played Oregon. I think that was kind of when I got comfortable playing defense against elite guards.

I'd say probably that one.

Q. This is for everyone, but I'll start with Haley since you knocked down a couple of threes last night. I wanted to get an idea of what you think of your coach's challenge, three-point challenge, as it relates to Ukraine, and if even fleetingly it makes you think a little more about makes or misses related to this?

HALEY JONES: I think -- wow, that's a good question.

I don't think it really changes my mindset. I mean, I'm always trying to make it, so I don't think it changes my mindset that way. I think we always want to make every shot we take.

But I think with Tara specifically, that challenge that she did with the whole tournament, speaks a lot to her character and how with her it's always more than basketball.

I think we see that every day just interacting with her. Basketball is the majority of what we talk about, but she's always formed us, as all the different Stanford alumni, that there are, everybody is doing things within basketball or you see them doing more than that.

With the Ogwumike sisters, now they're president and vice president of the players association. There's so much more to all the Stanford players that come out of it.

I think it just speaks to her having this wholesome view of the world, seeing there is more than basketball. Basketball is what she has her foot in so she's able to use what she's really good at, what she's keen to, then use that and put it towards something going on else in the world. If it's helping with Ukraine, if it's speaking up for women's rights, I think it speaks to her wholesome view.

Q. Anyone else?

ANNA WILSON: Does anyone know where she's at right now?

Q. (No microphone.)

HALEY JONES: Wow.

Q. Haley, you talked about how you've grown since the first Texas game. Did you watch that as part of the scout this morning? Whether you did or not, what are the emotions you remember from that game?

HALEY JONES: Yeah, we definitely have watched the Texas film after we played them, then today. We were just talking about how it's always so weird watching those games from the beginning of the season because it feels like the season has moved so quickly, but it's also been this long period of time. That was at the beginning of November, so it's like you're watching it for the first time, I'm seeing myself move, but I don't remember what I was doing. I'm watching every clip for the first time.

I think we've just grown a whole lot, even in the decision making, we're pitching out more, people are more under control, myself included. We watched a whole lot of missed shots today. We were like, Wow, what is that? Last night we were hitting.

There were a lot of missed shots that we usually make. A think a lot of the correct decisions were made in that game to shot selection. I think we turned it over a lot more than we usually do. I think we're better at handling pressure.

Seeing that film it kind of was a reassurance to us knowing we have grown so much since that time.

Q. Lexie, Lacie, homecoming from you. You answered a lot of questions about it. I'm going to ask a different take here. Has it been more pressure on you this week knowing all the questions and the attention, all the folks from CV in the stands? Has that added to the pressure for you this week?

LEXIE HULL: I don't think so. For us, we're just trying to enjoy our last few games with this group, with this team, with Stanford. Just to have that extra support, I think it just adds an extra level of comfort, honestly, and trying to not feel extra pressure because of the people that might be in the stands watching us.

There's always people watching and supporting Stanford basketball. The more that we have, the better. I think

we're just happy to be here and enjoying our time in Spokane.

LACIE HULL: I agree. I think all the people here were watching on TV anyway. Having them in the stands means so much more, to hear their support vocally. We felt that yesterday. It was loud. We definitely felt loved. I think that was amazing and we're really lucky to be playing here.

Q. Haley, we talked going into last season, you said there are times when opponents will be running offensive plays and you realize they're running it incorrectly because you know the scout so well. When you and Cam both got to Stanford, those first few scouting reports as freshmen, what was that like? Was it overwhelming? Were you like, I didn't even realize this was something you could scout in an opponent?

HALEY JONES: Yeah, I think coming to Stanford, the attention to detail that the coaching staff has when it comes to a scout is more than I've ever experienced. I think in high school I had a great high school coach who we did scout and we watched film. It just wasn't to where it is now. We'd have a scouting report, you just had their tendencies on their top five players. Now you're scouting everybody and then you're saying what each person individually needs to do against that person. You have all of their plays.

Now the coaches are watching the bench to watch the coach's hand signals and read their lips, zoom in, try to get the play calls. The attention to detail they have is beyond anything I've ever experienced beforehand. It was definitely a bit of a switch to have to be focused for these long film sessions that we do have.

I think it helps us in the long run. Even in yesterday's game, we're calling out plays. We might have a different play in our system so we can call it out so we know that better. It's really helpful when it comes down to the game.

CAMERON BRINK: Yeah, I'll add, before we watched film today, All right, if you need to go to the bathroom, get up and go now. It's a long time.

Before college, I didn't really watch a lot of film. I was not used to that. But it's so consistent now and it honestly just feels like a habit. If we weren't to do that, it would feel wrong, so yeah.

Q. How difficult is it to remember all of that?

HALEY JONES: Yeah, I think I'm a junior now, it's definitely gotten easier than my freshman year. I think

definitely more time doing it has allowed for my mind to be better at compartmentalizing player by player. For the twins and Anna, they're having to switch all the time on the perimeter, guard all the guards. You have to know the tendency.

I'll switch every other possession, I don't really need to know that much. They're switching all the time. They have to know all the starting guards, all the ones who come off the bench, all their personnel. It definitely gets better over time, but my freshman year was very rough for me personally.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you to our student-athletes. Coach VanDerveer should be here shortly and we'll continue on with our press conference.

TARA VANDERVEER: Hello.

THE MODERATOR: Welcome.

TARA VANDERVEER: Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, we'll start with an opening statement.

TARA VANDERVEER: Just excited to be sitting here (smiling). Cut to the chase.

Q. You should listen to Vic's opening statements. Tara, obviously it's tough when you're scouting a team and they have a freshman, you probably don't have any film on them. When you played Texas early this season, Rori Harmon torched you for 21 points, why was she able to do that and were you surprised?

TARA VANDERVEER: She's a really talented player. That wasn't a one-off game. She was Freshman of the Year in the Big 12. I think it is helpful when you've played a team before or you have a little more film on them.

I think she's that good. So we will have to work very hard to defend her and all their other really top players. Having watched the tape a couple times between last time I saw you and now, honestly I hesitate to say this, but I don't think we could have played worse against them. We didn't do the things we needed to do. We will have to play a lot better tomorrow to be successful.

Q. Kind of a big picture question. How has scouting opponents changed since you first got to Stanford, advancements in technology, but as you've evolved as a head coach?

TARA VANDERVEER: I think a lot of it has to do with



technology. When I first came to Stanford, I didn't have a personal computer. In the old days, like, you would maybe -- you wouldn't see a team. I mean, you know, you didn't have any video on them. You would exchange videos. It is totally, totally different.

Now you can watch synergy, every play of every player. It's really cut into my sleep, but it's great. I mean, I love watching, kind of strategizing what we should be doing, how we should be playing, what are player's tendencies.

Our team really buys into it. They know that gives them -- maybe that's an advantage that they can have. If they can really figure out this is what I'm supposed to be doing, I'm going to really work hard to take away someone's left shoulder or whatever it is, they'll do it.

Q. When you have a team like Texas that has such balance, so many perimeter weapons, how do you go through the process of deciding where you wanted to play Anna defensively?

TARA VANDERVEER: Well, Anna is one of our primary defenders. I mean, like last night, it was really, really -- I mean, they're both small, you know. No. 11 is a really good three-point shooter. We move Anna around. Other people are going to have to step up. It's not just Anna's job to play defense, although I thought Anna had a fantastic game yesterday. She is locked in, works hard, she really knows that was her ticket to the starting lineup.

For a while this year, when we played last time against Maryland, she didn't play that much. I think she really wants to be out there. She knows this is how I'm going to get out there.

Other people are watching that and learning from her. We're hoping that -- I thought Kiki played well for us last night. She can help us defensively.

A lot of it is just kind of watching and trying to figure out do you need somebody bigger on a player. But Anna is fearless. We have what I call the lockdown club. We have four players that are in our lockdown defensive club. The first one was Kate Paye, the second one was Susan Borchardt, the third one was Ros Gold-Onwude, and the fourth one is Anna Wilson. I hope there are more to come.

Q. Have you ever asked Anna if she's a better defensive player than her brother is an offensive player?

TARA VANDERVEER: I've not asked that question exactly, but I did ask Russell last night, I just said, Now, in football, you got people that just play one thing. I said,

Basketball, you've got to play both. I know you like to play offense, but could you guard anybody? I said, If the offense is doing really well and the defense is kind of taking a day off, do you get upset with the defense? Or if the defense is playing really well, you as offense are not with it, do they get upset with you? We kind of laughed about that.

Honestly in basketball you need two-way players. In the beginning of the year, I think we know Anna really likes to play defense. We lost a lot of offense with Kiana Williams. We needed both Anna and Lacie to step up offensively. They both have.

The beauty of basketball is you've got to be versatile, you've got to contribute at both ends of the court.

Q. You made a passing mention of the portal last night after the game. How much does that play a role for your program? How much do you look at it? How is it going to change going forward the development of four- and five-year players? Is that going to be a thing of the past?

TARA VANDERVEER: I mean, I think the portal definitely is changing. I mean, I think we're always -- we always have to embrace change and be flexible and be people that, you know, can work within a changing world because that's the world we live in.

But you couple the portal with NIL, all the things that are happening, it's a lot to deal with I think for young people and coaches.

I think it's very challenging for a team, not only do you have the portal but you also have the COVID years. You've got some people that are -- someone like Anna who we love having on our team, but this is her sixth year. Same thing with Alyssa. Some of it is really challenging for people who are used to living in a world where you can just Alexa or Google and get the immediate everything, instant oatmeal, instant everything.

Basketball is a slow cooker. It takes time. It takes development. So I'm really proud of the players like Anna, who as a freshman, if you saw Anna, you would never believe she is the player she is today. Or even the development of Lexie and Lacie, the development of all the players, when they're three and four years out.

I think sometimes the portal does change things a lot where if someone has a bad day, they get upset, it's like, I'm out of here. Our team has embraced I think -- it's not to say that people might -- there might be, after the season, changes, I don't know. But I think that that does change

the dynamics of college basketball a lot.

As a coach, I want to do the best job I can every single day. But it makes it more challenging having kind of that where things -- maybe people feel the grass is always greener somewhere else. We get better sometimes when we work through things, you know, when we have to deal with disappointments and challenges, not when everything is going our way all the time.

I don't know. I kind of went deep on that one. Sorry.

Q. This has been homecoming week for Lexie and Lacie. I asked them if all the questions and attention added to the pressure this week. As their coach, knowing their intensity, their competitive intensity, do you think that's affected them?

TARA VANDERVEER: I don't think it's affected them any more than playing in this environment which our freshmen and sophomores really have never played in has affected everyone.

There were a couple times last night where I said, Who is that team out there? I'm like, Really, what are we doing?

It's a different vibe. It's so different for us from what we experienced during the year, what we experienced last year. But they are so like this, I don't think they hear anything. They're out there, they're playing hard, and they're doing extremely well.

Q. You said you have to play a lot better to beat Texas this time. At the beginning of the season you were really struggling to handle the ball, turned the ball over 20 times against Texas. How much does it help that now Lacie has stepped into that role and Anna, too? Do you have a lot more confidence that you will be able to handle the ball?

TARA VANDERVEER: They have made such incredible improvement. I think also the schedule that we've played has been really helpful. Playing at South Carolina, playing against Tennessee, playing against top teams in our league that are aggressive, like Colorado. I mean, Maryland last night I thought was more aggressive than I've seen them.

But, you know, it is always going to be a challenge, it always has been for Stanford. The idea of playing against extended defense has always been what we have had a high priority to work against that every single day in practice.

I'm really proud of the development. I mean, Lacie every

single day working with her dribble glasses, working on her ball handling every single day. Anna saying, I'm used to playing the two, but I'm happy playing the one. Haley stepping up. I thought Haley had a really good game last night.

It will take more than that. It's going to be our inside game of rebounding. It's handling the physicality. I thought the quote yesterday that Brenda Frese said, we were the aggressor, we punched them, not literally. I thought that was great. We need to be the aggressor.

This is not going to be pretty basketball. But I will say this. I think it's really important. There are three people on the court, not on either team, that will have to have good control of the game. I believe people want to watch basketball and not football or rugby. Whether it's calling hand checking, calling anything that's not basketball, is going to be really important.

Our ability to handle physicality, you have to do that, but it has to be also basketball.

Q. You've prepped your players for how to on the court be ready for extended defensive time. What about mentally? How do you prepare the team to make sure they can stay mentally engaged for the entire extended defensive stretch?

TARA VANDERVEER: I mean, our team is an experienced team. When you're playing against -- in the old days you didn't have a 30-second clock, so defense could go on forever. They can look at the clock and say it's only 10 more seconds. They know they have to play hard.

Our team also, they know they don't have to play for 40 minutes. They know we have people that come in. Someone like Hannah Jump can come in, Agnes. We have more confidence in some of our younger players, Kiki, Fran doing a great job, Ashten. We can go 10, 11 deep.

Q. I'm sure you've already spoken about this a little bit, but just getting to this point deeper in the tournament, you've been to many tournaments, we see all the March Madness around you and behind you, do you feel there have been substantive changes in the way this year's tournament has been run beyond the signage that have made it different from your previous years?

TARA VANDERVEER: Hmm. No. I mean, I really think to really make changes, we have to have similar unit structure. I mean, I love the crowds. I love the signage. I don't really notice it. It doesn't feel like that much different.

Maybe there are little things. I mean, I know they've got the piping up and all that.

I think really the bottom line is it's a television package and it's a unit structure. When that happens, then we'll know that it's serious.

I will say this. I think in watching the games, the regional sites, the committee did a great job in selecting regional sites. They seem to be really, really well-attended.

Also I think the system that we're doing right now works really well for women's basketball with the home sites. Those were really well-attended. And it wasn't like it was an automatic win. There were teams that went in, you know, I'm glad we weren't one of the upsets, but there were upsets.

I think we're on the right path.

Q. There's been talk about holding the men's and women's Final Fours in the same city, potentially on the same weekend. What do you think about that?

TARA VANDERVEER: I think that was a recommendation of the Kaplan report. I know that's what maybe tennis does. They have both men's and women's tennis there. That might be something that will happen down the road.

But I think that right now women's basketball, we're finding our own way. We're growing our game. I don't think we need to be under, in the shadow of men's basketball.

I think what we're doing right now is working. I think Minneapolis will be sold out. I think we'll have a great crowd here. The other regional sites seem to have really good crowds. I think we're going in the right direction. Hopefully we'll just keep doing that.

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

TARA VANDERVEER: Thank you all.

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