

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

Sunday, March 27, 2022

Spokane, Washington, USA

Veterans Memorial Arena

Texas Longhorns

Coach Vic Schaefer

Rori Harmon

Joanne Allen-Taylor

Audrey Warren

Lauren Ebo

Elite 8 Postgame Media Conference

Stanford 59, Texas 50

THE MODERATOR: Welcome to Texas. Coach?

COACH SCHAEFER: Congratulations to Stanford and their team. They played hard and did enough things to beat us, and that's what great teams do. We'll tip our hats to them. I think everybody saw how hard the University of Texas played today. We're going to give God the glory for 29-7. You gotta praise Him in victory, and you gotta praise Him in defeat.

I couldn't be more proud of my team, these young ladies, how hard they played today, as they have all year long. Certainly disappointed that we lost, but I am not disappointed in them. They have been an absolute joy to coach.

They play the game the right way. They honor the game, they respect the game. I think everybody across the country today saw just exactly what the University of Texas and Texas fight in women's basketball is all about.

We're just starting. We played a great team today. Again, tell me the last time somebody's played the defending national champions twice in a season, and these kids did it again today, guarded them, defended them at a high level.

We had a hard time scoring, we had a bad fourth quarter scoring the basketball. Other than that, we left everything



we had out on the floor. These kids have made me a better coach. I'm so honored and privileged to have had the opportunity to coach them, see them every day. Made me a better coach, a better father, a better husband, a better man.

They have certainly impacted my life. I've had a lot of teams, y'all, 37 years, this one is really special. Really special. The things they have achieved, the accomplishments, the growth, how they've gotten better, each and every one of them. These three seniors, Lauren came with me when we recruited her. These two I inherited, and these two couldn't be more of a fit for how I want to play the game and how I want our team and our program represented of what they do.

They are absolutely incredible young women, and they're going to be so successful in life. I'm just really honored to have had the opportunity to coach them and see them every day for two years. I mean, it just -- you can go and coach a long time, y'all, but these two, I got -- every day I knew what I was getting from them. As with these two. This is probably our rock of our team up here, as far as every day what you were going to get, every game.

We had a conversation, us three, not Rori, but we had a conversation back when we were 5-5 about, hey, we weren't going to have a chance to win unless these three played well every night.

They needed to really kind of embrace that. And then we talked about our team, embracing the fact that, you know what, it gets old every time somebody beats you, it's like they won the national championship so we better figure out real quick you're getting everybody's best shot and you better get ready. You better get ready to embrace that.

And we did. These kids did. Really proud of them. Congratulations to Stanford. They made just a couple more plays than we did, and we wish them the best of luck.

This team right here, I'll go play 'em right now, we will line up and play 'em again, because I think this team is just as good as anybody that's going to end up north in a few days. So I'm awfully proud of them.



Q. Rori and Audrey, can I get your overall reaction to the end of your season and today's results?

AUDREY WARREN: Not happy with the things -- with the way things ended, obviously. You want to go out on a W with your last game, but there can only be one winner at the end of the day.

And I couldn't be more proud of these girls. This has been one of the most fun teams, one of the most competitive teams. I wouldn't have wanted to go out with anyone else, wouldn't have wanted to step on the court with any other people than them.

I just want to thank all of them. I want to thank the university, and it's been fun. It's been good.

RORI HARMON: Just to add on, this is just such a fun group of girls to be playing with. Honestly, like, the emotional part for me, yes, was losing the basketball game, but it was also for the seniors because this year has been like -- they have been on top of everything since day one.

And I respect them and I speak so highly about them. Any person that asks about them I speak so highly about them, and they just kept our team together. Of course, we didn't win this one today, but it almost does feel like a win because I'm still here with them and I know they're here with me.

Q. Rori and Joanne, Stanford went to a zone late in the third quarter, and it seemed to fluster your team. I don't think they played any zone in November, correct me if I'm wrong. How did that impact your offense? Were you surprised that they did that?

JOANNE ALLEN-TAYLOR: Yeah, I wasn't necessarily surprised. We were taking them off the bounce a couple times, and they were fouling, so they were having trouble guarding us one-on-one.

So, you know, good teams adjust at the end of the day, and they made an adjustment and went to zone. We just didn't make enough plays in the zone at the time. But credit to them for making an adjustment on what we were bringing to the table.

RORI HARMON: I think it was a pretty good job that we got them to adjust. That just means that we do what we were supposed to do and we executed the plan. That's all I have to say.

Q. Lauren, how difficult was it inside today? Brink finished with six blocks. They're very long. How

difficult was it to get things rolling inside?

LAUREN EBO: Obviously the whole team is huge. So our inside game, I wasn't a presence, and I take full responsibility for that.

Yeah, it's physical. It's physical down there. Each shot is not going to be easy. It's really hard. And these guards, like, I don't think they understand the full depths of how hard it is to work down there. Credit to them for their natural gift of their size, and they just really outtoughed me personally inside.

Q. I want to get your thoughts on you saw this team earlier before in the year, how was this match-up different from the first time you saw them in terms of how do you think Stanford is different and how do you feel your team was different from that first meeting?

JOANNE ALLEN-TAYLOR: Coach, I will direct the question to you.

COACH SCHAEFER: It's the same team we played. We're better, they're better. I thought on Friday, watching them, they looked really good. Obviously they're a machine offensively, if you let 'em get the wheel turning.

But that's how we approached them back in November. So same personnel. They're four months further along and together and their chemistry is better, but, you know, we've held them now to 56 and 59 points. If we would have scored 61 like we did the first time, we would have won again today.

I think, again, it's -- both teams were better. We hit a dry spell. When they went to the zone, we went 1 for 4 in possessions scoring. That's not the end all, but our kids were -- I thought played so hard -- we forced 20 turnovers. We forced 20 turnovers back in November. So you just took them to 37%, 17 from three.

You can't ask any more from a team than what our kids did defensively. You're talking about free throws, we missed 9 free throws, we missed some open shots. It's just part of it.

But that was a hell of a game out there between two great teams. I don't think there is a lot of difference between either team. Like I said, I think if we had to go back up there and tip it up, it would be another 4-point game with two to go.

Q. Rori and Jo or Audrey, Rori, I know the wounds are fresh, but where do you guys go from here? Jo and Audrey, where do you see the program going from here, whether or not you are here next season or not?

RORI HARMON: We have learned so much this year. We had our ups and downs. We all know we had a little drought at the beginning of the season, and then we had a little back-to-back loss with Baylor, but I've learned so much with this team and playing underneath Coach Schaefer and his coaching staff.

We are sitting there listening to his postgame talk in the locker room, we were like -- we're kind of like, well, this is only the first year. We went so far. This team is so great. And, I mean, we did so many great things. We can't really be upset about it. Yes, we're upset about the loss, but how we played and how we played this whole season, that really defines who we are as a team and as a university.

So I'm just -- I'm upset about this one, but I'm ready for more.

JOANNE ALLEN-TAYLOR: Just want to say how blessed I am to have played here, to play with these girls, because you just don't grind every single day with your teammates, you don't grind with your friends, you grind with your family every single day.

I am who I am today because I put on this jersey for four years. I just want to say thank you. I just want to say thank you because I'm so blessed. Even in defeat I'm so blessed.

Q. Rori, could you talk about -- you had 14 points, but it took 18 shots. Did their length bother you? There were times you hit some pull-ups in their face, but then there were other times where it seemed like they altered your shot just enough.

RORI HARMON: It was pretty tough. I am 5'6", they are probably 6-foot and above. So every shot I take against them is going to be contested and a petty tough shot. I can't make all my shots. So that's my answer to your question.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, ladies. We will continue on with questions for Coach.

Q. Vic, Brink was spectacular for one stretch that you pointed out you went 1 on 4, it was a Brink block, a Hannah jump block, Brink block, Brink block, Brink steal. How much has she improved since November?

COACH SCHAEFER: I think when you have that size -- I've had that size before, you've got that -- I call 'em an aircraft carrier, when you've got that person in the lane that is your forgiveness player, and that's what she is. She is their forgiveness player.

If we got by a guard, you've got 6-6 sitting in there waiting on you. Obviously she is a talented, skilled basketball player, real smart. I think she's much better and much improved. She's learning to be physical.

And so, again, I just think when you have that person back there it just kind of changes your team, lets you really do some things.

Like I said, I've had that before, and it allows your team to really play aggressive. And I call them your forgiveness player.

She's really good, really special. She inside pivoted us a couple times to start the second half, made some 8-footers, which we don't need to let her do that. Again, I think you see her play, you see how competitive she is.

And, again, real smart. She's real aware. She has a good awareness about her of what's going on and when she needs to help and when she doesn't.

Q. Vic, were you disappointed that y'all weren't able to get it going down in the paint, especially considering the way Lauren and Aliyah had been playing earlier?

COACH SCHAEFER: Yeah, we got some good looks early because there was a certain lineup we were going to look at down there, but we couldn't make a shot.

At some point you've got to stop beating your head into the wall. And when they went zone, we were feeding Lauren, and Lauren has been great all year, letting us play through her. And she was just trying to make a play. She was trying to make something happen, and we just -- you know, they're big down there.

Finally, when I called timeout, I said we need to play through you, not to you, we've gotta play through you. And she understands that. She was really just trying to do her job, because she's been our most improved player during the stretch.

She really has given us an inside game and an inside presence.

Q. Somebody online said this felt like a chess match, and when Tara went to the zone, did that surprise you?

COACH SCHAEFER: Not really. I was prepared for it. We went to our bread and butter offense, and I felt like if we could do what we did in man, I felt like at some point they were going to jump into that. And we needed to be prepared for it. I know we took a couple of bad shots in it.

And, again, I attribute that to kids just trying to make plays. But it's not something that -- look, we've been seeing a lot of zone. Utah jumped in a zone. I think we made three or four straight shots. Four straight, and they said, well, we can't do that either. And the lead went from 18 to 26.

So it's something that I've been down this street before. So I was ready for it. And like I said, we went to our bread and butter offense, we just didn't quite get what we wanted.

Q. You've played them twice, and obviously you play in a tough league. Is that the best team in the country?

COACH SCHAEFER: I mean, I haven't played, you know, UConn, Louisville, whoever else is out there, I'm not qualified to answer that because I haven't played everybody else.

I can tell you this: You can live in the Big 12, you play 18 rival games like I do, there ain't nothing that can get you get ready for this tournament more than what we went through. We went 18 rival games, then we go play three back-to-back-to-back within 40 hours.

Our style, win a Big 12 Tournament championship, you can't be more ready for this tournament. You can't be more battle tested than our kids. Are they good? Absolutely. They are really good. Are they the defending champions with everybody but one player back? Yes they are. We've gone toe-to-toe with them twice.

And we'll see. They're going to have an opportunity to play one or two more game. And if they're left standing, I think that answers the question.

You can't go off of what somebody thinks or writes on some blog about reseeding the tournament. It is what it is. That's just an opinion. You come live in my shoes, you play my schedule, play the teams I've played, and then we can talk about who we think is the best team in the country.

But they're really good, no question about it. You let them do what they want to do. They'll hang 70, 80 points on you.

I think you've got to give our kids credit because they didn't let them do what they wanted to do. They really played their guts out today, and they played the way we wanted to play. And we just couldn't score enough points. But they're really good.

Q. You referenced that point in the fourth quarter, 2-point game, anybody's game. How confident were you feeling at that point and how big was Hull's 3-point

play?

COACH SCHAEFER: We were right where we wanted to be. I mean, it's a game where we feel like when it's tight -- when it's close like that, the longer it goes and the closer it is, the tighter it might get on the other end. Our kids have really embraced those moments this year.

They've functioned in those games and in those moments more than not. And I think we had a couple of really good looks. And, again, I thought we had some things happen that we can't control, and then we had the three-point play gets it to 5.

But, again, we missed some shots we had been making, and we were empty at the free throw line. When you're going to play in these games, y'all, you've got to make free throws, and we've done that until today, and maybe a couple times here lately.

Our free throw shooting early and middle of the season was horrendous. And then when you go back and you look at our last five, our last ten, we were shooting an unbelievable number at the free throw line.

So a little surprising today that we did that. But I will say this: We had a freshman that went 0-4. Again, she has not been to the line much. We had some others that went 1-4 and those kinds of things, and it just happens. It's not like they're trying to do that. It's just part of it. It's part of the game. If we could have made a couple of free throws, now it's not a 2-point game. It's even, it's tied.

But it was a big play, no doubt about it.

Q. Coach, thank you for a season of amazing basketball. With your three seniors, Joanne, Audrey and Lauren, moving on next season, there are young girls who were watching them this whole season. What advice would you have for them now that they might have dreams of playing for the University of Texas?

COACH SCHAEFER: I think if anybody has watched us play and watched our kids play, and specifically if you want to talk about those seniors, again, I said this in my opening statement, they play the game the right way. They honor the game, they respect the game. They play very, very hard.

I think anybody that brings their kids to our games at the University of Texas, they know we don't run to the locker room, we stand out there, we sign autographs, we take pictures with everybody until everybody is done.

I think if you're looking for a role model or somebody to mirror your game after, those are kids that are really good to do that with. Whether it's your son or your daughter, when you come to the University of Texas and watch a women's basketball game, when you walk out of that arena, you can look at him or her and say you know what? I want you to play like Audrey Warren, I want you to be tough like Joanne Allen-Taylor, play hard on both ends of the floor, defend, just all those things.

I think those are the things that we as parents, we want our kids to have role models like that, people to emulate like that. And I think these kids are all -- they're those kinda kids.

Q. Coach, congratulations on the season you had. I notice you held Stanford to 3 of 17 shooting from three-point range. Anything you were doing offensively to force them to not have the kind of three-point success that they're used to having?

COACH SCHAEFER: We guarded them. We were standing real close to 'em. You can go down the list of everybody that -- whatever their percentage is, but if you're going to play Horse with Stanford or Iowa State or anybody like that, you're going to lose the Horse game.

So you've got to try to -- for us, if you watched us play at all, we try to make you really uncomfortable. We're not going to let you run your pretty offense. You're going to have to create something and do something that maybe you don't want to do.

I think for us, we have tremendous respect for their perimeter game and their perimeter players. I think they went 4 for 27 in the first time we played them, and then they went 3 for 17 tonight.

I think tonight we did a better job because, number one, they got 10 less off, but, number two, you know, it's -- we're pretty -- we're out there. Like, we're going to guard you out there. When you do finally get an open look, sometimes you're in such a rush because you can't believe you're open because you haven't been open in two days, you rush it and you -- and then you miss it.

So our kids really -- that's how we want to play. We've had great success for the most part, most of the year against teams that have those great shooters. We've gotten better.

Again, this is a team, y'all, that nine new players, one returning starter, so our chemistry has been evolving throughout the season.

I think what you see right now in the final team. The final game today is something that takes so much time. Your

defensive chemistry is the last thing that you get.

It's the last piece to the puzzle. Sometimes you don't get it. Most of my teams figure out a way and they get it because they understand the importance of it. For us, defending the three-point line, to answer your question, it's just really important when you're going against teams like a Stanford who can stand out there and make shots.

We talk about it all the time. The good teams, you're going to lose the Horse game. Like if you're going to play Horse against somebody, you're going to lose. So we've got to do things to take that away.

And when they put it on the deck and drive it, you've got to get over there and take a ticket and get a charge. Our kids are pretty good at that, too.

It's a special team, y'all. Defensively, they're really good, obviously. They have a chance to win the national championship again. And this team has held them to 59 and 56 points, 30 something percent shooting, 4 for 27, 3 for whatever today, 17, and just battled, battled, battled.

Again really proud of my team, proud of our season, and I'm so excited about our future and what we have coming, what we have coming back. Our future couldn't be brighter

Q. Are you happy with the strides you have made in the last two years?

COACH SCHAEFER: You probably know better than me. You know what it was like before I got here. The accomplishments that last year's team had, you know, beating two top ten's back life to-back and getting to the Elite Eight again, and the second round, and the Sweet 16, again, with only one -- you can call Audrey a half a starter. So with that many new players in the mix and so few back, look, I think this elite runs a little different.

We were supposed to be here this year in my mind. We're playing good. We're one of the best eight teams in the country. I don't think there is any doubt about it. Are we supposed to be here in year two? I don't know. I don't think that way. I just know that they hired me to do a job. I'm trying to keep a job. I'm trying to get us where we want to be at the University of Texas, where we're supposed to be.

That's where I'm at. And I've said this to you before: It's a miserable way to live. I have no desire to be good, none, but that's the way it is.

This team, the accomplishments it made this year, with so many new players, man, I am so proud of this group. I

would have to go back and look at some teams and realize how much they've achieved. I'm really proud of where we are. I am not happy that we lost today.

I think we should have won the game. But I'm awfully proud of these kids, it ain't their fault. It's my job to get 'em home. I will wear the responsibility. We had a two-point game with 2:37, I didn't look, but that's my job to get 'em home. That's why I'm the head coach and I didn't get 'em home today. But, man, I'm proud of 'em. I think maybe your question might be for an administrator; they might not know better than me, but I'm awfully proud of where we are today, and I'm proud to be the coach at the University of Texas.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you for your time.

COACH SCHAEFER: Praise the Lord and hook 'em horns. Appreciate what you all do for women's basketball. It means a freight deal to our sport so thank you.

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