

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - Norfolk State vs Stanford

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Stanford, California, USA

Maples Pavilion

Stanford Cardinal Tara Vanderveer Elena Bosgana Kiki Iriafen

Media Conference

Stanford 79, Norfolk State 50

TARA VANDERVEER: First, I want to congratulate Norfolk State on the great season that they had and how hard they played, and Diamond Johnson was really -- she's a really terrific player. I thought we worked -- we had to work really hard to get this win.

Elena really stepped up big for us. Knocking down her shot, I thought working really hard on defense, made some big plays.

And Kiki, I thought we had really good balance with Elena, Cam, Kiki, Hannah. So it's good to get somebody else in double figures. So great job, Elena.

And I thought we had some really good looks and people didn't maybe knock down some shots, but we are going to need them on Sunday.

Q. Kiki, you had a really explosive first half, 15 points but only two in the second half. Did you not feel the same in the second half and even though it was still a great win?

KIKI IRIAFEN: I think my teammates took over. It was their time to shine. Tara always says it's someone's game. So I think the second half just wasn't my half; it was Elena's half; Cameron's half, Hannah's half, everybody else's half, which is fine. I just made sure I did other things. Tried to rebound, get my assists up, so yeah.

Q. This feels like an extension of your performances in the Pac-12 tournament contributing more



offensively. Is there something that's going on with you late in the season that you feel like you've got -- your shot has improved, you're getting better looks but you seem to be more assertive offensively.

ELENA BOSGANA: I think my teammates do a great job finding me, and I feel personally, I was working during the season, and I feel good right now. So yeah, I hope it stays.

TARA VANDERVEER: Me, too.

Q. Yesterday Tara was saying that you had improved maybe more than any player she's ever coached. Can you comment on how you feel, as opposed to last year at this time, and what do you attribute your incredible growth this season to?

KIKI IRIAFEN: I think my situation is just a combination of preparation and opportunity and everything just lined up at the perfect time. I've been working for this since I was a freshman and this was the year I was able to showcase myself.

I also think mentally I really worked in the summer on just like my confidence and just being fearless, understanding that I will make mistakes but not hanging my head on that and I play with amazing players, amazing teammates and amazing coaches that are always pouring into me saying that I got this. So there's nothing for me to worry about when I got this.

Q. How did you work on your confidence?

KIKI IRIAFEN: So I have this coach from high school, her name is Coach Milly, and she's like an aunt to me now. So she was someone that I just hung out with the whole summer just talking about -- pouring into me, giving me affirmations that I can play at this level. There's so many things that I can do and that I'm limiting myself.

So I think once I started believing in myself. So many people believed in me, Tara, my parents, everybody, but I didn't really believe in myself. So once I had that mindset shift, I think that's when things started taking off.



Q. As a leader of the team, one of the leaders obviously, especially in scoring, you and Cameron both had 17 tonight. Norfolk tried to fight back down the stretch. Iowa State rather, they did fight back. So what's the mindset going into the next battle, especially last season, you guys didn't make it past that game and of course they will be fighting to do the same thing this year?

KIKI IRIAFEN: The biggest thing for us it throwing the first punch and making sure we are coming out, and not lackadaisical, like we are on our tens and executing our scout. Also staying out of foul trouble because that will be big for Sunday, but I think as long as we follow our scout and do what we do, we'll be fine.

Q. Just talk about, how do you feel you guys handled the pressure tonight that Norfolk State brought?

TARA VANDERVEER: Is that for me?

Q. Elena, how do you think you guys handle the pressure?

ELENA BOSGANA: I think we did a good job as the game went on. Definitely we could do better I feel at some point but I don't know, we -- I don't know.

KIKI IRIAFEN: I had four of them, so I'll work on that.

ELENA BOSGANA: I think we were good.

Q. I know that that loss last year here at Maples has been a theme all year, and something that's motivated the team. How much do you feel that now going into a second round game, and how has that driven you all season?

KIKI IRIAFEN: I think if anything, we've learned that it's March. Every team is great in March. So we can't take anything for granted. Like we have to put the same amount of focus that we would for higher-seeded teams and also we want to protect home court.

We don't want what happened last year to happen again. We want it get out of Maples. We want to make it to Portland. And I think something with this team is we are very close and we all want to play hard for each other. So it's more so I want us to win for my teammates, as opposed to for myself. So I feel like it's something that is strengthening us this year.

Q. How did you feel about listening to Norfolk State's band?

KIKI IRIAFEN: It was great. They were talking to me the whole game. We had some great banter. I think that's what makes the sport fun. They can stay stuff and I can blow them kisses but I think it was really fun.

ELENA BOSGANA: To be honest I never listen. Like I never listen to anyone except Tara and the coaching staff. So yeah, I think the atmosphere in Maples is great all the time and I love it. So yeah, one more game here.

Q. Audi Crooks had a big night and that will be a matchup that everybody is going to circle. I wanted to get your first thoughts on containing her after a big night?

KIKI IRIAFEN: Yeah, I think we can't let her get too deep inside. Keeping her outside of the paint will be very crucial. She finishes really well inside. So I think just making her shoot the ball is a good idea.

Q. How good does it feel to have a tournament high in an NCAA Tournament game?

ELENA BOSGANA: It feels great but honestly I don't think about it. I'm happy about Kiki's 1,000 points. I know it wasn't easy to get here but I'm very proud of her and I'm very proud of Cam and an Hannah and Brook and everyone, Jzaniya, in my class, I love them. It's been a long way but here we are.

KIKI IRIAFEN: Here we are.

TARA VANDERVEER: Here we are.

Q. Can you talk about Elena's game? She was playing well leading into this, and her improvement or this upward trajectory she's been on the last few weeks?

TARA VANDERVEER: I think she said it. She's feeling confident. She had a great, great, I thought a great game especially defensively, and offensively. But this is what we see her do in practice, and it was exciting to see everyone else get to see what she's been doing in practice.

You know, she's never met an assist she didn't like, and it was going in, and she was taking really good shots. She was getting the ball inside. She had the first assist and I'm really proud that we had 21 assists. And like she said, she's not about herself. She's about her teammates, and she was excited for Kiki. I think she's really progressed a lot this year and it's great to have her out there and she's doing some really nice things.

Q. I want your take on how you guys handle the press. Seemed you scored on the zone, the 3-2 they are with

playing, but the press, they were scrappy, Norfolk was but a few turnovers and interceptions here and there. What was your take on the press? I imagine other teams might try to throw that at you guys?

TARA VANDERVEER: That's what they do, and to be honest we haven't played against it a lot. I thought we did have some sloppy turnovers. We ended up with 14, but it felt to me like it was about 40. We had some times where people had the ball and it got taken out of hands or they did make some deflections and that's what they do. They won a lot of games doing that and they know how to do it.

They do what they did well, and I thought we adjusted. I mean, some is of the turnovers, Kiki owned up to four of them. You know, sometimes people just try to do things that weren't there. But you know, this is one of those, you know, one of the games that it's good for us to play against that, and this is really the first game except for Oregon but they didn't even -- almost played exclusively zone. And it was great to see our team just step up and make shots, and it wasn't just Hannah. Talana had some good looks that hopefully they will go down on Sunday.

But you know, getting the assists, sometimes people try to do things that maybe weren't there or had the ball taken out of their hands, which we didn't like.

Q. You mentioned Talana down the stretch, in the fourth, she was really frustrated that her shots were not falling. Is she kind of talking to you guys about what she's trying to do?

TARA VANDERVEER: No, you know, she had some good looks and you know we have confidence in her shot. I'm glad she's taking them. I encourage her to take those shots. She shoots an excellent percentage, as Jzaniya. Jzaniya had a great look. So some of it is just making sure that she continues to look for that good shot and she worked extremely hard defensively. So you know, tonight, your offense can come and go but your defense can be there every night.

Q. Kiki spoke of gaining confidence over the summer, really working on her self-confidence. Did you see a difference in her after the summer, and also, how do you like the matchup with Audi on Sunday?

TARA VANDERVEER: I think that Kiki had some opportunities last year, and maybe just wasn't ready in the way that she's ready this year. And she is playing with a lot of confidence. She's delivered for us. She's had big, big, big games and has been incredibly consistent.

I also want to point out, Cam, you know, should a

double-double tonight, and really good a great job on the boards, and it's really fun for me to see the camaraderie that is there between Cam and Kiki. They really support each other. They are excited for each other and that's something that's really important for us.

We are going to need both of them to guard Audi on Sunday. She's a terrific talent. Great hands. They work to get her the ball very hard, and you know, I think we have better size than Maryland does, and we're going to have to be much more aggressive than we were tonight.

Q. Talana seemed like she had a big role in defending diamond -- while she got her shots and got points, she needed 24 shots to do it. Were you happy with the way you defended her tonight?

TARA VANDERVEER: I thought we did a better job in the second half. In the first half, if there was a switch, our bigs were biting on her hesitation, and then she would go by them.

So if you're going to switch you've got to keep her in front. I think sometimes like for our team, it helps a lot to see people really in person and understand their game and I thought we adjusted to that really well in the second half, and Talana really takes pride in her defense, and so does Chloe. The two of them really work hard defensively, and I thought they both worked really hard and did very well.

Diamond Johnson is an excellent three-point shooter. For her to go 0-for-8 is a good night's work.

Q. Talk about holding their players, making them work hard for those points.

TARA VANDERVEER: That's something that we kind of keep our defense a secret. No one thinks we play any defense. But I thought we did a really good job. One of our goals is to hold a team under 35 percent. We did that from the field for this game and also did a great job from the three-point line. I thought that, you know, we just -- people worked hard. I thought we fouled a little bit too much and turned the ball over a little bit too much. But coming back after being off for almost two weeks, I thought we did very well.

Q. You've been pretty intentional all season long about wanting to be ten deep and utilizing all your freshmen. Was there something in particular tonight with this matchup that led you to squeeze the minutes a little from the freshmen and stay for to six deep in that way?

TARA VANDERVEER: I thought Courtney came in and did



... when all is said, we're done.®

some really nice things. Sometimes they will get in there and I'll just try to watch and see what's working. Elena was playing so well. You.

Know, like there have been times when Elena has been sitting and watching and cheering for Courtney or Nunu, but Elena was playing so well. I'm like, she's got to stay in, and then either Talana or Chloe were running the point, and Hannah came out and I thought Courtney came in and did a really good job. Brooke plays ahead of Nunu, and it was either Brooke and Kiki or Brooke and Cam.

We are going to need everybody where we want to go. I think lot of people's playing time will be determined by their defense. We have to really play really well defensively against Iowa State.

Q. You outscored them 17 in the second quarter. What was the adjustment you made in the second quarter?

TARA VANDERVEER: I wish I knew. Honestly sometimes it's just getting used to understanding what they are doing.

I thought our team honestly played a little tight tonight. They know the pressure. They kind of feel like, okay, we're supposed to win this game and you know we've got to play well. The other team came out a little looser, and really at halftime, maybe we loosened up a little bit but at halftime, I said, hey, let's have fun and play. Don't put pressure on yourselves.

It's going to be the same thing on Sunday. Let's come out and play hard and just move the ball, run good offense, work hard defensively, and we're going to have to play very well.

Q. You've had many scenarios at this time of year and I'm not trying to age you, but --

TARA VANDERVEER: Don't worry about that.

Q. But what will you emphasize so you won't have a repeat of last year where Coach Yo at Ole Miss respects you so much but had a chance to beat you, but it's Cam's last time on this court and Hannah's last time on this court. What will you emphasize?

TARA VANDERVEER: This is a totally different team. This team, there are some players obviously that played last year's team, and they have learned and we have learned. From the time that we lost last year, it was very painful. And people took it very personally, and committed themselves to hard work in the gym and hard work on being better connected as a team including coaches, and

we've had -- we have put in the work.

Regardless of the outcome of the game, I think that -- I know that I will be proud of this team because of how well we have done. You know, there's not anyone sitting here that thought we would win the Pac-12 regular season, or be in a championship game or even be a top seed.

So we just need to continue to play hard and play for each other, and have -- we have a lot of confidence in our team and at this point now, anyone, they are all really good teams.

But we are in a new year and we've got a good vibe going and we are really having fun. So we'll see everybody on Sunday and thank you all for coming.

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