

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - UC San Diego vs TCU

Thursday, March 19, 2026

Fort Worth, Texas, USA

Schollmaier Arena

UC San Diego Tritons Coach Heidi VanDerveer Dymonique Maxie Erin Condron

Media Conference

THE MODERATOR: We'll begin with the floor with questions.

Q. I'd like both of you to talk about the challenge. Obviously any NCAA Tournament is tough, but you're coming into a building where the team has won 42 straight games over the last two years, and even with a different roster, but just talk about the challenge it is coming here.

DYMONIQUE MAXIE: I think that TCU is a very good team. I also think that our team plays with a chip on our shoulder and we don't really get too hooked up in all the outside noise. So we're just going to come out and play the same basketball we've been playing all season.

ERIN CONDRON: Yeah, I mean, we know that we're the underdogs coming in. No matter what, it's going to be a really tough game. I think as long as we stick together, we can give them a good run for their money.

Q. What stood out to you about TCU and their offense from what you guys have seen so far on film?

DYMONIQUE MAXIE: Well, obviously, they have a star player, and we're just going to do our best to limit her touches and talk and communicate on defense.

ERIN CONDRON: They're also a lot bigger than us. That's definitely going to be a challenge that we're going to have to find a way around. But on top of that, I think that we play very fast. So I think that's to our advantage.

Q. You guys carry a little bit of momentum coming



into the tournament with I think now six straight wins, including big wins against Hawaii in the tournament. How will you guys look to carry that momentum going into this game?

ERIN CONDRON: Again, I think it's just like staying positive. Kind of like staying together. Like we have a lot of energy within the team. And as long as we stick together throughout the game, like I think that it'll help us in the long run.

Q. Erin, you're one of the people that's been around for a couple years. This program is not very old as far as the NCAA. What have you seen in the development since you've been there? And then getting the opportunity the last year just to get a taste of the NCAA Tournament, now being back here this year?

ERIN CONDRON: Yeah, I mean, I think from when I first entered this program to now, there's been just insane growth. I think a lot of that is just to do with the culture that has been created at this school. It draws people in, it drew me in, the culture that Heidi wanted to create and has continued to build.

Q. Erin, you having been here, and, Dymonique, your first year in the program, why was this team able to gel so quickly?

DYMONIQUE MAXIE: I think that we all just knew what our strengths were, and we used that to our advantage. So we know Erin likes it in the post, we get her the ball down there. We just stick to what we know, and that makes us a great team all around.

ERIN CONDRON: Yeah, I think the other thing is is that we get along so well off the court. Like everyone on the team is everyone's best friend, and that helps a lot.

Q. Obviously Olivia Miles plays for that team, but Marta Suarez has come in, big girl. So just talk about that match-up, what that could be like for you and what you see going against somebody like that?

ERIN CONDRON: Yeah, she's a really, really good player.



And she can do a lot of things. She can shoot outside, she can drive it, she can post up. Like that kind of player is hard to stop. Again, it's about limiting her touches, trying to, I guess, just put as much pressure on her as possible to try and restrict her shots as well.

Q. How does this experience contrast to the experience last year when the team got in for the first time?

ERIN CONDRON: I mean, it's -- you know, we did get in last year, but this year it's a new team. It's a new feel. I feel like our energy this year, personally, I think we have so much more energy. Like I am just very -- like I was very excited last year. I'm even more excited this year.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, guys.

Coach, when you're ready, we'll start this with an opening statement.

HEIDI VANDERVEER: Yes, we are very excited to be here and represent UC San Diego and the Big West Conference. Congratulations to Washington and South Dakota State. Aaron and Tina do a phenomenal job, and obviously at TCU, Mark and their program over the last several years.

So we're very excited to compete in the NCAA and represent a fantastic university and just a first-class athletic department.

Q. Last year your team got a taste of the NCAA Tournament. Talk about that experience and what that will do, but also the challenge of coming into a building where TCU hasn't lost a home game in over two years?

HEIDI VANDERVEER: Right. Great question. I think last year we were really excited to experience actually our first year that we were eligible in Division I, and we played in the Big West Tournament, and then on Sunday morning we got home, and then we found out Sunday afternoon we were going to LA, which we go to about five times or six times a year.

So actually coming here to play TCU, which they're a very talented team, is really exciting for this team. This team is totally different than last year's team.

So I think the experience comes from three or four people of embracing a tremendous opportunity to play in front of -- I know that you have excellent fans, very passionate about TCU basketball. And I think it's just a great experience for our young scholar-athletes.

Q. Can you talk a little bit about trying to slow down Olivia Miles and the TCU offense, especially with a Defensive Player of the Year like Makayla Rose?

HEIDI VANDERVEER: I've watched Olivia Miles play since she was in high school. She is a tremendous talent obviously, will be playing at the next level.

So slowing her down will be not just -- I mean, Makayla Rose is an excellent defensive player too. So it won't just be on Makayla Rose to try and contain her a little bit, but it will be on our team.

And I think that's the strength of our team. We play real team basketball, defensively, very team-oriented.

And they have other players besides Olivia Miles. Olivia Miles is very talented, and she obviously is the engine, but Suarez, Silva, Hunter, Bigby, and we've seen these players evolve through club and high school.

And so it will be a tremendous challenge for our team and Mak has probably one of the toughest jobs, but she is a relentless competitor. She is a gritty defender. And I think she's done her homework. So she'll be up for the challenge.

Q. You guys come in with a bit of momentum, with I think you guys are now on six straight wins, including wins against Hawaii and Davis in the Big West Championship. How will you look to carry that into tomorrow's match-up?

HEIDI VANDERVEER: Thanks for coming. Did you get all your exams done?

Q. No, I haven't (off microphone).

HEIDI VANDERVEER: All right. I can't help you. Trust me, I've tried to help some of our scholar-athletes. I'm like no, huh-uh.

No, I think that we have -- momentum is funny. I think that momentum comes from confidence, and it comes from trust. And I think that over the course of the year, our team has really developed those two characteristics.

Obviously we play probably six or seven people. So the five that we play a lot of minutes have developed that -- the trust, the chemistry, the connection that is really critical in March. And they will play not just with each other, but they will play for each other.

And I think that is what momentum comes from. It comes

from the confidence of knowing that you've put in the work, that you have great belief in your preparation, and you are willing to go out and compete.

And that's what we will do. We will show up, you know, tomorrow at 11 o'clock. And we (indiscernible) our 4 o'clock shooting practice, don't worry. So if anyone was thinking about showing up then, don't worry about it.

But we will compete. And whatever happens in the 40 minutes happens. But we will represent UC San Diego and our athletic department in a way that -- with the excellence that it deserves.

Q. Can you talk about the growth of this team. You had a few players come out, you had a few players come in. But can you talk about how the ride has been from those early days in November, where there were a few struggles, to some of like the heights of conference play and now where you guys are at and how the team has bonded and gelled in that time?

HEIDI VANDERVEER: I think that the day and age that we're in right now with NIL and transfer portal, you know, UC San Diego, we really try to obviously retain and recruit some of the best and the brightest scholar-athletes throughout the country.

And I feel like even the transfers that we brought in we have recruited before and we've also seen grow a little bit. Makayla Rose is one of them, Dymonique Maxie is one of them, our newcomers.

And I feel like sometimes when you're putting together -- we talked about chemistry at the end of the year. When you're putting together a puzzle, you do the borders first and then you put in the middle pieces.

And I think sometimes it takes a little time. We played a very challenging nonconference schedule, different. I mean, I know Washington is here obviously with Tina, and we played them, and I thought we played them very competitively.

And it's learning to trust each other. Our team defense is built on trust and to have great reps with each other. Same thing with our offense. Our offense is really free-flowing. And so that requires a lot of trust and where people get raps and they start to learn each other.

And it takes a while for that to evolve. And I feel like going through the Big West, we kind of found our footing. And then we developed that throughout the course of January, February and March, and we're finding our stride in March Madness now.

Q. I'm just wondering, TCU obviously has the size advantage against your Tritons. What ways are you going to try to minimize that advantage that this TCU team has, especially with the likes of passing the rock to Erin Condron, who was an elite primary scorer for your team?

HEIDI VANDERVEER: I think we have to offensively put Erin in good spots to try to take advantage of her strengths against some of the size that TCU has. Same thing with our guards. Their wings are very big, and they're long.

So we have to really offensively try to find -- put our players in positions that utilize their strengths against TCU's strengths and try to give Erin some good looks, whether it's on the move or get out in transition. We like to play with pace.

And then defensively we have to also -- I think the first question talked about our defense, and we have to try to minimize some of the mismatches that TCU presents to us. And our coaches do a great job of scouting. And I feel like we have a game plan and we have plan A, plan B, and it's just through the course of a game, we have to be able to be flexible.

But I think we have good quickness, we have a solid team defense. And their size, obviously we're -- we played against Hawaii, and they don't have the size obviously that TCU does, but they have some good length too.

So I feel like it's kind of like now it's the next step of understanding what that length can do and try to avoid some situations that could cause us some of those problems.

THE MODERATOR: Any other questions? Thanks, Coach.

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