

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - UTSA vs UConn

Friday, March 20, 2026

Storrs, Connecticut, USA

Gampel Pavilion

UTSA Roadrunners

Coach Karen Aston

Cheyenne Rowe

Idara Udo

Media Conference

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by UTSA student-athletes Cheyenne Rowe and Idara Udo. We will take questions for the student-athletes.

Q. Cheyenne, can you just talk about what it means to be back in the NCAA tournament for this program. I know it's your third year in a row in the postseason. There is a difference, isn't there?

CHEYENNE ROWE: For sure. There is definitely a difference I would have to say. You know, the stage is bigger here and you get to play your all. You're able to show the world exactly who you are.

Q. For either of you guys what's it been like being in a building with this much history getting to see Storrs and UConn for the first time?

IDARA UDO: This is a really historical place, a place you dream of coming to play one day when you grow up and get to be in this position. It's really exciting seeing all the banners and it's really cool to get to be a part of the culture and the history here.

Q. For both of you, is it intimidating? Is it exciting? How would you explain the feelings when you're going into a place like this and also playing the No. 1 team in the country that's undefeated?

CHEYENNE ROWE: I would have to say it's thrilling. I wouldn't say it's intimidating at all. As a basketball player, playing UConn is just amazing. You know, it's a chance to show us what we've got. Show the world what we've got.



It's definitely an exciting opportunity, so thrilling I would say is the world instead of intimidating.

IDARA UDO: I would add to that. I would say I'm very -- I think our whole team, staff, everybody is very excited to be here. Again, just touching on the history of the school and all the things they accomplished, we're really excited to be here and get to compete at the highest level.

Q. You all have dealt with some adversity this season, injuries. You had the run through the American. Can you talk about what that feeling was like when you were cutting down the nets and how you kind of had the resilience to get through this season?

IDARA UDO: I think that all the adversity, the challenges we went through made it worth it when we got to cut the net down. I think we kind of forgot about the struggles and the path that got us here.

It just makes you believe that when you work hard and you buy in, it pays off. No matter the circumstances you're in, you can always come out on top.

Q. When you guys are scouting a team like UConn, kind of what stands out about them and are there areas where you feel like you guys could match up well with them?

CHEYENNE ROWE: I would say it's just scouting another team. There are weaknesses and strengths that they have, but it's just how we ourselves will play and win or one-on-one battles.

Everyone will have to help the helper, things like that. We're one of the best defensive teams in our own conference so our goal is to carry that over into this game.

Q. You guys say it's exciting and it's just about scouting. I imagine the two of you being forwards may both at some point play against Sarah Strong. What's that opportunity or challenge like for you guys to play maybe the best player in the country?

IDARA UDO: I think it's, again, exciting. It's obviously



something that I don't think anybody would pass up that opportunity. I mean she's a really talented player all around. Three-level scorer, shot blocker, all that. So it's really good to put your talent up against some of the best talent in the country.

So just really excited. I mean, I think that there is nothing we can do but go out there and play and have fun; just soak in the opportunity to get to play against a player like her.

CHEYENNE ROWE: Piggybacking off that, Sarah Strong is definitely a very versatile player and I would love to play against someone like that. It's so cool to see what my skills are against her, see where I could develop, where I need to get stronger and things like that.

THE MODERATOR: Joined by our start head coach Karen Aston. Opening statement from coach and open to questions.

KAREN ASTON: Yeah, obviously our team is incredibly excited to be here. You know, I've been coaching long enough to know that these opportunities don't come around every day, and it's been an absolute thrill for me as a coach to see these young people have this opportunity to play in the NCAA tournament, experience everything, and just kind of take it all in.

Super proud of our entire group and the run that we had last week. It was pretty amazing to watch the evolution really of this team all year long, but then see to come together in the tournament was really fun for me, just to watch the players and staff be rewarded.

I'm excited to play.

Q. I was wondering what did you do especially well in that last five-game stretch? You beat some teams that had beaten you earlier in the season. What do you feel like you're doing well, bringing it into the tournament?

KAREN ASTON: Yeah, I think there is a couple things that we did well manage that five-game stretch. Obviously with the Rice game leading into the tournament.

Some of it is just maturation of young players. We had some injuries throughout the year. Some were season-ending that led us to playing some really young perimeter players.

Then we had a stretch where we were playing without Idara. It was kind of a team that needed to grow up and it doesn't necessarily happen on your watch.

So I think it sort of happened at the right time. But I think to answer the other part of your question, the things that we did really, I mean we played defense really well.

We been really solid defensively all year long but I think that the evolution of the young players helped us a little bit down the stretch because it's just a little bit better understanding of schemes. A little bit better understanding of connection. A little bit better understanding of, okay, I played these people one or two times and now I know what their transition game looks like.

It was just a maturation that happened at the right time, to be honest with you. Defensively we played really good in the tournament.

Q. Coach, you played UConn a couple times in the tournament when you were at Texas previously. What is it like for you to be seeing this matchup again so many years later?

KAREN ASTON: Well, I don't know that it's necessarily ever fun, except that it's always, you know, an honor might be a little bit of an overstatement.

But it is. I mean, I respect the game a lot. I love the game. When you have an opportunity to go toe to toe regardless of where you're at with the best and the tradition that UConn carries with it, then there is a respect that goes with that and there is an excitement that goes with it.

It's a challenge. I mean there is no question that this is a monumental challenge for our team, but as always, you're excited to measure. And for our players, I think it's a fantastic opportunity for them to have -- and we played some really good teams this year. We've played Baylor. Went to Tech. They had a great year this year.

So we understand the level. Again, they're the defending national champions; clearly the No. 1 seed. For our players to be able to get a visual of what that looks like and just how they carry themselves, I think it's a fantastic opportunity for them.

Q. Obviously you guys have played in now three state postseason tournaments; what you did last week at the American Conference. What is it about this team and group of players that can handle big lights, big stages when the pressure is high, especially knowing the NCAA is a step up from your other postseason tournaments and it'll be more attention than ever during this weekend?

KAREN ASTON: Well, I think I would be making it up if I knew they could handle it. I mean, I think that the players

that we have on our team have a lot of pride in being at UTSA. I think a lot of them, not all of them, experienced the run we had last year.

Some of them experienced a lot of disappointment in getting beat in the tournament and not making it to the NCAA because we felt like we were an NCAA team last year. So I think that maybe they felt a little bit of redemption in the tournament, you know, to be able to win it and be able to go where their goals are.

We made it clear we want to go to the tournament. That's going to be a goal every year. I think what's unique about the players that are on this team is that they have bought into that. They've bought into the pride that you're supposed to have when you put the uniform on. They want to represent well and they understand what our expectations are. Regardless of whether we meet them or not, they understand what they are and they embrace that.

I appreciate that about them. They come to play for me because they do understand that I have expectations and they want them.

Q. Ashlynn Shade has played under the radar for UConn this year behind some superstars. What's your impression of her and the impact she has on games?

KAREN ASTON: You know, I mean, there are several players that I would probably give the same answer about, but in particular I think that she picks and chooses really big shots to take and make. She appears to be the person that knows exactly what her role is and what she's supposed to be doing all the time and does it really, really well.

Again, I could say that about a lot of the players that may not get as much attention as the two that do.

She in particular looks like she's in the right place at the right time all the time. You appreciate that about players.

Q. Just wondering if you notice a difference in Siena's leadership this year? Sat out most of last year. Gave birth to her son in July. Have you noticed a step up in just her leadership or the way she approaches the game and approaches practice?

KAREN ASTON: You know, it's been tough for her. It's been a journey. Absolutely. I think that ironically enough it's been late in the year she's found her voice. She missed a lot of time and it's been a journey for her to get back into playing form.

I think she's one of those players that, I mean, she's not

going to speak up if she's not doing it. I think most kids are really that way. But she's found her voice here late in the year and she knows exactly what's expected.

She's been around me long enough to understand that so if I ask a question a lot of times in a film session she always knows the answer and is not afraid to speak up because she does understand the system and knows what we expect.

You have to admire the stick-to-it-ness that she's shown for sure.

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