

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

Saturday, March 21, 2026

Storrs, Connecticut, USA

Gampel Pavilion

## UTSA Roadrunners

## Coach Karen Aston

## Cheyenne Rowe

## Ereauna Hardaway

### Media Conference

UConn 90, UTSA 52

THE MODERATOR: We welcome to UTSA Roadrunners to the stage. We are joined by head coach Karen Aston along with student-athletes Cheyenne Rowe and Ereauna Hardaway. We will begin with an opening statement from coach.

KAREN ASTON: Yeah, I want to thank everyone here for how inviting they were and respectful to our team. I really, really appreciate that a lot. It's a reflection of Geno and how he goes about his business and how the University of Connecticut does, so thank you very much.

They're really, really good and our team, I do believe our team understood that. They had the correct mindset, the correct preparation, but we ran into a team that is really, really, really good and what they do really well defensively is not very inviting for our team and it hasn't been, to be honest with you, all year long. We have struggled against pressure at times and even in our league and so I think it was a match-up that was probably pretty difficult for us, but I do want to commend our team for continuing to compete.

I was really, really impressed with them that they never gave in to trying and they never gave in to trying to execute. They never gave in to not trying to guard. They just ran into the best team in the country right now.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open up questions for the student-athletes.

**Q. Just from a player's perspective on the floor, what was UConn doing that was making it difficult for you**



earlier in the game?

CHEYENNE ROWE: I would say they were definitely connected defensively and it was difficult to try and see through it, but they played hard and we just -- we were able to get through it in the end, but at the start and throughout the middle, it was difficult to get through.

**Q. What does it mean to be able to cap off your senior seasons playing in the NCAA Tournament against a blue blood like UConn? What was that experience like for you guys?**

EREAUNA HARDAWAY: I would say it's a blessing. Not everybody gets to, first, make it to the tournament but also play the number one team, so I would definitely say it's a blessing and a great opportunity for us to measure ourselves to see where we're at and where they can grow for the ones coming back next year.

CHEYENNE ROWE: Yeah, piggybacking off what she said, it's a blessing. It means a lot. There are times where you think you may not get to this point but then you do and you realize all your hard work paid off, so.

**Q. I know you talked about this season, but I feel like if there's anything you want to add to those comments. Clearly you're not just going to talk about this one year. You guys have played for a long time and I feel like you have earned the right to talk about your trials and tribulations and what it took for you to get here.**

I think a lot of people don't understand the story. I think they might see today, but they don't understand what you went through in that conference tournament. What you went through this year. What you have been through in your past four years. If you can just take the floor and please explain if you could.

EREAUNA HARDAWAY: I just want to start by saying thank you to Coach for reaching out and allowing me to have the opportunity to play here. I don't think she knows, but the love that I gained for basketball this year is crazy. I didn't think I would want to play sees or anything and coming here really changed that.



I had the best teammates. We had a lot of ups and downs this season but I really love them and I'm really grateful to have the opportunity to play here. It's been a fun season for me. Everybody might not think it went how it was supposed to, but I had a great time this year.

CHEYENNE ROWE: I definitely second that. It takes finding the right coach and Coach Aston is definitely the right coach. She helped me gain my love for basketball again and the players, too. They bought into what me and Ereauna wanted. We wanted to win. We wanted our team to want to win. Having players that follow you that listen to instructions, it's amazing. I got to thank them for everything.

**Q. Cheyenne you were on that team last year that came into the American conference tournament as the one seed and lost in the first round to Rice. Now you come into the conference tournament this year as a sixth seed and make it all the way to the NCAA Tournament. How rewarding is that? Even though you didn't get the result you wanted today, just to be able to stick through that process and get your first NCAA Tournament bid in 17 years.**

CHEYENNE ROWE: It's definitely a historical moment for us and I'm glad to be a part of the team that I am on now to make that historical moment, but it's also an amazing feat for us and it's eye-opening. It helps us let the world know who we are. It gives us respect and I think that not just for this team, but for the next teams to come, there's a new standard and they can live up to that.

**Q. Coach Aston, I also wanted to get your opinion on these two seniors next to you. I know it means a lot, especially for how you guys got here. Like I said, once again, I don't think that story is being magnified like it how about. You took on the top two seeds and your chances were pretty slim going in.**

KAREN ASTON: Top three.

**Q. Yeah, so if you could speak about these two young ladies sitting next to you.**

KAREN ASTON: Yeah, they kept us afloat. That's the best way I know to describe these two. Cheyenne in particular, because she was the lone returner, really, that was able to play early in the year when we had all the injuries and Idara got hurt midseason and Ereauna was new.

Any time you throw a new quarterback on the team, there's a learning curve. There's a learning curve for her

teammates and her chemistry with her teammates. There's a learning curve for the system, learning what the coach needs from you. I think it took her some time and I appreciate just how she stuck to it.

She never was one of those ones that's like, okay, this didn't work out the way I thought it was going to be when I came here. I decided to come here because I thought I could win. Then we had all these injuries and it didn't really flow the way I think she thought it was going to flow and it tells you so much about her character. She just rolled her sleeves up on days that it was really, really hard.

Cheyenne is the anchor because she was the returning player that went through all the ups and downs of her career. She sat on the bench behind our player of the year last year when somebody else could have said, well, I'll just go somewhere else. She waited her turn and when her turn came, she was ready. It speaks to who she is.

These two had to keep us afloat until the young ones grew up and Idara got back into shape and she got back into the flow and there really wasn't another choice for that besides my coaching staff who did their job also, which was keeping us afloat.

But it just says a lot about them as people. They never complained because it wasn't exactly going the way they thought it was going to go because we were picked second. I think with everything we had returning, if we all would have been healthy like I think that was a legitimate pick probably but it didn't work out that way. For them to come together at the right time and make that run in the tournament was really special for me to watch as a coach.

THE MODERATOR: Any other questions for the student? All right thanks for your time, guys. Congratulations on a great season.

We will open up to questions for coach.

**Q. The big question coming into the season after losing Jordyn, after losing Nina was how you guys were going to build off of that and what the new standard would be and then, like you said, you ran into some injuries and then you ended up sweeping the conference tournament and making it here. What does that say about the resilience of your team and your program that you've built through your time at UTSA? Just to be able to make it even further than you did after losing some all-conference players like Nina and Jordyn?**

KAREN ASTON: First of all, did you -- you made this trip on your own?



**Q. Yes, ma'am.**

KAREN ASTON: How did you get here? You just came up here by yourself, huh?

**Q. Yes. 17 years... (inaudible).**

KAREN ASTON: You'll get paid back for that. I appreciate that a lot. That means a lot to us. Resilient is the word I've used all year long, so you picked it up. This team has been really resilient. Just bad games. I can go through the whole entire year, but I think the Tulsa game was a real turning point of, okay, are we done? It was our last home game, we had a chance to really get a fourth seed and we just dropped the ball and the next day we talked and we just decided, look, we're not done and they decided.

But, yeah, resilient, tough, tough-minded. Willing. I think those two hit it on the head that the young players were willing to listen to them finally. It took a while for cohesiveness to happen but I think when it happened, it was fun to watch for me.

**Q. To piggyback off of what you said about resilience and everything that you guys went through, when you first took this job and where you knew where you were starting from with this team to where they're at now, on a scale of one to ten, where do you think you guys are at right now?**

KAREN ASTON: We're right where I thought we would be. (Laughter) It's just what I expect. I will say that much. When you talk about standard and -- I'm a vision person. I have visions for everything I do and this is what we talked about from day one, regardless of whether we thought we were going to do it, the first year we won seven games and we celebrated every one of them with a cup of apple juice and we toasted to every win and that taught these kids everything is important.

We had some kids really buy in. Retention is not easy and it's sure not easy at UTSA. We have kids that -- if Idara Udo comes back, she will be a fourth year senior. Cheyenne was here for three years. Jordyn Jenkins hung around when she could have gone anywhere in the world.

There's something going right at our school and it starts at the top with the support from my administration, but it's also the people I've surrounded this program with: The coaches, the staff. They believe in what I believe in and so I think it's easy for the kids to kind of follow suit. It was the plan and I thought it was going to happen last year. I'm so excited for this team, but it is a little bittersweet for me, because that team didn't -- we've had multiple years where

we were right there. I could go down the line. Three years ago, we were in the semis of the conference tournament and we had a mishap right at the end of the game that really could have turned -- we were right there.

We could be sitting here with three years in the NCAA easily, but that's how hard it is and that's why those kids need to really relish the time they've had here and appreciate this moment, because it's not easy.

**Q. Last question from me, I just wanted to ask about those young players. You know you're going to have some departing seniors, players like Adriana Robles, Mia Hammonds, even some players on the bench that didn't get to play because of injury. Just how important is this moment going to be and this experience? How do you think that will aid their development going forward as you guys look to contend every single year?**

KAREN ASTON: I think it will fuel them. I think it was an eye-opening experience. Not just today. Obviously today was. What a wonderful crowd to play in front of. This is what women's basketball is supposed to look like. But also just the journey. I think it will really fuel them and help them understand the day-to-day work that it takes to be at the level that you make the tournament. It should fuel them and I hope that we retain them. That goes hand in hand.

**Q. Having gone through this experience in the just for the young players but the whole program as you go forward, what can they take away from this and what will this do for UTSA's future?**

KAREN ASTON: I hope that it just continues to motivate everyone. We're opening up a new practice facility in the fall. It's a game-changer for men and women's basketball and volleyball. I think that it's going to allow them to have a space to get in the gym and get in there the way that you have to get if there to be a great basketball player.

I think that this experience has to fuel them. I don't know what else to say. It fuels everyone. You can work really, really hard, which we do every single year, but when you get some reward from it, it should motivate you to do the same thing again. That's what I'm hoping for.

**Q. It's Women's History Month. I wanted to ask you was there anybody, especially with the way the game is now, from the time you were if your previous coaching job up to now, you have seen women's basketball upgrade a lot but you have also had a very successful year. You have also had a great coach and you have led two great programs. Is anybody**

**specifically on the female side that you would like to shout out to you achieving what you have achieved so far in your career for Women's History Month?**

KAREN ASTON: Oh, gosh, I don't have -- there's just not a lot of time for that. I have so many people that have affected my career. The people that gave me opportunity are the ones that profoundly changed my career. Sonja Hogg. There's probably people in this room who don't even know who she is, but she's one of the main reason why women's basketball is where it is and she gave me my first job at Baylor.

Then you to go down the line, the people that I've had the opportunity to be mentored by and work for. Jodi, Kim. Tina Slinker at North Texas gave me my first full-time assistant's job. They're all females that really cared about the game before the game was as big as it is now. They paved the way for all of us.

And then like she wasn't my best friend of anything, but Pat Summitt was -- she was the one for me. She was the person that when I was growing up as a young coach, that's who you paid attention to. That was who you wanted to be and so she -- like I was one of those young coaches that I went to the Final Four shoot arounds, the open practices, just so I could see Pat. That was -- she was the one when I was growing up.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you for your time. Congratulations on a great season.

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