

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Four - Southern vs UC San Diego

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Los Angeles, California, USA

Pauley Pavilion

UC San Diego Tritons Coach Heidi VanDerveer Sabrina Ma Sumayah Sugapong

Media Conference

THE MODERATOR: All right, welcome everybody. We are joined by UC San Diego, winners of the Big West women's basketball tournament. Making their 19th overall NCAA tournament appearance and first as a member of Division I.

With us is head coach Heidi VanDerveer, student-athletes Sumayah Sugapong, and Sabrina Ma.

Coach?

HEIDI VANDERVEER: Yeah, we're extremely excited to be here participating in the NCAA tournament. There are obviously 68 teams. Excited to keep dancing, and we have some good dancers on our team so we are very excited about that.

We are grateful to the UC San Diego administration, Chancellor Khosla and our AD Earl Edwards for supporting athletics and women's basketball specifically to enable us to achieve our goals.

As a young girl I'm sure Sumayah and Sabrina will expand on this a little bit. Everybody wants to be playing in March, and we are extremely excited. The opportunity is not going to be lost on us. We're going to enjoy it.

Q. It's your first time in the tournament. Just want to know what does it mean for the overall program and how have you approached it? Any change in intensity in practice, or is it business as usual?

SUMAYAH SUGAPONG: Yeah, obviously super, super excited to be here; first time here. I think kind of just been



business as usual. Obviously these last couple games and next few games hold a lot of weight, but just approaching it the same as we have been in this second half of the season.

Yeah, just super, super excited to be here. Really just enjoying the ride. But also ready to hopefully win some games out there.

SABRINA MA: Like she said, I think we are just all super grateful for this opportunity to represent ourselves, the community and just everyone and everything that we hold dear to us.

Q. Sumayah, you lead the team in points per game and assists, despite being a sophomore. What's it like being to be thrust into a leadership role despite being an underclassman?

SUMAYAH SUGAPONG: It's been a good challenge. I think me personally I've grown a lot since last year kind of stepping into that leadership role a little bit more.

But it's just been a lot of fun for me and I've been grateful for the trust my teammates and coaches put into me. That's really what allows me to go out there and play my game.

Q. And then one of the best players at Southern Aniya Gourdine. What do you expect out of that matchup?

HEIDI VANDERVEER: We've had obviously a quick turnaround. We have scouted Southern. We have -- our coaches do a great job of preparing our team. She is very talented. She's the engine that drives their team. They're extremely aggressive defensively. They get out in transition. Very well-coached.

You know, it'll be a defensive battle. I think our defense is up for the test as well. It's going to be a total team effort to make it really tough on her specifically, but she's surrounded by very talented players as well, so going to be a great challenge for our defense.

Q. This question is for Sumayah. After watching you



in high school doing your thing at La Jolla Country Day, how cool is this for you guys to be in this moment making the transition from DII to D1? Just how cool is this for everybody here in San Diego and you guys just repping for the town. Just being a part of it. How cool is it as a whole coming through La Jolla Country Day and just doing your thing with everybody out here?

SUMAYAH SUGAPONG: Yeah, this is just a unique experience. This is everything I worked for, everything my whole team worked for the whole season, and it's really cool just feeling all the support not only from UC San Diego fans and community but from La Jolla Country Day and all the friends and family back home in San Diego who are rooting for us out here.

Yeah, it's just been a lot of fun. Yeah, just an unbelievable experience.

Q. When you guys were balling out this year and going through the conference and doing your thing, obviously the goal is to get to this point. When did you guys -- when did it become a realization when you got into the tournament that like you know you ran through Cal/Poly; then played Hawai'i. Take me through when, hey, we can really get this auto bid and really get this done?

SUMAYAH SUGAPONG: Yeah, I think this has been mentioned before, but we got off to a rough start to our season. We kind of hit our stride once we got into conference play.

Especially Hawai'i, we had lost to them twice during conference play. We knew going into that quarterfinal game it was going to be a dogfight. We knew for sure we would be able to get them.

Then yeah, going our into Davis, that final, it was just a thing like, we did all this work to get here; we got to come out with a win.

Q. How important was it for you coming through La Jolla Country Day to stay home and just play in front of the family and your friends? Just how important, how cool is that that you got to stay home and do this and be a part of turning everything around and just staying here? How cool is it to make history and you being the first class to do that?

SUMAYAH SUGAPONG: Yeah, it means a lot. It really means the world seeing my family at every home game. They travel to us at some of the closer away games as well. Like I mentioned before, the support from family, friends, you know, different communities has just been

unreal and it's made it 100 times better.

HEIDI VANDERVEER: Thank you. Thank you all.

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