

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

Wednesday, March 19, 2025

Los Angeles, California, USA

Pauley Pavilion

UC San Diego Tritons
Coach Heidi VanDerveer

Parker Montgomery

Kayanna Spriggs

Media Conference

Southern 68, UC San Diego 56

HEIDI VANDERVEER: First of all, congratulations to Southern on not just an excellent season, but a hard-fought game tonight. I thought they came out and set the tone defensively. We struggled in the first half. We weren't in sync. They made us pay for every mistake that we made.

So congratulations to them.

With that said, I feel like our team really showed its character in the second half competing. We've had a great run through the Big West tournament, Big West regular season, and would not be where we are in the NCAA tournament for the first time in school history, first time that we are eligible to compete in an NCAA tournament, without Parker and Kayanna.

I'll start with Parker. Parker is a fifth-year grad student getting her Masters. Came her first year of COVID and so she didn't really have a senior year or freshmen year. Senior in high school.

But she just stuck with it and she came back for this; came back for an opportunity to compete for a Big West Championship; was a tremendous leader for our team, especially the last three years here. Gave it all for, again, an opportunity to compete at this level. Couldn't be prouder of her. Love her.

And then Kayanna, another senior who actually is a transfer for from San Diego, transferred back for one year. When she came, it was really special. She is really some of the heart and soul of our team in only one year. Just is



really competitive and, again, we would not be in this position without Kayanna. So thankful for Kayanna for taking a chance on UC San Diego.

Again, couldn't be prouder of our team. We have a young core and we have set a great legacy with the two young women up here. Hopefully we can come back and have a better first quarter.

Q. Question for you, Kayanna. So not a question, first I just want to say it's been a pleasure to watch you all season. I think we talked to you after winning the Big West, that you have so many intangibles as a player, so many things you can't teach, the heart, the grit that you have. It's such a pleasure to watch you play. First I want to say thank you for giving us such an incredible season to cover and watch as a fan. It's been incredible. And just knowing what you know now at the end of the season, starting out winning conference play and making it to March Madness, talk about the journey a little bit and what it means to you as a transfer only coming back for a year, and also just knowing that somebody like you has played a huge part in changing sports culture at UC San Diego, very specifically for women's sports. I mean, we got a picture during our broadcast that somebody sent us of people watching the game on a projector in a study room during finals week. What does it mean to you looking back on the journey of transferring and knowing you guys started out 1-8 to making March Madness, to knowing you're leaving a legacy beyond yourself as a senior?

KAYANNA SPRIGGS: Yeah, first thank you for your kind words. I really do appreciate it. I think like even in the beginning of the season, I chose us. I had us in the beginning. Yes, we went through a lot of adversity, but never for a second did it cross my mind that it wasn't going to be us cutting down that net when it came March.

Yes, we handled a lot of adversity and we fought through a really tough season, and like Heidi earlier, I really credit her for bringing me along to this team. It's been a wonderful, wonderful year. I couldn't ask for a better college experience.



Just coming in I feel like I had enough experience to help lead this team as well, but I give it all to my teammates. We played off each other, together, and they made it really easy for it to be a great year. I would do it over and over again if I had the chance. So, yeah.

Q. Parker, like Coach mentioned, you've been here since the beginning, and kind of to bounce off what Haley was saying, how have you seen the sports culture changing over your years here? How do you see it going forward, so much support at the Big West and out here in LA?

PARKER MONTGOMERY: I think women's basketball as a whole is growing and I'm just glad to be a part of I guess that journey. I believe in my team. As Heidi said, we do have a young core, and that's basically the team playing now.

So I have my full trust in these girls that are coming behind me, and they're just going to make more legacy and make a name for themselves, too.

Q. Parker, just congratulations for an amazing five-year career here. It's been a joy to watch. Reflect on what winning the Big West and appearing in March Madness has meant to you, someone that's been with the team through the whole transition process.

PARKER MONTGOMERY: Yeah, it means everything to me. I said it in multiple press conferences, that this was the reason I came back. I have full trust in my teammates now. I knew this team was special.

I took a chance coming back because, I mean, I had a free year, but I wanted to stick it out with UC San Diego, and I couldn't be any happier. Who would've ever thought UC San Diego would've been here, and winning the Big West first year out.

Yeah, I'm very happy.

Q. Coach VanDerveer, you've been coaching this team since 2012 through the D1 transition process and now for the first D1 Big West Championship and March Madness appearance. How much does that mean to you and how proud are you of this team?

HEIDI VANDERVEER: I'm extremely proud of this team, and more so because they set out a goal in July, and I don't think anybody really thought we would be sitting here in November to mid-December.

And then we played Northern Kentucky and we lost to

them right before the holidays, and then we beat LaSalle, who I think was very good at that time.

And then we just got a lot of confidence and people started understanding the commitment it takes to compete.

I couldn't be prouder. I think that, again, I don't think anybody would've thought we would be sitting here except for the people in our circle.

Sometimes a little bit of belief and confidence and trust is all you need, and the result is what you're seeing here. It hurts. It hurts. I told Parker and Kayanna, if it didn't hurt so much it means that it wasn't important to you. The fact that it hurts, it was really important to us.

It's more about the journey than the destination. Our journey has been one for the Ages, so to speak.

Q. Congratulations to you and your program on a phenomenal season. Just a question regarding Southern and some of the things they did tonight. Soniyah Reed had a huge shooting night and they have been the type of team that's gotten contributions from different people throughout the season. What did you all see out there from Soniyah? Obviously she made some shots and got comfortable, which made it challenging at the start. In the scout, was she one of the ones that like, hey, we need to lock in on her as well or was it just -- because Southern is a difficult team. They don't have one player that can just score.

HEIDI VANDERVEER: Southern is well coached and they're very talented. Bringing her off the bench is a luxury. She got loose in our defense in the first half and then, you mentioned it, got comfortable.

I think our defense has been something we've taken a lot of pride in. I think, again, maybe just -- maybe -- I don't know if it was a little bit of nerves or what it was, but she got loose in our defense and got comfortable.

No, we didn't overlook her. I think she was 1A on our scouting report. Our coaches do a great job scouting. She got loose a little bit and made us pay for every mistake we made.

Thanks a lot guys. Thanks for taking time to cover women's basketball.

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