

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - Texas A&M-Corpus Christi vs USC

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Los Angeles, California, USA

Galen Center

Texas A&M-Corpus Christi Islanders

Royce Chadwick

Alecia Westbrook

Paige Allen

Media Conference

ROYCE CHADWICK: First of all, hospitality has been incredible. We are very honored to be representing Texas A&M Corpus Christi. Corpus Christi, the city, and the Southland Conference, and very excited about the opportunity. We know it's a huge task.

Everybody in the NCAA Tournament is very, very, very good and has some talent, and I think USC is obviously one of the best teams in the league or in the tournament. So we've really got our work cut out for us, looking forward to the challenge and excited to watch our team play.

Q. What makes this team so special? Is there something in the off-season or something off the court that you guys all do that is special that has brought everyone together this season and really allowed you guys to gel as a group?

PAIGE ALLEN: I think our team is special just because of how close we are not only on the court but off the court.

A lot of us, me and Lecie, for example, have played together for ten years, known each other for a long time, and some of these girls I played with that I came in with, and we have been able to grow that bond. And we started this back in June when everybody comes in, and we always look forward to this season in March, saying once we get to March we'll be ready to play. I think that just helps us as a whole.

Q. For you guys, I'm sure you've heard about across



March Madness, both men's and women's, some of the higher seeds getting upsets historically and the excitement that goes with that. What does that do to your mentality? Does it provide a spark or confidence, seeing these other teams, does it give you motivation going into your game tomorrow against the No. 1 seed?

ALECIA WESTBROOK: I think it definitely does. We are going to go and play our hardest. We never know if it's our last game or not, so we just have to leave everything out on the floor.

Q. Six different players on your roster are from Spain. What is the connection there and is there a pipeline or where did all that talent -- how did it get from Spain to Corpus Christi?

ROYCE CHADWICK: It started in COVID. During the COVID years, we couldn't go and recruit. So we started watching videotape, and I hate recruiting off videotape. I'd lot rather go watch someone live and we were able to get these tapes in and someone sent us a tape of Mireia Aguado, and we compared her with the other tapes we had, and we felt that she was the best player available.

So we decided to take a chance and we went and brought her in and she was everything that we hoped that she would be. And so she opened the door for Vio Verano. We found her and then brought her and developed a connection, and so we've just been able to nurture that and it's really been wonderful to have them in our program.

I think the world's a smaller place when we all are a little more open to everybody else's culture. So we've enjoyed having them and they have been marvelous representatives of the university.

Q. As players, what have you guys been able to learn from having student athletes from all over the world as part of your roster? Have they brought in any cultural experiences, or anything that they have shared with you guys that have had a cool experience for you as players?

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ALECIA WESTBROOK: Yeah, obviously we got to learn a new language. That was a great part of it. We also got to learn new foods, like for Thanksgiving last year, we had -- everybody bringing a dish that represented their culture. So I just think the little things like that brought us closer together. Yeah, it was cool to experience those type of things because you don't get to experience it every day.

Q. What is going to be the key to shutting down a player like Juju Watkins?

ROYCE CHADWICK: I don't believe you can shut down a player like Juju. We've got to play team schemes. We have to try to do the things that we do best. We have to present different defenses to her but offensive rebounds can play, too, and Marshall can play, and Padilla can play and Davis. They are a well-rounded basketball team, and we have our work cut out for us in every position matchup.

And it makes it extremely challenging, and we are going to go to the practice floor here in a minute and we are going to talk about, here is how we want to do this and we've got to go out and we've got to execute. We are looking forward to the challenge and we know that it is a big one.

Q. There's lots of people would be watching tomorrow and will be the first time they get to see check economic in any sense. What do you want them to take away about your team, school, your program, your culture, what is it you hope viewers watching will walk away and say about the islanders?

PAIGE ALLEN: I want them to see he with work hard, no matter if we are up or down we work to keep that lead or to fight back, and just see our heart for the game. That's what I would like them to see.

ROYCE CHADWICK: I hope they see execution. I hope they see that we are able to turn the lights on really bright and go play the game the right way.

You know, we're a very veteran basketball team, and we were a good program before these two arrived but Lecie has put us over the hump and page put us over the hump in helping us win championships and that's when the championships started, when these young ladies came and they have been difference-makers. They are not just putting a ripple on the pond. They are putting a tidal wave on the pond in the Southland Conference. And so I hope they see the difference that these young ladies have made in our program and that we went out and that we represent the City of Corpus Christi the right way.

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