

# NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: Regional Semifinal: Missouri State vs Stanford

Sunday, March 28, 2021

San Antonio, Texas, USA

Alamodome - Alamo

**Stanford Cardinal**

**Coach Tara VanDerveer**

Sweet 16 Postgame Media Conference



Stanford - 89, Missouri State - 62

**Q. On Tuesday night, you said you and your players had deemed that a C game, even though you beat a Big 12 team by 11 points. What was the grade on today's performance?**

COACH VANDERVEER: I might say a B. There's some things that we really were able to get out and get in transition. Overall team, I would be a B. But I thought we had an absolute A game from Anna Wilson. A for Anna. I thought she really came to play. Kiana is steady. She did a good job. I thought different people came off the bench for us.

This was a great game for -- Hannah Jump came in and gave us some great minutes. I thought Ashten Prechtel gave us some great minutes rebounding. And then just in spurts, Lexie and Lacie made some great plays.

But one of the things that I thought we needed to do better, we needed to rebound better. And we needed to make our free throws going forward.

But we're very excited, very excited to be in the Elite Eight. It's very special. We're really happy that our team -- this is a very good team, and I want to congratulate Coach Mak and her team. They're a very good team and we had to play well to beat them.

**Q. Toward the end of the game, it looked like Fran was going to dunk. I think she kind of bobbed the ball when she started to go up. And then she kind of shrugged. It made me wonder, do you guys have a lob play for her to dunk? Is that in her skill set? Is it something we'll see potentially?**

COACH VANDERVEER: I think -- she's comfortable dunking off a dribble. We do have a lob play, but it's not necessarily for a dunk. But she gets up on that lob play. But I thought it was a good decision by her not dunking.

And Fran did some great things for us. She rebounded. She got on O boards and worked hard defensively. I was just glad to see her just finish on that play. She went 4-for-8. I'm being greedy. I wish she had made her free throws.

**Q. You guys have had some great games against Oregon and (indiscernible) -- you've had some great games against Oregon in recent years. Would you rather face them in the next round or a new challenger in Louisville?**

COACH VANDERVEER: We're excited to be -- I'm rooting for Oregon because they're in the Pac-12. The Pac-12 is doing so well with Arizona in the Elite Eight. But we will be ready to play whoever wins the game.

**Q. You guys are up 23-15 at the end of the first quarter. Can you just talk about the second quarter? You guys were able to get some separation there and take that 23-point lead at halftime?**

COACH VANDERVEER: Well, I thought we got out in transition well. I thought Haley had some great passes. Anna had a nice steal. I thought we shot the 3 ball well. To go 15-for-32, 46 percent from 3 as a team is awesome. So we shot the ball well.

I thought Anna did a great job defending a terrific player in Brice Calip. And Haley and our post players, I thought, did a very good job defending Jasmine Franklin. So I think we were able to defend what they wanted to do and get out in transition.

**Q. I know you've talked all season long about Anna's maturity and just the many ways she affects games. She kind of just gave us an answer that I thought was incredibly mature about pressure and not really letting pressure get to you, but the way you can sort of**



**channel that in your favor. How big of a factor is it for you guys to have somebody who really does have all the leadership skills that she has for you and can come out in all different ways?**

COACH VANDERVEER: You know, I am so thankful that her appeal to the NCAA was approved so that she could come back for a fantastic senior year. This is what college sports is all about -- someone that struggled early with injuries, with adjusting to college.

We were just talking in the locker room, the coaches, is how much she has matured as a player and as a person. And she's doing a great job as a leader. I think she also has a great example in her brother kind of as a great mentor for her. But all of our seniors, Kiana, Anna and Alyssa are fantastic leaders, just outstanding players to coach. I'm very fortunate.

**Q. During the game Holly Rowe reported that the team has a current inter-squad table tennis competition going on. Anna mentioned before you that the team has a fun committee. So two questions for you. One is how important is it to have something like a fun committee in this sort of a situation and have those outlets for the players during a bubble tournament? And, two, I was wondering if we could get the coach's scouting report for your team and your assistant coaches and maybe a self-scout of your table tennis game.**

COACH VANDERVEER: I think it's really important. When you're here, this is going on two weeks now, when you're here for two weeks and you hope to be here for three weeks, you can't be just locked up in your hotel room, just eating hotel food.

So we do have a ping-pong tournament. We have a lot of different games. And our players really enjoy doing the Xbox games, doing the board games that they have and ping-pong.

As far as the ping-pong, of the staff, both Kate and I were knocked out. But of the staff, I say Kate and I are probably the best ping-pong players.

But I think Hannah Jump is still in there. Wilder, who is in the championship? We have a staff member. Celia Marfone is in it along with Hannah Jump and Lexie and Ashten. Ashten has a wicked backhand; she knocked me out.

It's been fun. It's been fun. And our team has enjoyed being here, being together. I think part of the reason we play well is that they want to keep playing with each other.

And so we just want to stay for another week.

**Q. I don't think East Coast bias has a seat at this table, not in this tournament. That said, on the national landscape, both for the women and the men, what do these deep runs say about the Pac-12?**

COACH VANDERVEER: Great question. The Pac-12 is doing awesome. I've been texting with Wayne Tinkle. I'm so excited for the Pac-12 men's and women's. I've been texting with Kelly Graves and Cori Close at UCLA and Adia. I think the West Coast is representing really well. And I'm really excited about how the Pac-12 is doing in both men's and women's basketball.

**Q. As the field gets narrow, the spotlight gets bigger. How have you seen your team's confidence grow with each game, each win throughout this tournament?**

COACH VANDERVEER: You know, I think our team has been really steady. I think we came into the season with confidence. We've played through the Pac-12. And when you play against great competition and you see how well the teams that we've beaten, we see how well they're doing, that does give you confidence. You see Arizona having a great game against Texas A&M, Oregon playing so well, UCLA playing so well. So that does give you confidence.

But our team, I think, just really enjoying playing with each other. And they're great teammates for each other, which is really special.

**Q. I know you don't want to look too far ahead because there's games on the schedule. But what would this mean, you talk about envisioning things, players and coaches talk about envisioning things. Winning the title, what would it mean to you in a crazy year like this to win the national championship?**

COACH VANDERVEER: Like you said, I'm just taking it one game at a time. We'll play the winner of Louisville and Oregon. And our team, you have to -- you just have to enjoy the moment. I'm a very live-in-the-present person. If we have an opportunity to answer that question I'll be happy to answer that.

But for today I'm excited about beating an excellent Missouri State team that we struggled with when we played them two years ago. They had eight players back from that loss. I thought we came out and put the hammer down and we did a great job. We'll just focus on getting ready for the winner of Louisville-Oregon.

**Q. Great game for Anna. When she was granted**

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**permission to come back, did you think she would be contributing at this level and that well? And how awesome is it to have two famous people in the stands supporting her and not be a distraction, the brother and sister-in-law?**

COACH VANDERVEER: Well, we're not distracted by the fans. We're excited that fans are in the stands to cheer for us, because we have had empty stadiums all year long.

Did I know she was going to be playing at this level? I can't tell you honestly that I knew it. But I was hopeful. And I was hopeful because she had a great offseason. She trained with Russell, and she was a great leader. They organized, the three seniors organized small group talks with the young players. They really took ownership of the pandemic and just tried to say, hey, if we're going to -- we've got to do what we can do. So we're going to put in the work every day.

And I'm really proud of Anna. And it's a real pleasure to coach her and see her be so successful.

I also think that for what goes on right now is that a lot of players want instant success. And basketball is kind of a slow-cooking game. It's not instant oatmeal. It's the slow kind. And Anna is a great example of someone dealing with adversity, being resilient and determined, and being persistent and staying with it. And I'm so proud of her and really excited for her and our team.

**Q. While you're going through this in the thick of things are you able to enjoy it, or are you just too busy focusing on what you guys have to do for the next game, the next game plan?**

COACH VANDERVEER: I think that's a great question. I think sometimes you really do have to just take a deep breath and relax and enjoy it. But there's so much that you're always worried about, you're always thinking about -- whether it's testing, whether it's your opponent, different players on your team, how they're doing. I think it's one of those things that you might enjoy it more in retrospect.

**Q. You've been referencing the game two years ago. I think at a time you called it a root canal. Wondering as you're going through this game today, what did it feel like?**

COACH VANDERVEER: That was a root canal. This game was fun. It was really fun to see people get out in transition. I think we made it an up-tempo game. I like that. A high-scoring game.

Are there things we could have done better? Yes. There

are some I'd say some shot selection. I thought people seemed to play a little, kind of a little hyper, like rushing. Lexie rushed. And I thought Ashton rushed shots that were just right there; just make the basket.

But we had some great plays and a lot of different people stepping up was really exciting. So it was not a root canal for sure.

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