

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

Sunday, March 28, 2021

San Antonio, Texas, USA

Alamodome - Alamo

## Missouri State Lady Bears Elle Ruffridge

Sweet 16 Postgame Media Conference

Stanford - 89, Missouri State - 62

ELLE RUFFRIDGE: Thanks for having me. Obviously -- sorry, I'm very emotional right now because we didn't play our best basketball. But like Coach Mak said, we fought to the very end. I wish I had more time with my teammates, this coaching staff, being in this uniform.

It sucks, but Stanford is an incredible team. And just reflecting on this season and what we did, it's just incredible. So we have nothing to hang our heads about. The loss is tough because basketball is done for us this season. But again, we have so much to be proud of and I just love this team. And again, I just wish I had more time.

**Q. The end of the journey that Coach Mak always talks about, I know it's difficult now, but looking back and it comes to an end now, but I'm sure there's just going to be so much that brings a smile to your face and just what are you proud of for what you guys accomplished this season and a tough season?**

ELLE RUFFRIDGE: Yeah. Like you said, there's a lot to smile about. So many special moments with these girls. We're special. We love each other on the court, off the court. We're just -- we just gravitate toward each other. Love being around each other on a daily basis. And kind of like what Coach Mak was saying, I think the cool part of this is just seeing each other grow, not only on the basketball court, but just the relationships that I have developed, changing coaching staffs. I talked a bit about this my last interview. But I can't say enough about this coaching staff and what they have done to elevate our talents. But just to make us better overall people and just building high-character people. And my teammates, God, I love each and every one of them. And I truly have a



unique relationship with each one of those girls. I'm just grateful to be a Lady Bear. And I will cherish these memories I've made with them forever.

**Q. You talked about the growth of this team. How bright is the future for this team?**

ELLE RUFFRIDGE: I think the future is very bright. There are girls leaving. There are also girls staying. And we've learned a lot. And I think some of the younger classmen are going to step up next year and the years they have to come. They should take advantage of this opportunity. And I know they did.

But the future at Missouri State University is very bright. Not only in basketball, but Coach Mak talked a little bit about this, too, but we're just great people. And it goes beyond basketball. But we have more to do in the outside world. And I think that's really special. Just bigger than basketball. And I think that's important.

**Q. When you look back at both this run and also the run you had a couple of years ago in the Sweet 16, what do you think is going to be some of the moments that stick out in your mind and kind of when you look back on it you'll always smile about?**

ELLE RUFFRIDGE: Just the relationships I have with my teammates. And, yeah, I have memories of plays that happened in a game or winning a game. But really most of the memories that I cherish the most happened outside of basketball. Or they're just tiny moments that happen that just mean a lot to me. And like I said we're a tight-knit group outside of basketball as well. So, yeah, we may not be practicing or playing games anymore, but we're still going to be with each other all the time. And just again being with my best friends, truly, just any moment I get with them is special to me.

**Q. Just listening to what you're saying, it doesn't sound like you're coming back next year, just from how you're talking. I don't know if you can confirm that, and just what everything's meant to you, just wearing that Lady Bear's uniform. You've talked about how emotional it is to not just wear it again.**

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ELLE RUFFRIDGE: Yeah, that was probably my last game as a Lady Bear. It's hard to let that sink in. But like I said, these last four years of my life have truly meant the most to me. I've gone through a lot of adversity, lots of ups and downs. But again credit to the coaches that have been in my life, all of my teammates. It's truly been the best thing being a lady bear for me.

I've grown so much as a basketball player, but as a person. And just knowing that that was my last game, it's tough. But I am really looking forward to the future. And I think people should be excited for the future of Lady Bear basketball. There's so much to be excited for about just the culture we have, the tradition and what we have right now. But I'm just -- I don't know. That was the first time I ever came out with that statement. But there's no need to hide it anymore.

**Q. Just listening to you talk, you're emotional at times. And then you sound excited at times. I just don't know what the feeling is running through you, because it sounds like you loved it so much but you're so sad that it's over. How can you kind of ascribe what you and I'm sure some of your teammates are going through right now?**

ELLE RUFFRIDGE: I'm apologizing for all the tears. It's just very emotional right now for me, as well as my teammates. I'm sad it's over. But I'm so happy it all happened.

As a little girl I always dreamed of playing Division I basketball and getting the opportunity to play in an NCAA Tournament. But for me to be able to say that I was on two Sweet 16 teams that's pretty unbelievable for a small town Iowa girl and these past four years have meant the world to me, the amount of people that have come into my life and who will be in my life for the rest of my life. I couldn't have asked for better teammates, staff, support.

Shout out to all the Lady Bear fans who traveled to watch us play and our families. The love and support has been endless throughout. And it's just really, really special what Springfield has right now and moving forward and I just couldn't be grateful for what Missouri State University has done for me.

**Q. You mentioned all the successes and all the runs that you've been on. You're also going to go down as one of the most prolific 3-point shooters this school has ever seen. If you would have told that to Elle four years ago when she was signing the papers in Pocahontas, what do you think she would have said about that?**

ELLE RUFFRIDGE: I mean, I don't know if I really would have been surprised or shocked. I mean, I can shoot the heck out of the ball. I mean, I can. I work really hard. I put a lot of time into my craft. And shooting the ball is what I do.

And for me personally, this year, I felt like I went outside of my comfort zone and had mid-range. I was attacking the rim more and just doing stuff beyond being a 3-point shooter. And again that's a testament to this coaching staff, how they're so good at developing individuals.

And a lot of that goes out to Coach Tori, the amount of time I've spent with Coach Tori just working on different things to elevate my game. But going down in history at this university, again, is special, because Lady Bear Basketball has been and is pretty good. So I'm proud. It's pretty cool.

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