

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: Regional Final: Louisville vs Stanford

Tuesday, March 30, 2021

San Antonio, Texas, USA

Alamodome - Alamo

Louisville Cardinals

Coach Jeff Walz

Elite 8 Postgame Media Conference

Stanford - 78, Louisville - 63

Q. You guys had such a great first half when it seems like almost everything was going right. Was just the difference in that second half that shots weren't falling and their shots were falling pretty much?

JEFF WALZ: Well, Doug, it's a little bit of everything. I thought we were really, really good defensively in that first half. Got them to play exactly how we wanted them to play, really made it difficult for them. We contested. We actually did a decent job of rebounding the basketball.

Then in the second half, Ashten Prechtel, Tara put her in the game, and what a great substitution that was because she by far changed the entire game. Now you've got a post that can pick and pop and shoot the three, and we knew that's what she does, and you've got to give the kid credit. She goes 6 for 6, 3 of 3 from three, ends up with 16 points. In her 15 minutes, she's plus 27 on the plus and minus side. She won the game for them.

Her presence of stepping in there and making big shots. We called the one time-out, coming out of the time-out, we knew what was coming. We told them here's what's coming, and they still executed and scored.

So you've got to tip your hat to Stanford, tip your hat to Ashten because she was remarkable there in the second half.

Then there's no question. We missed some shots. We had some good looks there and missed a couple, and then they were just relentless on the offensive glass. I don't think they have an offensive rebound or a point in the first quarter. They had zero second-chance points in the first quarter and ended up with 23. And we had talked to our team that that was one of two areas, second chance points



and then fast break points, where we really had to dig down and stop them. They were just relentless with their size and their effort continuing to go after it.

Unfortunately, it sucks. There's no other way to put it. There's a few other ways to put it, but I don't think you want to hear me say those things, so I'll just stick with sucks.

Q. I know it's very early after this loss, but is there a way to put into words what Dana has meant to you all this season? She had a very Dana-esque type game today, just didn't seem like -- things didn't go your way in the second half.

JEFF WALZ: Dana's worked her tail off in the four years that she's been with us. She came in the gym every single day and stayed late, got in there early, and continued to get better and better and better. It's just a tribute to her for her work ethic and her desire to want to continue to get better.

It just -- it's a tough way to go out. There's no question about it because our goal was to get to a Final Four, and unfortunately for us, we just fell one ball game short. Actually, one half short.

But, again, you've got to tip your hat to Stanford, and Ashten Prechtel, what a ball game she played.

Q. Can you just kind of put into words this whole year, you've talked all year about there's so many challenges. There's so many things that you guys, everybody has faced, and to get this far, obviously, you're one game -- you're not as far as you wanted to, but what it means with this team to have accomplished what you did.

JEFF WALZ: I'm really proud of them. It's been a challenge, and it's not just a challenge for us, it's been a challenge for all these teams that are here. They really closed their circle of friends. Besides their teammates, I'm not sure what they did or who they hung out with, if anybody. It got to the point on the weekends, we get back on a Monday, I wouldn't even ask them what they did because I know it was nothing.



Because they committed to want to have a chance to get to this point, and we believed from day one that we had a team that could make a run at this, and we do. It's -- the hard thing about it is every game's a battle, especially when you get to this point, and we executed as well as we could have in the first half. We really ran some good stuff, got some great shots.

Then eventually Stanford's size wore us down, and we just couldn't keep them off the backboard, and that was the difference in the game, as well as Prechtel, like I said. She made some big-time shots.

Q. Let's talk about this whole bubble situation. Do you like what they did down in San Antonio, and should they continue doing it, or should they go back to the old format?

JEFF WALZ: Nobody wants all 64 teams in one spot, and you can't have fans. I'm definitely hoping that for next season we're able to get back to a little bit of normalcy. But I will say, I am a huge fan and a huge believer, after watching this, the way they operated this, that we need to have a Sweet 16 in one location, have 16 teams show up, play your Sweet 16, and Elite Eight at one location, and then go and play a Final Four at a different spot.

The games that we've had here in the Sweet 16 and the Elite Eight have been absolutely amazing, and then what it also is going to do is it's going to allow fan bases to actually know where that regional semifinals and regional finals is going to be played. So your attendance is going to shoot up because right now the hard thing is, when the draw comes out, you see -- you'll hopefully get to host, like we have been, your first two rounds, you're waiting to see what region are we going to go into? So you're not going to buy plane tickets to four of them.

But if you knew where your regional was going to be, you could actually go ahead and do that as a fan and sit there and say, hey, I know I'm going to a regional. This is where it's going to be.

There's no way you can -- there's no way we want to, I think, have all 64 teams in one location. Eventually, I hope, as our game grows, it would be awesome to be able to have the first and second rounds on a neutral site also.

Q. A lot of your past trips to this point, Elite Eight, you've had really experienced teams. You've had seniors, handfuls of seniors you were saying good-bye to afterward. You've got one senior, and she's a heck of a senior right now, but this is a really young group. What did this experience, strange as it was, mean for

all these young players, and how do they take this moving forward?

JEFF WALZ: Well, I think it was a great experience for all of them. I've got some pretty devastated players in that locker room right now, but that's a good thing. I mean, if it didn't hurt, I'd be concerned. It gave us a taste of it. After that ball game, I gathered them all together right there before we left the court and said look down there. Look down at that celebration because that's where we want to get to. That's where we want to get next year.

It's got to sting. It's got to burn. It's got to piss you off. I could see it in their faces, and it's a matter of getting back in the gym. We're going to take some time off. Golly, they need a break. Then it's a matter of getting back in the gym and working on the things you're not good at because a lot of players, if they're a three-point shooter, they just like to go in and turn that gun on and just shoot three after three after three. The problem is then you just become a one-dimensional player.

We'll put a plan together for all of our returns about let's figure out a way to get better at what we're good at and continue to work on what we're not good at and continue to work all the way around. I'm really excited. We've got a very, very good group returning, excited about our incoming freshman class, and you've got to love the portal these days. It's like free agency.

So I mean, there's lots of players. We'll see if we are fortunate enough to get one or two and go from there.

Q. Jeff, you talked about their size and how it kind of wore you down. When they started to make their big push in the third quarter, 17-2 run, what's going through your mind as far as how do you adjust, how do you change the tempo maybe?

JEFF WALZ: Your question is so bad that the fire alarm has just gone off.

Q. That's not a first.

JEFF WALZ: It's not a first. All right, good. And if I see smoke, I'll tell you, but as of right now, we're okay. There's a fire in the building. This is a first. This is an absolute first. It's pretty impressive.

Hey, only in women's basketball can you get a fire alarm going off during the damn press conference. If you guys can hear me, I'll keep going. This is unbelievable. Everybody's sprinting out. Should I be concerned? If you see smoke, tell me.

So the fire alarm's going off and telling me to exit the building, they're telling me to hang on and stay here. Isn't that encouraging?

So during a 17-2 run -- hot dog. No, he's back. Okay. During that 17-2 run, we called, I think, two time-outs. We actually switched up some different things because they had Prechtel out there. We went five guards to try to switch everything and try to turn the heat up on them. We actually came up with a couple stops, but then we turned the basketball over, and then we gave up. We had a stop but didn't get the defensive rebound. We gave up an O board. Those were just backbreakers at that point in time.

THE MODERATOR: I think they're evacuating us. We'll let you go.

JEFF WALZ: Go ahead and ask more questions. That's the way my day's been going.

Q. Kind of off the question that Eric asked you about the underclassmen, how much have you learned about them? A lot of them seemed like they grew up a lot.

JEFF WALZ: Yeah, I was really happy with the growth and the development of Haley. She's such a competitor. I'm just really excited about the opportunity to work with her this spring and summer and then for the next three years. Olivia Cochran is just going to get better and better as we continue to work on her outside game.

So I'm really excited about all of them. I mean, they've all made progress, and now they see where we are because we finally had an opportunity to play in an NCAA Tournament, which was the first one for Liz Dixon, Elizabeth Balogun, a lot of our players. Now, when you get to this level, you finally get a chance to see, okay, what do I have to keep working on to be able to play my best during these times?

THE MODERATOR: Coach, we're going to let you go.

JEFF WALZ: No, you only get one chance. Go ahead, guys.

Q. This is like the real Alamo.

JEFF WALZ: It sure is.

THE MODERATOR: I keep telling him he can go, but he doesn't want to. He wants you to keep asking.

JEFF WALZ: What did you say? I couldn't hear you over the fire alarm.

Q. It sounds like they want you to leave.

JEFF WALZ: Hey, I appreciate all of you, especially our local media for taking the time to cover us all season. You know how much I really appreciate it. Thank you all so much. What a way to end the damn year with a fire alarm.

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