

# NCAA Women's Basketball Championship Final Four: Arizona vs Stanford

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Alamodome

**Stanford Cardinal**

**Haley Jones**

Finals Postgame Media Conference

Stanford 54, Arizona 53

THE MODERATOR: We are now joined by Haley Jones. We'll start with questions.

**Q. You definitely turned the ball over quite a bit today, but you really took care of the glass. How much had Tara emphasized that in the scout that you needed to out-rebound them?**

HALEY JONES: Yeah, I think rebounding is a huge emphasis for our team. We got out-rebounded by South Carolina on Friday. That hasn't really happened a lot in this past season. We just needed to be on the glass. We had a lot of untimely turnovers, turnovers in the game, we knew we needed to take care of the ball better. Down the stretch we just didn't.

Luckily we got on the boards, made it a point to crash the O boards, box out as much as we could on the D boards. It's been an emphasis the whole season, especially in this game.

**Q. You weren't even close to being born the last time Stanford won a national championship. You obviously came to Stanford in part because you had a chance to play for a legend. What does it mean to end a 29-year drought for Tara, all the other Stanford players that couldn't ever reach this point?**

HALEY JONES: Yeah, I mean, this program is what it is because of Tara. The legacy she's created, just being able to be recruited by her, now be a part of the team, and then to take that a step further and win a national championship after the 29-year-long drought.

It's just a blessing to be here right now. I don't think it's still honestly even hit me yet. Even standing with the confetti,



I'm just still waiting for it to kick in.

So many great players have passed through this program. They have all come for the same reason that we have, to be coached by the greatest to develop not only as a player but just as a person, as a young woman. So I think this is just an honor to be able to do this for her and with her.

**Q. Haley, so much has happened in the last couple years, no tournament last year, you were hurt last year. To get here and make those big shots, have you had a chance to let it soak in at all?**

HALEY JONES: I mean, I just owe it to my teammates. We have so much trust in each other. Even when I don't have confidence in myself, I can look to them, they have confidence in me.

The whole game, Alyssa Jerome, I didn't have the best first half, I got in foul trouble, which hurt me, the team. In the second half I had to get back. Alyssa was telling me, This is your half, this is all you, this is your time. They kept instilling me with their confidence they had. Down the stretch, I just knew if the ball came to me, I knew I had to shoot it. I had confidence in myself to make those shots.

I owe it to them for instilling it in me when not having it in myself.

**Q. When you play the game long enough, watch the game long enough, you pretty much can tell when a player releases his or her shot if it's going to go in. When Aari let that shot go, did you have a pretty good sense it was off the mark or did you think it had a pretty good chance to go?**

HALEY JONES: Oh, I had no idea. I was just like, Oh, please, God, don't go in. We had like three people on her. They were suffocating her. She's a great player. That had to be done; We knew she would be the one taking the shot.

Honestly you never know. She's made some wild shots because she's just that great. You hope it doesn't go in. I didn't really have an idea. When the buzzer went off, I didn't really realize what happened. I think if you go back

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and watch, I kind of stood there for a second. It hadn't clicked that we actually just won and the shot didn't go in.

I really had no thoughts. My mind was completely blank when she shot the ball. There's three people there, that's all you can do. It not up to us any more at that point.

**Q. Being hurt last year, your freshman season. Can you talk about rebuilding your confidence, rebuilding everything from then, what it means now to be in this position.**

HALEY JONES: Yeah, that injury, it was heartbreaking. I'd never been injured like that before. It was very difficult. Then the season got cut short, so that didn't only impact just the season being cut short but with my physical therapy, rehab and everything like that. Campus was shut down so I had to go home. It was very difficult.

But, I mean, I just had a great support system. I think a lot of my confidence just came from working back to the basics, back to the fundamentals of the summer. I'm in the really like a crazy, shifty player anyways, I'm not like that, but I was getting back to the basics. I think I found confidence from shooting, doing basic ball-handling drill. The Steph Curry ball-dribbling drill we did at practice, I did it every day at home. I was dribbling in my garage with my mom having her pass me stairs, just doing the little stuff to find the love for my game again. When you get injured, it's hard. You wonder why you're still doing it. With the season there was no season in sight. You lose faith, why am I doing this? Where is the motivation coming from?

Doing little things with the people that I love around me just kind of helped me get a passion for the game again, and my confidence kind of came from there.

**Q. You talked about Alyssa picking you up. Talk a bit about how it feels to as a team and individual have picked up Kiana?**

HALEY JONES: Yeah, I mean, Key, Alyssa, Anna are amazing leaders. Last year we had some great leaders, but I think this year our team is even closer. We owe that to all of them.

They're each different leaders in different ways. I think Key, she always lifts us up. After a turnover, she's like, Get it back, I need you, Hey. If she's not having the best game, it's fine. I still have confidence every time Key shoots the ball it's going in. Sometimes I get yelled for not crashing the O boards. But I'm like, Tara, I think it's going in. That's just how much confidence we all have in her.

When she's not playing her best, we know she's still going

to do everything that she can to help the team win because she's that unselfish. She wants the best for the team.

But, I mean, I think she's just an amazing person, an amazing player. We just have so much confidence in her no matter what's going on in the game just because we know her and we love her.

**Q. You were asked on the floor if the road trip was worth it. Can you put in perspective what this season has been like for you all, the fact you didn't play at home, you haven't seen your families, practice in a gym with wooden backboards and still wind up winning the national title.**

HALEY JONES: I mean, it's been chaotic, hectic. But I think it was crazy, Tara talked about it in the locker room today, how she didn't tell us it was going to be a 10-week journey. She said you're going to have one week in Vegas, who knows? One week in Arizona, a week in L.A. But it was just a long, very difficult journey. Being on the road, sleeping in hotels, living out of your bag, it's just a lot. You're on the bus, you're on planes all the time. There's just never really an end in sight. So it was difficult.

But I think from that experience and losing on the road, dropping one at home, I think it just really kind of grew this extra like chip on our shoulder almost. I don't know if that's the right word. It was like we just had something extra to us this year. So I think it came from just being resilient from all the things we went through. Now as we came through the tournament, I don't think we showed our best in all the games, any of the games. I don't think we really were like, this is the best game we've ever played. I think we've had good halves, good moments, great moments. I think it just shows we're going to tough it out, we're going to stick with it, we're resilient, we're gritty. Tara and Kate always say, No more nice girls from Stanford. I think we showed that we're tough, gritty, resilient. Yeah, I think we learned so much from the tough journey we were on this year.

We came into the season saying we wanted to win a natty. We stuck with it in all of the ups and downs, in all the adversity, we stuck with it.

**Q. The Louisville game you have to come back, the South Carolina game, this game. You had to gut it out and gut check a whole lot of times. Did you wonder how many more gut checks you had left in the second half?**

HALEY JONES: No. Personally I think I was very confident in the team, confident in myself that no matter what punches were going to be thrown, we were ready. If

that was Arizona going on a run because we're turning it over, I'd try to pull the team together, Guys, this is our game. This is nothing compared to what we've been through. This is ours. We're not going to stop fighting. Lexie the whole game, This is us. We got three more minutes, four more minutes.

This is the last time we have each other on the court. No matter what punches are thrown at us, our confidence never wavered the entire game. So, yeah, I think we just stayed very levelheaded, poised and patient, so yeah.

**Q. In the final huddle, what did Tara tell you guys about the final play with the last six seconds?**

HALEY JONES: It was just to lock in. We really just played defense, talk, communicate, switch. This is the last six seconds you have as a team, so you want to leave it all out there on the line. We knew whose hands the ball was going to be in, who was going to take the last shot. We had to lock in and focus, communicate. I think we executed in the last few seconds as best as we could.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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