

Atlantic Coast Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Friday, March 7, 2025

Greensboro, North Carolina, USA

Cal Bears

Charmin Smith

Marta Suarez

Kayla Williams

Postgame Press Conference

Notre Dame - 73, California - 64

THE MODERATOR: Thank you everyone. Joining us from Cal is head coach Charmin Smith along with student-athletes Marta Suarez and Kayla Williams.

CHARMIN SMITH: I've just got to say I'm really proud of my team for battling. I thought we were really competitive, and I thought we played good basketball aside from turning it over a little bit too much.

I think we showed our growth from where we were the last time we played this team, and I think we have a lot more basketball ahead of us. I also think Notre Dame is a really good team.

Q. Coach, the ability to move the ball around and swing, the disruption of Notre Dame, what happened? What happened with the ability to move the ball around? Also for Marta, just a wonderful, wonderful player. Just want to talk about your confidence out there, playing like a guard and a post.

CHARMIN SMITH: They're a really good defensive team, and they're extremely disruptive, as you said. I thought they were very physical and bumped us off of our line consistently throughout the game. I wish we would have been able to have that same freedom to do the same thing to them. It didn't feel as though we did.

That physicality is something that we struggle with, so we turned it over a little bit more than we should have. What are they, the second -- I don't know. They're a really good defensive team, so we struggled. But when we were able to get up shots, to shoot 45 percent from the field is really



good. When we had freedom of movement, we looked really good against them. But if we can't get to our spots, it's going to be hard for us to look good.

THE MODERATOR: Marta, again, the question was about you and your confidence, if you want to answer that one.

MARTA SUAREZ: Just like Coach said, very proud of the game. My confidence just comes from the work we're putting in and the people I have around me. I feel like obviously they're a really good team. They're a team that's very respected.

We're the underdog today. I think we put up a good fight, so I'm proud of that. Of course, if you're the underdog, you've got to bring everything you have. You can't be scared of mistakes. I think that was our issue. We had too many turnovers. I had too many turnovers.

We know that's fixable. We had downfalls that we know we struggled with in the past, but definitely growth. We're not done yet. So let's keep playing.

Q. Two related questions. What's the thing you guys are most proud of in growth between the first time you played them and the second time you played them? And what's the thing you can take from this game going into it? Like you said, you have more basketball to play. What's the big thing you can take going forward?

KAYLA WILLIAMS: I would say our fight. I think we went to their place, and I can't remember the deficit, but it was a pretty large deficit. Today we came out here, and we fought. I think that was the game. We believed in ourselves, and we had confidence from the jump, and I think that showed because we were able to compete with them down the stretch.

I think that was the biggest thing, coming in here confidently and just putting up a fight because we believed in ourselves.

MARTA SUAREZ: I think defensively we did a great job. I think offensively we did a good job finding our shots. Our



only issue was taking care of the ball.

I think our growth, we can guard, and we showed that.

CHARMIN SMITH: We had a goal of keeping them from getting second chance points. It says here they had 9 second chance points. They had 21 second chance points in the first game.

Honestly, I think they embarrassed us in the first game. We have pride, and we wanted to come back and show we're a better team, and I think we did that, in my opinion.

I think hopefully people could see in this game how good we are and stop putting us on an 8/9 line and not giving us the respect that we deserve for beating teams like NC State and Florida State and being in this conference and traveling four trips across the country when no one else was doing that but Stanford.

I think it's crazy where our NET stands and where we are relative to other people who haven't had to do what we have done. That's why we wanted to come out here and compete today, to try to get off the 8/9 line to show that we belong and we can play with the top teams in the country. Notre Dame is definitely a top team in the country.

It would have been more convincing had we won, but I think we made a statement, and I hope that people were able to see how good we are.

Q. Charmin, you've been mentioning for a while wanting to get off that 8/9 line. Where do you think you guys belong? Also, this is uncharted territory for this team. You have some that have been to the NCAA Tournament, but for the most part, this is a new experience. How do you spend the next week plus preparing for that, especially coming off a game where you just saw a really tough team and you're going to see more teams like that.

CHARMIN SMITH: I think this game gives us confidence, and it's something we can build on. Like I said, Notre Dame is one of the top teams in the country, a 1 or 2 seed, right? We know that we can compete at this level. So we can take that into our practices and preparation for the tournament.

Not having an opponent right now, we're going to work on taking care of the ball because that's been a struggle for us throughout the season. So we'll focus in on ourselves until we have an opponent.

In terms of where we belong, I don't know. I'm not sure how long we're going to keep using this NET that makes no

sense, but I just think -- I'm not going to talk about other teams, but I just want people to really do their homework and give us credit for what we've done, really give us credit for what we've done.

When you put our record in Quad 1 wins and the fact that we have no losses outside of Quad 2 -- we have Clemson and Virginia Tech are our only Quad 2 losses. Everything else was North Carolina, Duke, Notre Dame twice, like it's just -- I think we should be a higher seed than what we have right now.

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