

March 9, 2013



Stanford – 61
Colorado – 47

An interview with:

COACH TARA VANDERVEER CHINEY OGWUMIKE MIKAELA RUEF

THE MODERATOR: We have Coach Tara VanDerveer, Chiney Ogwumike, and Mikaela Ruef on the way.

COACH VANDERVEER: First, I'd like to compliment Colorado. They have a very deep and aggressive team. This was a really important win for us. Colorado was extremely aggressive, and I thought they did a good job of making sure things didn't go over the line. Chiney Ogwumike was a human today. She missed shots that she's been making all season long.

But we got some great play, some great minutes from Mikaela Ruef. We got a great match from Amber Orrange and some different people stepped in. I thought Sara James was steady. She hit a basket for us, made some nice defensive plays. For us to have ten turnovers was a great thing for us. We outrebounded them, which was a great thing for us, and we're very, very excited to be playing tomorrow against UCLA.

Q. Can you look ahead to UCLA now, watching what you watched? The way they played Cal? Is that a cautionary tale for you guys in any way?

COACH VANDERVEER: You know, Cal has an excellent team and I think that it was really kind of the perfect storm. UCLA did a great job of not allowing second shots, and Cal has a way of feasting on old boards, and that's something that we've been emphasizing with our team that we have to rebound. Honestly, all my focus was on Colorado and now it's thinking about playing

against UCLA. They have a big and physical team. And we have a big, physical team too. We match up well with them, and we know we have to play very well.

This game for us was we have to get our team off their feet, and it doesn't help maybe to have this, you know, to spring forward tonight. But these are young players that are going to have to come out and really battle tomorrow.

Q. Chiney, yesterday you said that you were all smiles as far as, you know, your team getting involved, and it seemed like there was a lot more work involved tonight. Can you talk about that?

CHINEY OGWUMIKE: I think I was all smiles again today, but it was forced smiles, like, come on. The next one is going to go in. But, again, I'm really proud of this team. A lot of people don't realize that we are pretty young. Despite Mikaela Ruef's class as a red shirt junior, Sara James and Mikaela Ruef and even Joslyn Tinkle in a way are looked to as leaders.

This year, especially in the game, Sara James was that one person that we were all like, hey, let's do this. Let's get through this together. So it was another good moment for our team. Clearly the ball didn't go in the basket as much as we'd like.

But this is how March is. The game is physical. You have to stay with things, and I think that was a big test today. Colorado is a fantastic team. Definitely deserving of their ranking. And I'm just really happy that our team responded well to the adversity.

Q. Talk about the collective defense, you, Sara, almost everybody, Taylor. Just talk about that part of the game?

MIKAELA RUEF: Well, we didn't necessarily like the way we played defense yesterday in our game. We thought that it was lacking a little bit, especially in the post end. That was one of our main focuses for me and Chiney

Ogwumike to not let our people score. We couldn't let this team run as much because they had good perimeter shooters. Amber Orrange had good stuff on Chucky Jeffery. Chucky Jeffery is a good player, and I thought Amber Orrange did a good job of not shutting her down necessarily but containing her.

Everybody was super focused on guarding her player, and we switched well, I think, and did a really good job on screens and stuff, and trying to get through those and stop their people.

Q. Tara, did you envision winning a game like this with one 3?

COACH VANDERVEER: We have played games like this. I think Sara James did it. We have played games like this. Teams, I think, respect the three-point shooting. If you saw us yesterday, I told our team at practice forget shooting threes, just put the ball on the floor. I just really felt this was their style. We've played them a couple times. I don't know how many threes we've gotten against them in other games. They extend the defense. They put it on the floor. We didn't have a lot of assists either.

They made it very tough to get the ball inside, and when Chiney Ogwumike got it, it made it very tough for her to have bodies on her, arms on her, and they subbed in waves, so that they weren't worried about anybody fouling out. They had like 22 fouls.

So I guess we have played teams like this before. This is an Arizona State, which we're used to playing against. This is like the semifinal game last year against Arizona State. We didn't have any threes in that game either. We were able to go inside, get some drives to the basket. I thought Amber Orrange was really the key. Just how she swept through their defense. They're going to get extended and she made them pay for doing that.

Q. Coach, can you talk about the adjustments you made at halftime to get the separation until the second period?

COACH VANDERVEER: Quite honestly, the best ideas at halftime were not mine. I asked our team what they like doing out there. What felt good to them. I got great input from assistant coaches. Trina had scouted them, and she was talking a lot about what we needed to do. Amy made a game adjustment. Kate had a list of different things. I think in some way the better play was not from me.

But I was a little upset about how physical the game was. I think the assistants were doing a better job coaching, to be honest with you. The adjustments that we tried to make were going high and in, spreading out a little bit more, taking people off the dribble, trying to recognize some mismatches. Just keep going at Chiney Ogwumike and trying, more than anything, to stay supportive. I liked how Mikaela Ruef attacked the basket.

Sara James tried to, but she had a charge. Amber Orrange attacked the basket. Chiney Ogwumike attacked the basket. And quite honestly, we can only play people that go to the basket. That's what we talked about at halftime.

Q. Chiney, Tara was mentioning the bodies and arms all over you. Did this have the intensity and feel of an NCAA Tournament game?

CHINEY OGWUMIKE: Yes, that is the first thing I said. That felt like a tournament game. Just the set-up of Key Arena, this reminds me of a tournament with the blue and black and everything. Yeah, in the tournament, you can't foresee anything. And today, we struggled at moments.

But at the same time, I think we responded well. We just stayed together. And that's how teams win in the tournament. They try to be more aggressive, and I think we were more aggressive in the second half defensively. That's what helped us get easier baskets, and we found a way to push through.

So I think this game has really taught us a lot just to stay with things, despite any situation, despite how you're playing, to stay together united. And I think we play for each other at Stanford. That is one thing that no matter what happens, we're happy if we play hard and play for each other; and it was fun. It was fun. It was a very fun game -- winning is fun.

Missing shots isn't fun, but sticking together when you have teammates pat you on the back saying the next one's going to go in. Just being there with each other. So we have a lot of fun at Stanford, despite any words.

Q. Mikaela, do you feel like it's coming together for you guys? That making adjustments successfully? Do you feel there's a bit of coming together in the last few weeks?

MIKAELA RUEF: I think so. I think we're figuring out how to put pieces together on our team

and where people fit in and how they can help our team. We are getting a lot of contributions from the bench, which is awesome. Especially in a tournament like this where it's three games in three days, and it's not ideal to play three games in three days, but we're a team that since we can get help from our bench players or substitutions, subs, that we can get through these three games successfully.

Q. How long have you been in the starting lineup?

MIKAELA RUEF: I don't know. People work hard and stuff.

COACH VANDERVEER: Good job.

CHINEY OGWUMIKE: We love each other. We're happy to win.

MIKAELA RUEF: I'm bad at interviews.

CHINEY OGWUMIKE: It's okay.

COACH VANDERVEER: It's getting late.

CHINEY OGWUMIKE: It's getting late, obviously.

Q. Coach, there have been years they've called this the Stanford Invitational, and there is a reason for that, and some years have been a cake walk. This year is more competitive, I think. Do you agree? What is your response to that?

COACH VANDERVEER: Well, if it was a cake walk, I missed the cake. It has never, ever been easy. I can remember at the Pac-12 tournament, we're down 18 against Arizona. We ended up winning it. Every, I mean, every game to me has been tough -- every tournament has been extremely challenging.

You know, this year we do have four teams ranked in the top 20, and I think the Pac-12 with the Pac-12 Network is getting fabulous exposure. We have terrific players and so many young players. Like just Arielle Roberson out there today or just looking at the number of great young players that we've seen playing in the Pac-12.

You know, I'm really proud of our team and how hard we worked. They're part of a great tradition. But we work for, I think really hard. Just an example with Cal, they've had a great, great year, and you have one bad night and you're not in the finals or having a chance to compete. So two-thirds of our work is done and the most important third is ahead.

Q. Could you talk about the difficulty of playing a third game in three days and also

UCLA's depth? Could you talk about what happened last game?

COACH VANDERVEER: These are young people that play basketball for hours and day, and I also would just say I compliment our strength and conditioning coach who works really hard to not only get people really strong and get them in shape, but to help them recover.

They'll be fine, and there is going to be a little extra adrenaline tomorrow. So I would take who we have maybe over playing ten people. In different situations, we can play different people, and we are down one player and they're down one starter also.

But I think we'll be in great shape tomorrow, and I think that people will see a very exciting game, and I just know that, we've, as Chiney said, learned from this game and gotten better. And that is the idea of this tournament, the Pac-12 tournament, is about showcasing great women's basketball, and helping us get ready. This is a dress rehearsal for the real thing.

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