

March 8, 2013



Cal – 78
USC – 59

An interview with:

**COACH COOPER
CASSIE HARBERTS
CHRISTINA MARINACCI**

COACH COOPER: Opening statements: Whew. It feels like all year long, but to really play against a number two-ranked team, they really came out and established their game very early. I felt like they put us on our heels early and we were never able to recover.

But before I go on, I just want to give a lot of credit to these two young ladies, especially Christina Marinacci. When I first went to USC, she was my lone freshman there in a sense. To have her play four years, it's such a disheartening feeling that she's going to be gone. We've had great times together, and I think USC has definitely prepared her for life after basketball. For the time being, she has a life with basketball because she's going to go on and do some great things. I know this hurts now, but I want to thank you for your effort and your maturity and the things that you've brought to our club and helped our young players get to this point.

But, again, I tip our hats to that Cal team. They're a very good basketball team. I'm proud of my team too.

Q. After playing Cal two games reasonably close this season, this one got away. What was the reason it got away from you?

COACH COOPER: The biggest thing was toughness. I thought they were a lot tougher on those boards. What did we give up, 22 offensive rebounds? When we've done that to teams—and we've done it this year—we've been successful. And they [California] were committed. They were committed to showing us that they were the

tougher team. Still, we banged around, but you're not going to win too many games when you're giving up those type of points and those type of points in the paint.

Q. Cassie, can you talk about today's game and the difference between the close games that you've played with them and what happened today?

CASSIE HARBERTS: I think like Coach Coop said was their physicality and being tough. They came out and gave us a punch, and we kind of fell flat on our butt and we didn't respond. That's really what we need to do: we need to come out and focus and throw the first punch. We need to be aggressive. We just didn't do that today.

Q. Cassie, as a follow up, this season as a whole, were there a lot of frustrations this season? Were there a lot of moments where it felt like it was frustrating?

CASSIE HARBERTS: I think there were. We were pretty young to begin with, so that was kind of tough. Getting the freshman experience, I think that's vital for them especially going into next year. But as we had our downs, we also had our ups. We had a lot of good half of basketball games. I think if we're 19-4 or something [at the half], we just need to put 2 and 2 together, and we'll be okay.

Q. Christina, what's it like mixing it up on the boards with Cal's post players? What's that like?

CHRISTINA MARINACCI: For me, I kind of look at Cal as more of our rivals than UCLA. Every time we play them has been a battle. Those are the games I've enjoyed. I played with Gennifer Brandon since eighth grade, going to Nike skills camp, playing in the McDonald's game and all that. We just go at it with each other, and it's fun. Looking at the score sheet in the game, I don't know if I'll play her again. But I look forward to playing Cal. It's fun to have that competitive kind

of game on the boards and stuff like that. I tip my hat to her. She's a very difficult person to box out. She moves without the ball very well. I also learned from her. I've always enjoyed it, and always looked forward to playing Cal. It's just tough to have my last game as a loss against them, but it's all good. I wish them the best of luck.

COACH COOPER: You'll see that one again, whether it's overseas or in the WNBA.

CHRISTINA MARINACCI: I want to see her somewhere. Even in a pick-up game outside (laughing).

Q. How do you plan on renewing yourselves as far as USC goes?

COACH COOPER: We have a lot of work we have to do. Obviously recruiting is going to be very important. But we have a great foundation of young players that are going to be a lot better, a year older next year. I think Ariya (Crook) will be a big piece. Cassie (Harberts) has been the foundation of everything we've tried to implement and build on, and Kate Oliver will be back. Our players are going to be a year older and a lot better.

Q. If you can just look ahead to the NCAA Tournament, how far do you think this Cal team can go?

COACH COOPER: I think they can make it to the Elite 8. There is still some roughness about them. I don't think they're a good perimeter shooting team. But as you step up in the level of play, you're going to get against some people that can rebound with you and bang with you and the other parts of your game are going to have to be important.

I think we did a good job today on (Layshia) Clarendon, holding her down, and she is the perimeter factor for them. They've got a great inside attack, but she's able to get the easy jump shots for them. (Brittany) Boyd, (Afire) Jemerigbe, (Eliza) Pierre are questionable shooters, and as you step up in talent, your weaknesses are going to be magnified.

Q. Christina, can you talk a little about ending your career with USC?

CHRISTINA MARINACCI: It's been a long journey with a lot of ups and downs, but I don't regret it one bit. I know we didn't make it to the NCAA Tournament in my four years of being here, but knowing that and looking back to when I was a senior in high school, given the opportunity to go

somewhere else once there was a coaching change, I still would have come here. I've had such a great experience playing under Coach Cooper with these kinds of girls. I've played with Cassie (Harberts) since high school on club teams. Yeah, we weren't as successful in basketball, but I've learned a lot. It's given me an opportunity to play overseas, and it's also set me up for life when basketball's over. We have a great communications school, and I want to go into sports broadcasting. That is another thing I learned from Coach Coop as well, since he has a background in sports broadcasting.

So times like these are rough but I've had a great experience, and I don't regret anything. I came to work every day at practice, and you know in the end we didn't make it, but I would still choose this jersey if I looked back on it in high school. So fight on, I guess.

COACH COOPER: She cleans up very nice. She was a sideline reporter at the ESPYS and I didn't even recognize her. I was walking on the red carpet, and she was going, "Coach, Coach". And I was like who is calling me? It was Christina.

We want to thank everyone for coming out. It's been such a lovely time in Seattle. It's a great venue for women's college basketball, and we're hoping all the teams the best. Thank you very much.