

NCAA Women's Regional Semifinals and Finals: Chicago

Saturday, March 30, 2019
Chicago, Illinois



Tara VanDerveer Alanna Smith Anna Wilson Stanford Cardinal

Stanford - 55, Missouri State - 46

TARA VANDERVEER: We're really excited to be playing Monday night. I think that our team worked really hard. I thought our defense was really locked in. We obviously struggled shooting the ball, but people stayed with things really well. We had great contributions off the bench. I'm proud of how Anna came in and really helped us.

First of all, I think that congratulations to Missouri State for their season, and what a great job their coaching staff, Kellie is doing and their coaching staff, just a very, very tough team, very gritty team. They played really hard, and we had to work really hard to beat them.

Again, we're excited to be playing Monday, and we're going to work as hard as we can to have a great evening against Notre Dame.

Q. You're both very accomplished players. Have you ever experienced anything like the shooting trouble your guys' team had today, and how frustrating was that for you guys within the course of the game?

ALANNA SMITH: I would say that, yes, we have experienced shooting trouble. Probably not to the extent that it was like tonight. Usually we'll start off a little not great in the first half and then pick it up in the second, but it persisted the whole game.

Honestly, I think the feeling on the team was we weren't worried. We know that we can hit down those shots, and we weren't today, so we had to go to something else.

And I think Tara said it, you could just tell that we stayed with things, no matter what our percentage was. No one was freaking out, and I think that was really good on part of everybody on our team because we

kept each other accountable, we kept each other in the game.

ANNA WILSON: Yeah, we obviously didn't shoot as well as we wanted to. I think in regard to that, I think that our team really stuck with things, and when we needed to score, we did. I think the most important thing is that we just stuck together and we never got down on each other. We continued to encourage each other. So yeah.

Q. Was there any part of the game where you felt your team had an opportunity to perform better than it did, and the frustration just got to be a little more than you expected?

TARA VANDERVEER: That was an absolute root canal. You know, again, I think that there are some real positive things that came out of that. I thought we worked really hard on defense, to hold a team as talented as they are to 46 points, and we've really hung our hat on our defense, and today we actually -- we got on the glass a little bit better. We out-rebounded them, and I have never seen -- I can't ever remember a Stanford team that has struggled so much from the field, not just threes, but lay-ups, you know.

And to move on to the Elite 8 with a game like that, I'm so glad that's not our last game because I really believe we're a lot better than that. But it was -- I was not sure what Alanna wasn't worried about. I don't know what game she was at. I mean, wow. We just -- we tried a lot of different things. We tried a lot of different people, and we struggled.

But it was -- we found a way to win, which is -- this is March, and it's survive and advance.

Q. You kind of alluded to this at the end there, but how much does experience help? You guys have been in the Sweet 16 the last however many years. How much does all that experience help when you get into a game like that and your shots aren't falling and everything?

TARA VANDERVEER: Well, I just think that more than anything, our league has prepared us for this in that we have been in very close games with other schools in the Pac-12, and playing against a team like UCLA, playing against a team like Arizona, we're down to the last -- things were not going well for us. We struggled

shooting the basketball.

But I think that if you took that aside, we rebounded well. We defended well. People were into it the whole game. We didn't have meltdowns or -- I thought we did really a lot of things to get us ready. The experience of playing in the Pac-12 is really what helped us as much as anything else.

Q. Somehow you managed to build a 13-point lead despite the shooting difficulties. Even when they made the run, you were able to work that clock down the stretch.

TARA VANDERVEER: We were trying. I think that that was something that we were really trying to do. I mean, we struggle when we have our key people in foul trouble. DiJonai was in foul trouble, Alanna was in foul trouble. Ki picked up an early foul but she stayed with things really well, even though she really struggled offensively. She made key plays for us.

You know, it just was hard getting anything going, and we did get that lead, and we did try to milk the clock a little bit so that knowing that -- coming down and taking a quick shot wasn't going to help us any.

That's where I think an experienced point guard, to your point, someone that I feel like is a coach on the floor, I felt like she really did a good job with that.

Q. How much of a lift did Anna give you off the bench in the second half when you guys were struggling?

TARA VANDERVEER: Oh, I thought Anna gave us a lift at both ends. She scored. She got a nice backdoor lay-up and finished. She scored in transition on a nice pass from Lexie. She hit a three for us. Her defense, she worked very hard defensively, and people on our team have confidence in her. Our bench really helped us a lot between Anna, Shannon, those two, Lexie Hull, I think those three especially really came in. We needed maybe a little more help. I thought Alyssa grabbed some rebounds. But just for whatever reason, we just struggled finishing at the rim or even from the three-point line.

If you had told me we'd shoot 10 percent from three and win, I'd be surprised. But we did.

Q. Your impressions of Notre Dame and the challenges that you guys will face Monday night from them?

TARA VANDERVEER: Well, we've played against some of their players. They look -- I thought that was a great game, watching Texas A&M and Notre Dame, two really, really tough teams. You know, we know that we'll have to play better. They have a great inside

game. They have phenomenal individual players, one through five. We've played against some of them already. We haven't played against Shepard. But for the most part, we've played against everybody else.

They have an outstanding team. I mean, they're basically -- everyone is back that won a National Championship, and then they add Brianna Turner to that mix, and they're playing kind of in their backyard. So we know it will be a big challenge, but I have a lot of confidence in our team, and we know we'll have to play better and I know we can and they know we can, too. But Notre Dame, I mean, there are no chinks in that armor. They have everything. Muffet and her staff do a tremendous job, and they just really -- they're the leading scoring team in the country, right? So it's going to be fun.