

Pac-12 Women's Basketball Media Day

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that's their expectation. So the pressure is from within. There's never any pressure from outside at all. Pressure is from within to be the best that we can be, and we know we have a lot of talent, but we also know we have a lot of work to do, and we want to really improve a lot.

And one of the things that I guess -- I was talking to someone about this already today, but we were going down the stretch ranked No. 1, yada-yada-yada. And you're supposed to do this and get this seed, and then you have a couple injuries, boom, you're out. I mean, just even look at the Warriors' situation. We're going to take every day and enjoy every single day, and I'm going to make every day -- I'm really excited to be here with DiJonai. I know she won't be sitting in that chair next year. I want to have a great year coaching her and enjoy every day. Not even buy into that, all the pressure stuff. We're going to have fun.

Q. Coach, a lot of the coaches have come up here and talked about how they see this as the Pac-12 having been the deepest since they've been here. You've been around the conference for such a long time, four potential top 10 teams in the Pac-12 this year. How does the depth of this league compare in your eyes?

TARA VANDERVEER: Well, you know, I think the Pac-12 and Pac-10 has always been a great conference. The game changer in my mind has been Pac-12 Networks in that now -- then people could watch the West Coast basketball. A lot of times we were playing and no one was watching. And the example I would give you is that a great player like Tina Thompson was not All-American at USC. So why didn't that happen? Because people didn't know about her.

Now people know about our teams, and we're getting better players, and I would agree with you that top to bottom, it is stronger. You know, there might have been days where we could say, you know, you could pencil in a W against a certain team. You can't do that anymore.

These young ladies, they're playing against, I think, the best in the country, and that's very exciting. I didn't let DiJonai answer your question. Did you want her to comment on that?

Q. If she's got something to say.

TARA VANDERVEER: Well, hello, everyone. We're very excited about our season, and very happy to have Kiana and DiJonai here. They're going to be leaders of our young team. We have a very talented group returning, and we have some exceptional freshmen this year, and I'm really excited about how our team has been working hard in the preseason. And just I love our team motto of more than me, and that's what it's going to take. We're going to really have to improve a lot and stay healthy, and we're going to have a great year.

Q. For the players and for Tara, can you talk about how the freshmen are sort of integrating into what you guys do, and has it been pretty seamless so far bringing in the young people?

TARA VANDERVEER: You know, one of the things, we've really started early. It seems like the calendar is -- this is early, and everything has been early. For some of our players, they've been out. Like DiJonai is just coming back, Nadia has been out. We have several players out. So the freshmen have gotten a lot of reps. And I think our upperclassmen have really helped them a lot to learn things. They take them aside, they show them things. They're helping them. But some of it is the freshmen are the ones that are out there a lot, and I think they're doing very well.

KIANA WILLIAMS: I'd agree with what Tara said. Like she said, they're getting a lot of reps and they catch on to things really fast. I feel like we show them something once and they get it automatically, which is good.

Q. Obviously this talented freshman class to complement some of the really good veterans coming back, much is expected, not just of the conference but on a bigger landscape nationwide. You're no stranger to that. It's a lot of pressure on the youngsters. They're hearing it. How is that settling on their shoulders?

TARA VANDERVEER: I don't think we are hearing it. I mean, just -- we kind of -- we're a little bit isolated. We're in that gym and we're working hard. I mean,

DIJONAI CARRINGTON: Well, like Tara said, I personally don't feel any pressure. I don't think our team does, either. Kiana, do you feel any pressure?

KIANA WILLIAMS: Not at all.

DIJONAI CARRINGTON: We take it day by day. Obviously we have goals throughout the season, but we know that none of those are going to happen without us just focusing on the day at hand, so that's kind of what we've been doing. Each day in practice just trying to do the best that we can, and if we do that, then we'll reach all of those expectations that the outside has for us.

TARA VANDERVEER: That was a better answer than mine.

Q. November 15th, you play San Francisco at the new Chase Center, and I talked to Molly last week and she's really excited about that game because you'll be among the first college teams to play in that facility. What do you think of that, and for the players, are you excited about it, Coach and players?

TARA VANDERVEER: I'm very excited. I can't wait to see that building. It's just a great arena, and it'll be really fun playing against USF. We're very excited about it. How do you guys feel?

KIANA WILLIAMS: Yeah, I'm excited, as well.

DIJONAI CARRINGTON: Very excited. Years ago there would never have been even an inkling that a women's college basketball team would play in an NBA arena, and now it's possible, so we're able to see how far we've come. Even though there's still far to go, I think it's so exciting and an honor to play there.

Q. Coach, I just wanted to get your thoughts on having coached Charmin Smith, and I see her as a player, now she's a head coach at Cal. Your thoughts on her and what she'll bring to the program and any advice you've given her as she's stepping into this new role?

TARA VANDERVEER: Well, we know Charmin does a great imitation of me. Did she do that? Well, Charmin is an outstanding young lady. Majored in engineering at Stanford, and just loves basketball. Very intelligent, hard-working, and I know she'll do a great job.

You know, when I think about being the head coach for the first time at Cal, to me that's very intimidating. I mean, I was a head coach at Idaho, but she's right in that spotlight, and I hope that she knows that -- I'll always be a mentor for her, and as long as they come in second, I'm cheering for them.

But she'll do a great job, and I'm really excited for her.

Q. My question goes along the same lines. You have Charmin as a head coach at Cal, you've got the Ogwumike sisters playing and one is in the media. You've got Roz. You've got a lot of stars --
TARA VANDERVEER: Where is Roz?

Q. I saw her upstairs, I think. Actually my kids were in your camps. You have really mentored and meant a lot to a lot of young women. How does that -- is that fulfilling at this point in your career?

TARA VANDERVEER: You know, I'm really proud of all the people that you mentioned, and obviously the two up here, too. It's kind of every once in a while, I'll be like, when I was at basketball camp and Vanessa Nygaard's daughter was at camp and Kate's daughter was at camp, I'm thinking, wow, I've been around a while. It's humbling, and again, I'm so proud of Roz or Chiney or Nneka, Jayne Appel, all the great players that I've had a chance to coach. I just feel really fortunate and very blessed to be in the situation I'm in.

Q. Fran Belibi is going to bring something to the collegiate women's game and to your program obviously with the dunking that she's obviously known for nationally. How are you going to integrate that, prepare for it, game plan for it? What do you do with that very special talent that she has that everybody knows about?

TARA VANDERVEER: I think it's just going to happen organically. Maybe we'll have to run like a lob play. Talk to Steve Kerr about some good lob plays that he runs. But you know, I just want her to not put pressure on herself. Maybe just do it in warmup and get it over with. But obviously we know she can dunk. But I don't want her getting hurt doing it, either.

Q. I've been covering Haley Jones, as long as we're talking about the freshmen a little bit, she's kind of been one of those players that's been a positionless player, and that's kind of been her identity. Do you see women's basketball kind of moving more toward positionless players, and how do you plan to use her?

TARA VANDERVEER: Well, Haley is an exceptional young lady, and when you say positionless basketball, she's 6'1", 6'2", plays the guard, plays every -- she's plays 1, 2, 3, 4 on our team, 5. What's really astounding to me honestly is how quickly she catches on to everything. At first I thought, well, I don't want to overload her with stuff, but where should I play her. Should I play her where we need her most or should I play her where she's best?

Well, she's really good at everything. So we just put her

out there and let her learn kind of on the fly. But she's very intelligent. She's someone that will add a lot to our team. Just a great passer, great vision, and really fun to work with.

Really finds Ki, wherever you are, Ki.

Q. Without jumping ahead, you are in a position potentially late in the season to pass Pat Summit for the all-time wins for women's basketball. You probably haven't thought about it, but do you have any thoughts about it if somebody asks you about it?

TARA VANDERVEER: It has come up here. It has come up here. It's not something that I've really thought about. But you know, it just comes back to kind of what I said before, just enjoy every day. Because here's someone that was arguably the greatest coach in the history of women's basketball, and she's not here to enjoy all the things that she helped build. The relationships with your players are number one. It's not about winning. It's more about just having -- I want to do a good job for Ki and I want to do a good job -- a great job for D. It's her last year.

I think that it's very humbling to be in the conversation with Pat. I was friends with Pat when she was coaching, and just someone very special, but it's sad to think about. If that happens, then I hope it does just because that will mean we're being very successful. But it's not something that -- like I'm counting down or anything. I'm just like, let's have a great practice today, let's get better today, and then if it happens, great.