

# Pac-12 Women's Basketball Media Day

Monday, October 7, 2019



## Mark Trakh

## Stephanie Watts

## Kayla Overbeck

USC Trojans

MARK TRAKH: We're really excited to be here, and we're really excited about our upcoming year. You know, we've got a lot of new faces. We've got a freshman class that was ranked highly last year, and we've got a few graduate transfers, and we're excited about the year.

We've just got to mix our youth and experience together, and I think we've got some good talent on the floor, and right now our kids are really working hard in practice, they're coming together, are doing a lot of good things. So we're very excited about this year and moving forward with our program.

**Q. There's been a lot of change in your program. What do you know for sure right now about your team?**

MARK TRAKH: I know that they're together. You know, I know that they genuinely support each other on the floor. We went on a retreat this weekend, and we did a lot of team bonding things with the kids. Went up to the -- inland from San Diego, there's a camp there, and just seeing the kids work together on a lot of our team-bonding drills and seeing them work together when they did the high ropes courses and seeing the communication and the love they had for one another. I think that's really going to go a long way.

That's what I'm really excited about, just how together and close-knit this group is.

**Q. How did it feel like Survivor?**

KAYLA OVERBECK: Because we haven't really been out on the trails in a long time, and it was just -- there's like gnats everywhere. We're trying to do team bonding and we're trying to go like that (swatting) without slapping each other. But it was different. It was a lot of fun.

**Q. Kayla and Stephanie, what was your favorite activity from the retreat weekend?**

STEPHANIE WATTS: For me that was probably -- there was one where we were all in this middle island

type of deal, and there was like a square around us, but it was super hard to balance on the square because it was only probably like an inch thick. So the goal was for everyone walk across the log and everyone spread out across the square somewhere, so it was kind of cool like working with each other to figure out kind of like a puzzle-type deal with our teammates. It was a lot of fun and really cool to work on that together.

KAYLA OVERBECK: Yeah, that same activity. But also we had this other activity where it was like a plank of wood on like a seesaw. So the first time you have to go to either side, you and a partner, as a team, as a whole, and the sides couldn't touch the ground. And so the first time we did it, we were talking, communicating like come on, this way, this way. And the second time we had to do it without talking. So really being able to focus on the people on the outside, really paying attention to each other and really listening without actually listening. And so it was a lot of fun to see everyone really getting involved and getting excited and just really having fun. You know, it was just a lot of fun.

MARK TRAKH: It was fun watching them do the high ropes courses. Because it was like 50 feet in the air, and you're harnessed, but we had to talk Stephanie into doing it because she sat down and said I'm not doing it, there is no way I'm going up that pole. But she did it. It's really neat when they have -- they had a fear of height, and Stephanie had a fear of heights, and just to overcome that and get up there and then balance herself on a thin wire 50 feet in the air, I really enjoyed watching her do that.

STEPHANIE WATTS: He's not going to mention he was my partner that dragged me up there, so he was my partner doing it, so it was fun. We had a lot of fun, and we ended up doing well on it, so it was cool.

**Q. Stephanie, how has the integration gone for you from UNC to USC, practicing with some new teammates, some new faces? How did you land? How did you get from UNC to USC? Help us understand the journey and the decision.**

STEPHANIE WATTS: So originally I looked at a ton of schools when I was deciding to leave, and I actually knew a player from Charlotte that was on the USC women's basketball team, Aliyah Mazyck, who had

nothing but great things to say about the program, the coaching, the family atmosphere of the program. And when I got here for my visit, I felt everything that she was saying. It's kind of crazy because I feel like I've been here for so much longer than I have with just the family atmosphere. I kind of forget that I've only been here for a few months and I'm a grad transfer.

But they just make it seem like -- I feel like I've known Kayla forever. I feel like I've known Coach Trakh forever, and it's just been an amazing experience, and they've made this adjustment process so easy. Practice has been great. Everyone -- although we have a lot of new faces -- has been just molding together so seamlessly, so I'm glad to be here and glad to be a part of it.

**Q. What are your expectations with all the new faces? A lot will be on you. How do you feel about that?**

STEPHANIE WATTS: I'm excited. I couldn't be more excited. The team is meshing together so well. We've put in a lot of great stuff. I couldn't be more excited to be a part of this and to have that expectations and pressure, we love it. We love being the underdogs. I think we have a lot more in store than people think, and we're excited.

MARK TRAKH: She mentioned Aliyah Mazyck. They were childhood friends, and for those of you who know Aliyah, who I absolutely love, but Aliyah comes into my office, and she goes, Coach, I've got a graduate transfer for you, and I kind of looked at her, and she could tell the way I was looking at her. She goes, no, no, no, Coach, she's not like me, she's a good kid I promise. She's going to go to class, she's going to do everything she's supposed to. She won't yell at refs, I promise. For those of you who know Aliyah, you'll understand what I'm talking about right now.

**Q. I asked the Bruins, so I want to ask the Trojans. Talking about distractions, Los Angeles is a fun place to play. Does your team have a go-to restaurant, a good to song, go to things? What is it about LA that you guys have fun playing college ball in that city?**

KAYLA OVERBECK: I would say Hot and Juicy is probably the --

STEPHANIE WATTS: That's the first thing that came to my mind. It's like a crab, seafood, shrimp, like all that, and they put it in a bag with a bunch of really good sauces, and ever since I've got here, I love that place. But our team loves going there. They just went there I think last night, but we missed it.

KAYLA OVERBECK: I know. But what do we do?

There's not really like a favorite song, either, that we dance to. I feel like everyone will dance to anything. Even if you don't want to dance, you're going to start moving. Like okay, come on, let's go. But I think that's the best part about it, too, like everyone is so willing to just step outside themselves and really just be themselves, because why not? We're all so new and young, we're not going to be this age for that much longer, so why not do it, yeah.

**Q. Mark, what can we expect from you guys on the floor? What kind of team will we see?**

MARK TRAKH: You'll see a team that plays hard, that's unified, that's going to be a system team, that's going to be together like Tammy Blackburn's high school teams were. Remember that, Tammy, those many years ago?

But we want that culture. You'll see us play hard, you'll see us play together, and that's what we've really been working on, for all these kids to really buy in, to be all in on what we need to do this year.

**Q. Coach, just a little bit of an extension of that question. How will you be able to use your size and speed to beat teams that might be coming in and very tough on paper, but having that balance that maybe you haven't had in the first couple of years?**

MARK TRAKH: Well, I'll tell you, first of all, let me say how great it is to see you again and to let you know, again, what a great inspiration you are to all our kids and especially to me day in and day out. So keep the fight, we love you. (Applause.)

Oh, by the way, Tammy was nominated, was a finalist for San Diego woman of the year, which we're all very proud of, too. Just wanted to give you a shout-out there.

I just think with our style, I think we've got a 6'5" freshman who's shown really, really well -- we've never had an athlete that's tall since I've been there, and kind of we're going to platoon her and Kayla. Kayla gives you that she can step outside, she can go around you, so it's going to be a good combination. And I think our guards shoot the ball relatively well, and I think we've got enough size -- not overwhelming size -- but I think we've got enough size and strength and skill level that I think we'll be competitive, and that's what we want to do, we want to compete every night, night in and night out.