



Pac-12 Women's Basketball Media Day Press Roundtable Stanford: Coach Tara Vanderveer and Chiney Ogwumike

Opening Statement:

Coach: "It's been a great day. We're really excited to be here. It's hard to believe the season is so close to starting. We're very excited. It's great having "sophomore" Chiney Ogwumike with me here. I am so excited about Chiney's senior year. She had a great year last year. I think she did women's work for us and now I think people around her have really improved and we have some great young freshmen to add to the mix. So we're very excited and looking forward to a great season."

On Chiney's evolution...

Coach: "The only reason I recruited Chiney was because Nneka said to. Actually I loved coaching Nneka and I love coaching Chiney. Chiney from the very beginning has been a warrior. That was what impressed me, was her tenacity, determination. In beginning, I saw Chiney would come along as a player well in our first exhibition game when she had something like 20 rebounds. [Assistant coach] Amy [Tucker] said Chiney's in our starting line up, and I said really? Amy said, she's a rebounding machine. And I think that's how she started, she just would rebound. She wasn't rebounding that many of Nneka's shots because she didn't miss that many. As a sophomore, she rebounded and ran the floor and she became our top defender. Then as a junior she had to rebound. I already told this once today but last year I was upset when Chiney shot because she wasn't rebounding, and I was upset when someone else shot because Chiney didn't have the ball. She really had to do everything for us last year. But I think this year what you'll see is a more versatile Chiney. I think Chiney's development as a player at the next level is she's not that big. She plays big but she's not just a back-to-the-basket, playing two feet away. She's going to shoot threes for us, she can play the 3, she can handle the ball. She'll have more around her so in some ways she'll get to rest a little bit more. I wish I could clone her and have Chineys on the rest of the teams I ever coach at Stanford because she's an absolute joy to coach.:

Chiney on her own evolution...

CO: "I think that every year presents a different challenge. I think honestly I feel absolutely no pressure coming into my senior yr. I think last year was the year I felt most pressure being Nneka's sister and her leaving and hopefully being the leader to our team and living up to the expectations of our program. But I think now it's so much fun, working on skills, knowing I have a new chapter in a year or so and making sure I develop into player I hope to be, which is versatile, a threat on the court on both ends, working on perimeter skills and outside shot and bettering my left and off hand. And also becoming better passer, more efficient, making plays not necessarily with dribbling the ball."

On Chiney's sisters perhaps committing to Stanford...

CO: "They're up in the air. They love to play, they'll probably play, but we don't know where. Basketball for sure, though."

Coach: "We're definitely working on it. But this is the one I'm working on the most right now."

On the sisterly bonds on the team, including sisters Karlie and Bonnie Samuelson...

CO: "By far. I think the sisterhood we've had is one that hasn't left our team. The way we approach our locker room is that we're all sisters. I think with Karlie and Bonnie there, it's a resurgence of that and it's exciting because they care about each other, they take care of each other. We have a buddy system, so my mentee is Erica McCall. Every upperclassman has an underclassman that they make sure understands the plays. And of course Karlie's is Bonnie."

On reactions to not making the Final Four...

CO: "The best way I can describe what I'm feeling now thinking retrospectively is that our culture changed after that loss. We assessed our good years as going to the Final Four but the actual culture we want is to do everything as a national championship caliber team. This year we're motivated to get everyone on same page because we have five new freshmen, but not only that but do everything, every three-hour practice, every weights, everything national championship caliber. So we've been recalibrated a little bit. We love Final Fours, we love the streak, so it was disappointing to lose but I think we all realize we had that great history but is that satisfying? No. We want to win a national championship."

On the NCAA rules change

CO: "I'm so excited. First of all, I love the rule change. I just learned something new about screening."

Coach: "When have you ever started screening?"

CO: "I'm not talking about me, I'm talking about who it might affect! Shots fired! I like the ten-second backcourt because it enforces us to play better defense. If you can hold for a few seconds you can create an instant turnover. We're excited and are buying into that. And hand-checking, I think it'll help the game go by more smoothly. The skill will be on better display, and not only that but if there's any way I can leave a game a little less bruised then I'm all for it. I love the physicality though, because then it's more competitive, but I do think players need to be protected, and anything that aims to protect the players is good in my books."

On junior Amber Orrange...

Coach: "I think all of our returners have, as Chiney referenced a bit, I think this spring we went through a culture change of you win and you win and some people think you just put on the jersey and you're just going to win. I think Amber is in the best shape she's ever been in. She's a bit lighter, she's in that gym working on her shot, she's more vocal, and we're working with her to do more of the things we needed to do. I think she can be one of premier point guards in our league if not in country. Her work ethic is really special and I think lot of it is just keeping her poised and keep playing hard every game. She has help around her and she also, last year if she was tired we

took a to or she came out of the game and if we had a 10-pt lead it became tied or if it was tied we'd go down ten, but now we have help behind Amber which will help her in practice too. I think she's really helped Alex Green who is a young lady that's a junior really but hasn't played a minute for us in a game. So someone like Alex is really getting the benefit and confidence amber has. I think Amber also was cut from the World University Games team this summer and I think that motivated her in a good way. I think they gave her some valuable feedback on what they're looking for and as a coach you want someone else telling her the same thing you've been telling her the past two years."

On the potential starters for the season...

Coach: "Mikaela Ruef, we're very excited about. First of all Mikaela graduated academically but she chose to come back to Stanford and pay her own way to get her master's degree or they call it co-term in engineering. As it worked out, she now is on scholarship because of the two injuries that we did have. But Mikaela is a sneaky worker, she's one of those Stanford kids that they don't ever want to show them you're studying, so she goes tot the gym early in the morning. But she's really improved a lot. She's looking to be a lot more offensive and she's a great passer. So Chiney and Mikaela Ruef would be our starting forwards so to speak. Then our three with more help would be Kailee Johnson who could play a 4 inside, Erica McCall could play inside and Tess [Picknell] could play a lot inside. We do miss Allie. If Allie's healthy she would've been a great piece to puzzle. But I think our two freshmen and Tess with Chiney and Mikaela Ruef."

On her upcoming 900th win...

Coach: "I don't really think about it to be honest with you. Some people brought it up today. I've been really fortunate in my life. I missed the plane because Title IX was when I was already in school so I didn't have a scholarship. I didn't have those things, but the timing was right for coaching. So I started early, I was a head coach when I was 23 or 24 years old. So if you do it long enough, you're going to win enough games otherwise you're going to get fired. It's a job I really love, I get to work with people like Chiney every day. I've worked at great universities, I've picked athletic directors wisely, and having really good athletic directors is really a key to keeping your job. I have great assistant coaches and you have to have talented players. I'm always trying to get better. I don't feel like I have all the answers. I'm always trying to watch and learn from other people. I just want to do a great job for this team, this day, this year. Chiney doesn't care about those other 100 games but if I can remember something that helps her do well, that's important. So those games just mean a lot of great experience."

On Coach Sylvia Hatchell...

Coach: "It's frightening. That's why to me, it's important not to get so caught up in advertisements for the Pac-12 Tournament, a lot can happen between here and then. To see my contemporaries, these are people that I coach with. It's something that kind of seems like it came out of nowhere."

Chiney on 900 wins

CO: "Oh yeah. We're going to get it."

Coach: "It was before you were born."

CO: "I know, right? I'm just so excited. I was part of the 800th win, at USF, and that was a fun moment. I think that's another target out there. It's my senior year, you know what, let's get 900. I wouldn't be surprised if she got 1,000. I'm calling it now."

On the new music videos...

CO: "We already have a demo of a song. I'm so excited about my senior year. We're going to do it. So it goes off of the concept of Nerd Nation. We started out with Nerd City and we spread across the nation. So now we're Nerd Nation. It's a team effort. We just wanted to get it done early because we want to focus during the season. This one, Jasmine [Camp] did the beat, we worked with our sound professionals that are really great, our director of creative video, and he's just great. There's no such thing as a bad idea. It's a fun way to express ourselves. One of our fans, Dawn, came to one of our practices, and she was suffering from cancer, and she said the videos we make really uplifted her. That hit home with us. We want to do something with our fans. They come to our games, they support us, they've gotten to know our personalities, so if we can package up something for them to enjoy it's great. I know President Hennessy has expressed interest. If he wants to be in the video, we can't say no."

On her team having interests outside of basketball...

Coach: "I'm fine with that. You can only practice basketball so much. As long as when it's practice, we're there and people are engaged and working really hard. I want them to have good team camaraderie. That's something that seems to help, doing stuff like that. And the first one Mel Murphy did "Got Bounce," and it was fun. They did a good job and they had to do a sequel and that one became Nerd City. That one started out a bit shaky but that got better."

CO: "She's producer and editor. Everything has her approval."

Coach: "But it's something fun. A lot of the outside perception is that Stanford is all boring. Kids looking around for the pocket protector. But it's the opposite. Kids like Chiney, they're very well rounded. It's a throwback school, kids like to do a lot of stuff and I'm fine with that. I want them to take advantage of the smorgasbord of Stanford. There's a lot more to it."

On the support from professors...

CO: "It's great to have professors and academic faculty that support what we do. And Coach Tara is all over campus too. She doesn't say no to an event unless it conflicts with basketball. We just want to play hard for each other on and off the court."

On what Coach VanDerveer has done for current and former student-athletes...

CO: "I think the best person that can answer this question is my sister. What Nneka tells me is she really values her relationship with Coach Tara because not only did Coach Tara help her evolve as a person but also as a player. We cherish putting on our jerseys because being a Stanford student-athlete means so much more than going out and playing. It's carrying yourself, it's taking care of your classes. It's those

little things that amass to making you a better person. The door to her office is always open. She's so invested in everything around basketball, she has a story for every situation, and that helps us because it makes our goals attainable, it makes them tangible. It makes it that much more real. I just hope people see that. Coach will do anything to get us motivated to play hard, and that's one thing that I don't take for granted."