

March 8, 2015



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An interview with:

STANFORD

**COACH TARA VANDERVEER
LILI THOMPSON
TAYLOR GREENFIELD
KAYLEE JOHNSON**

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations to the Stanford Cardinal, and Coach Tara VanDerveer, Lili Thompson, Taylor Greenfield, and Kaylee Johnson.

COACH VANDERVEER: I'm really excited for our team. Very proud of the effort our team made. First I just want to congratulate Cal on a great year and an excellent game. Lindsay does a great job with her team, and I think they'll do a great job in the NCAA Tournament.

But our team really came out and showed some real grit. We got down, I don't know how many we were down in the first half. But we started a little bit slow, and people dug in. I thought Lili and Taylor really carried us in the first half, and we got more contributions in the second half. I thought different people stepped up.

We didn't play necessarily a pretty game, but a gritty game. I'm really proud of our team. Great tournament for Taylor. Kaylee, getting used to winning a tournament. Lili stepping up big. Amber, our whole staff I thought did a great job scouting, and we're very excited to be the automatic bid to the NCAA Tournament.

Q. Lili, you had to find your grit quite a lot during the course of the season. Talk about doing it today against Cal. And I also wonder

how you felt the game was impacted when Boyd was out for a long stretch?

LILI THOMPSON: Us being gritty is something that's been a season-long thing. We know that teams are going to come out and play us hard, and we really wouldn't want it any other way. So when we get on to the court we know that the 15 of us versus anyone, our coaching staff and all of our support staff, and we know that if we go out and play the way we need to and play with grit and play with heart that we can succeed, and glad we got that done today.

With Brittany Boyd out, I hope she's okay. I saw she had a bandage on her face. We didn't really want to focus on what was happening there. Just continue to have the same game plan and just get it done.

Q. After you beat Oregon State, you talked about relishing the role of the underdog. You came into this tournament as the underdog again. But do you not think of yourself that way and your team that way?

COACH VANDERVEER: Not really. Honestly, you're going to do same thing regardless. You prep with all the video, you do the walkthrough, you're in the gym getting up shots. When they toss up that ball, you're just playing hard. Not just playing hard, but playing smart. Trying to really make adjustments during the game. You know, if someone starts out slowly, other people on the team I think picked them up and just, you know, this is an extremely rewarding feeling for our team to have accomplished this goal.

Q. Tara, there was a stretch in the second half Amber had a couple of steals and lay-ups, Lili had a hustle play when she got back. I thought changed the tone of the game. Taylor was doing great things, but those guard plays --

COACH VANDERVEER: Just a hustle

play on that loose ball that maybe would have been an over-the-back. I think that did set the tone. You know, Lili attacking the basket. In the beginning of the game I thought she was maybe settling for some jump shots and she got aggressive, and that's her game. She attacked the basket, finished. I think Amber did a much better job in the second half. But I mean, Taylor's stepping up for us. Especially with the fact that Karlie Samuelson was out, and we needed Taylor, and she responded.

Q. Taylor, coming in, Coach said that you were needed, but what were you maybe even visualizing before that tournament started? Was it this? Having the net draped around yourself?

TAYLOR GREENFIELD: Absolutely. The way our Pac-12 season kind of went this year, I don't think a lot of people maybe had the highest hopes for us, but we definitely didn't let down on that. Before coming to the tournament, we were all talking about like last year we didn't win the Pac-12 Tournament and we had our superstar Chiney, and this year we don't have that person that you were like, oh, you need to win. So we really embraced that and it was like let's just go out. Our theme this year has kind of been to crash some parties, and I think that's exactly what we did here.

Q. Taylor, this is kind of in the same light: You personally, did you ever imagine coming into this tournament being named MOP?

TAYLOR GREENFIELD: I hate to say I imagined it, but I knew it was possible. It's not what I was looking for, but if that's what it took, I'll take it. Like she said, I knew what needed to be done, and I knew I was very capable of doing that, and I had the opportunity to do it, and I took it.

Q. What did it feel like for you to hold that trophy and turn to the crowd there?

TAYLOR GREENFIELD: I don't even know. I was just thinking about celebrating with my team. I mean, we love each other so much and we have so much fun together, for me personally it was a great accomplishment, and I'm extremely happy and blessed to have that. But all I was thinking about is what we just did out there two games in a row. Battled through a lot, and I would not want to do it with anyone else. I'm so glad that I have these girls around me, that I can be myself with and appreciate what I have and they're happy

for me, and we're just, yeah, we're all happy for each other and I love it.

Q. As far as attacking the basket in the second half, it looked like things were clogged up in the first half. Did you feel things opened up and there were opportunities or did you feel like you had to miss those opportunities?

LILI THOMPSON: A little bit of both. The coaching staff let me know that Reshanda Gray was in a little bit of foul trouble and to just go at her. There was one lay-up that I just completely missed. As we were coming back to the timeout Taylor was like, "Take it, you have it. You'll knock that down and you have it." Next time I was able to get it.

So it was really keeping that positive mindset and maintaining aggressiveness.

Q. First of all, if you could have some comments on Taylor and anything you saw that she was doing different this week than she had. And secondly, your rebounding a lot of people think it's kind of a mental thing, a toughness even more than a physical skill. Have you always enjoyed rebounding? Have you always been good at it?

KAYLEE JOHNSON: Well, we've kind of coined the nickname "Tournament Taylor," so I guess she's just living up to that. But I think Tara's always emphasizing how sometimes different people need to step up in different games, and I think Taylor really showed that this weekend.

Yeah, obviously I'm not the biggest post out there trying to rebound. But I like it, it's fun. I know it's going to be a battle, and I always like rising to the occasion. I guess it is more of a mental thing knowing I have to go battle, and coaches thinking I can outjump someone.

Q. Tara, yesterday Lindsay gave you a lot of praise. She said she thought this was one your best coaching jobs because your team so different. Has it felt to you like maybe not your best coaching job, but just a really tough year, a different year? Have you grown a lot as a coach this year, do you think?

COACH VANDERVEER: I think I have. I think Taylor talked about it a little bit, but it has been hard. We don't have the give-ins that maybe we had in the past, where you throw it into Jane. We have young, young players that have to play

big roles. I think our seniors have really stayed with things. They knew it was going to be tough, and they kept battling. We had to run a whole new system, and it's taken a while to get it figured out.

To play in this league, you've got to come out very energetic every single night, and we've learned sometimes when we weren't as energetic as we needed to be or we weren't as focused as we needed to be. But this is as rewarding a championship as I've ever sat up here and felt because we definitely had to really scrap for it and battle, and I'm really, really proud of not just the three that are here, but the other 12 that are in the locker room and our staff and our coaches.

Q. Do you like the spot your team is in right now heading into the NCAA Tournament?

COACH VANDERVEER: I would like one thing that won't happen, but I wish Karlie was healthy. That is the only thing. Going into the Tournament for me, you know this is the most important thing as being healthy. So we're going to be really careful in practice, and we're going to work really hard, get a lot of shots up, do a lot of review and have people rested and excited and ready for the NCAA Tournament.

But this is, in some ways I don't want to say this is a dress rehearsal, but this gives you the Tournament feel. It's a great tournament, and it's something that I think really the close games have really helped us grow as coaches and a change so that we're really ready for the next step.

Q. Taylor, we're all dying to know, what is in Huxley, Iowa?

TAYLOR GREENFIELD: I mean, nothing, honestly. Maybe that's why I was always at the gym. That's about all we have. My parents are actually moving, so I won't even be returning to Huxley, so that's going to be extremely weird. But truthfully it is what people think it is, corn fields and not a whole lot. Very small town. I think we have like 3,000 people, and now we're losing four more, I guess.

Q. How many people were in your high school?

TAYLOR GREENFIELD: I think in my graduating class we had like 80, and we were combined with the junior high, that made the whole high school, so not a lot, but I liked it.

Q. (No microphone) athletically and educationally, but Iowa State, I presume was

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dying to have you. Did you consider them at all?

TAYLOR GREENFIELD: For sure. I mean, I lived ten minutes away from there. So growing up that's what I went to watch. We had season tickets. It was right there. They have a great basketball program. We knew a lot of people. But until Stanford got on the radar, that changed the game for everything.

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