

March 5, 2015



UCLA – 80
Arizona – 62
An interview with:

**COACH CORI CLOSE
JORDIN CANADA
KELLI HAYES**

THE MODERATOR: Coach Cori Close, Jordin Canada and Kelli Hayes. Coach, an opening statement and then we'll go from there?

COACH CLOSE: Sure. First of all, thanks to the media and the PAC-12. We need you for our game, and this is a first class tournament, so I want to thank you for all of your efforts.

I also want to say how much respect I have for Arizona. I think Niya Butts is spectacular, and we are really close to her staff. So we knew this was going to be a battle. We knew coming into this game that they were going to be prepared, they were going to compete hard because they reflect their great head coach. So we came into this game knowing that it was going to take a big effort.

But what I'm most proud of as a coach is you don't know where those effort and those punches are going to come from. And the selflessness that our bench has shown all year long, they never know when their number's going to be called, but they continue to work the same way in practice. They continue to give to their teammates the same way. They continue to be coachable, and therefore they're ready.

Kelli Hayes is a perfect example of that. I thought our first half, our bench scoring and our bench punch on rebounds was the difference in the game. It's when the momentum turned in our favor. So I'm really pleased with the selflessness of our bench, and the readiness of our bench to be willing to step up when the pressure's the highest.

Q. Coach, it seems like you guys really wanted to get out in transition and push the tempo. How important was that as part of your game plan going in?

COACH CLOSE: I just think it's who we are and when we play best. I was disappointed we didn't do more because we didn't rebound well enough. If we had rebounded better than on the defensive end of the floor, I thought we could have gotten more defensive transition opportunities.

Credit Arizona for how they ran down long rebounds and out-of-area rebounds. But I thought every time we controlled one of those long rebounds, we got run out transition baskets. So that's who we are, that's how we play best, and so that's why defense and rebounding are so important for us, because it allows us to be our best on offense.

Q. You held them to 34% shooting. You have to be pretty happy with that.

COACH CLOSE: I am. I think our zone has been our best defense most of the year. They've struggled to stretch that zone out, Arizona has, and make enough threes to really pull us out of that. I still thought in the second half we had some lapses in that, but overall our defense was definitely our anchor.

Q. What can you say about Nirra Fields?

COACH CLOSE: Well, I think Nirra is someone who just keeps growing. I thought in crunch time in the second half, when things got tight and they made a little bit of a run, I think she scored seven straight points. I think that just shows her maturity, and I think the biggest thing is she's our only returning All-Conference player. She's the only one who has been in this environment before with these kind of minutes. She's the only one on our team. So she really has to be someone who is most confident when those things happen.

Q. Then for Jordin and Kelli, just being in a situation where single elimination, and you guys need to win the tournament in order to keep your season alive, how do you guys feel about that so far?

JORDIN CANADA: I think there is a lot of emotion going into this game just because for the seniors and this being potentially their last game. We just wanted to go in and play for them. I know that was one of the things that coach emphasized, what are you going to give up or what is the one thing that you're going to do to.

COACH CLOSE: What are you going to give up for the sake of the team?

JORDIN CANADA: Yeah. And I wanted to just play hard for the seniors and give it my all. I think the team wanted to do that as well. So I think that was the big motivation for us coming into this game, and I think we did a pretty good job tonight. Although we were down on the boards, we've got to do a little bit better job of that playing against Stanford, they're a great team, so we need to keep up our intensity that we had today, I think we should be in good shape.

KELLI HAYES: To piggyback off what Jordin said, I think that we just focus on we don't want to have any regrets, and we've had a lot in the past from preseason to regulation or whatever the heck it's called, PAC-12, and now the tournament. We wanted to just go all out because all we had is one loss and we're out.

With this team, this is a team that we have and we need to work with what we have. I think we can continue to do that and continue to play as a team.

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