

March 6, 2014



USC – 59
Arizona - 54

An interview with:

**COACH COOPER
ARIYA CROOK
KATE OLIVER**

THE MODERATOR: Welcome USC. Coach?

COACH COOPER: I thought we played tentative at some points in the first half. I thought we lost our focus defensively, and second half we played better defense and executed on the offensive end and got some key defensive stops.

So we didn't play our best game, but I thought we played well enough to win, and I was proud. I was proud of them. Kate came in and gave us a huge spark off the bench. Defensively she made it tough on the inside; then she got a couple offensive rebounds and putbacks and helped us in the half court execution. So Ariya knocked down that big three-point shot that really kind of broke it open for us late in the game. So not happy with everything that happened tonight, but really, really happy with the win.

Q. Sometimes when you get in a game like that where the other team is such an underdog they kind of play looser. Do you feel like in the first half they played a little looser than you guys did?

ARIYA CROOK: I know when we were in that position last year, and we came into the Pac-12 tournament last year, we thought we had nothing to lose and we needed to come out and win so we could make it to the NCAA Tournament, but we came up short. So for Arizona to come in and have nothing on their shoulders or anything like that, they just came in and tried to win the game and take our spot.

KATE OLIVER: I would have to agree. They definitely came in with nothing to lose. We were thinking that they would, but even still it took

us a little bit by surprise. But we definitely brought it back together and we were able to get it back together.

Q. I thought in the last couple of games you played more minutes than you have been. Were you surprised you played as much as you did tonight?

KATE OLIVER: I mean, I'm happy to get out there and play with my teammates and do what I need to do (No Microphone).

Q. 4 for 11 from the free-throw line. How concerned were you about that?

COACH COOPER: Well, I think part of that, I just thought part of that was nerves. I thought we were a little nervous. We were a little tight. When Arizona came out and they were so aggressive, I thought they had us on our heels for a moment, and I thought that hindered us and really got us unfocused even at the free-throw line.

So in so many areas we were back-peddaling and on our heels and not as focused. I just think the free-throw line was another example of us not really being in it. But I thought down the stretch when it was time and we needed to hit free throws, we hit them down the stretch.

So I'm not majorly concerned, but it's definitely going to be something that we talk about.

Q. Seemed like you guys were going back and forth, it was 44-43 there with a couple minutes to go. What changed and allowed you to make that change?

COACH COOPER: Well, a couple things. Arizona starts to change defenses, and so between the box and one and the 2-3 zone, we had to figure out an offense that would get the ball where we wanted to get it in a timely manner against that type of defense.

So we changed plays and then we put Kate in. The great thing about Kate is that she's not necessarily a banger. She likes to shoot. She likes to finesse it in, and she's 6'4". So what she

did was not only did she provide an offensive punch for us, but she also passed the ball so well that it allowed Cassie to get some looks. It allowed Alexis, we call her X, to get some looks, and it allowed our shooters to come out. Then the guards started focusing in on the post players and it allowed our shooters to get some space to get some shots off.

I know Des hit a three-pointer; and Ariya hit a three-pointer later in the second half. So really we changed offenses and we inserted Kate, and I thought that helped open it up for us.

Q. You guys are 19-12 now. (No Microphone)?

COACH COOPER: Well, we want to win the tournament to make it to the NCAA Tournament. But we're really -- we take it one game at a time. So all we were thinking about was Arizona, and now all we're thinking about is ASU. We really take it one step at a time. We think we've done enough to hopefully make it to the tournament. We have some big wins with Colorado with 12 in the nation, we beat them. We beat Cal at Cal. We've played Stanford tough, and I'm missing a win, a big time win. Oh, we took ASU into overtime at their place.

So we have some games that I think will be very interesting for the NCAA. But at this point we're not thinking about that. We're just thinking about our next opponent, and that is ASU.

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