

# PAC-12 Women's Basketball Tournament

Thursday, March 1 2018

## Jody Wynn

## Mackenzie Wieburg

## Amber Melgoza

Washington

California-71, Washington-68

JODY WYNN: Well, for those of you that saw us for the first time, I think what you saw is a team that's battled like this all season long, and we might be short, we might be down in numbers, but throughout the course of this year our team has shown the heart and the grit and the toughness in which we want our Washington women's basketball program to be all about.

I'm just proud of the fight that we showed today. We could have come in and said, oh, guys, we're not supposed to win this game. They're too good. They're too strong, but we believed that we could do it.

The two next to me and the rest of the others, they fought for 40 minutes, and I'm certainly proud of that.

**Q. Jody, as you pointed out, Cal had a real size advantage on you, but it was really Asha Thomas there at the end of the third quarter and the beginning of the fourth that really kind of took over the game. Can you talk a little about that sequence and what she contributed to their victory?**

JODY WYNN: Yeah, absolutely. I think AT's a phenomenal player. She's so shifty, she's explosive, and she's able to change speeds really, really well. She got lost a few times in our transition defense, and she was able to get downhill on us, create some and one opportunities for herself or some short jumpshots. We lost her for three.

We're just so concentrated. I mean, we're maybe 6'1", I think maybe that's a lie. I don't even think we are. We're so concentrated on down low, and helping out down low. Sometimes you've got to pick your poison a little bit. She was able to knock down some big shots as is Jaelyn Brown.

**Q. What do you think you guys took from the last time you played them, that end of the season game, and what was different for you today, because it was so much closer?**



JODY WYNN: I think we were tougher for 40 minutes and focused for 40 minutes today. I think at Seattle we hung our head down because we weren't making shots, and that turned into some lack of focus defensively in our positions.

Today, nothing was going to stop our focus defensively, and we mixed it up nearly every possession, to try to keep Anigwe off balance a little bit and keep some of their players thinking out there on the floor.

Our team has incredible character and heart, and they didn't want to just lay down. They believed and we all believed we could win this game, and they played like it.

**Q. You guys showed flashes of what could be a great team in the future down the stretch late in the season, and especially with Amber's contributions. Can you talk a little bit about that and what she's brought to the team in your first year and what's impressed you?**

JODY WYNN: We came in with the mindset that we're going to play equal opportunity and give a lot of players a lot of confidence early on. Within the course of the season I think we found our roles, but I didn't define them right away because every player was a new player to us. Over the course of the season we developed strengths and weaknesses.

We had an insurmountable -- I don't even know how many starting lineups. Probably every game we played this year, 30 games we had maybe 30 different starting lineups. And I do that because I want our players to have confidence that their work in practice is worthy. Practice means something to us as coaches, and I want it to mean something to these guys.

Amber's been able to really allow the game to come to her and develop a -- she's always been so competitive. I mean, I've watched her play all through high school, California State leading scorer. She was amazing. But she's really learned the game and allowed herself to be coached and be pushed and be challenged to be able to score in a variety of different ways. And her team has worked well around her and there has been zero jealousies, to me, that's tremendous.

We're not a star system, per se, but stars will arise

throughout the course of the system. On any given night, anybody can step up and have a big game, and we saw that all year long with us.

I think Amber's competitive will and her desire to want the ball in her hands and not be afraid of failure is something that she's going to take well into the working world, long after her playing days are over. Just not afraid of the challenge and not afraid to make a mistake.

**Q. For the players, you guys had a really big comeback in the second half. I was wondering what coach said to you guys during halftime?**

MACKENZIE WIEBURG: Well, she definitely talked about how hard we were working on defense down low and in the post. It was kind of more so about keeping up our hustle and not letting down, because sometimes we've had letdowns when the floor is switched when we're away from our bench. So it was definitely about communication and playing through all the possessions and kind of knowing technical stuff about what we were in.

AMBER MELGOZA: Adding on to that, some of our shots weren't falling. But we knew that if we just keep shooting and just got to believe in each other that they'll keep falling. It's a bummer that we lost, but I'm very proud of my team and everybody, and I thought we played our butts off and we fought till the end.

**Q. Mackenzie, in the first quarter how important was it for the team's confidence to be able to just match Cal? You guys were just going at it scoring?**

MACKENZIE WIEBURG: Yeah, I think it was very important, not so much us matching Cal, but us trying to push or beat them in terms of energy and toughness. We were trying to play our game, which was hustle plays and getting down and dirty in the post, and helping our teammates and finding open shots for each other. So I think that was kind of the key for us throughout the game.

**Q. For all three of you, could you talk about how this performance with these kind of sticks sets the tone for the future of the program?**

JODY WYNN: I'll start, and then they want to hear from you more than me. Well, first and foremost, every team that takes the floor in a Washington jersey with us coaching is going to play with our heart and hustle for 40 minutes. It may not be pretty, though.

There were several games we had droughts, but we never felt like we quit and gave up and laid down. There are going to be teams that are versatile, where players can rotate in and out, players can be put in

different spots on the floor offensively or defensively, and their versatility is going to grow within the course of the year and within the course of their careers.

So we're excited that this current 2017-18 has paved the way for the heart and hustle that you're going to see for many years to come.

AMBER MELGOZA: To add on to what she was saying, I think our team and whoever comes to our program and they're going to be recruiting some phenomenal players, we're known for our hard work and giving our all. I definitely think this off-season will be something really good for us. I think each of the players that we're going to be returning next year are going to do what they can do and be better. I kind of see it as a new beginning. So, I mean, it's a record. Yeah, our record's that, but we're going to come together and it's going to be a new year.

MACKENZIE WIEBURG: Yeah, I really feel like this game kind of set the tone for what's to come in the next years. It sucks that I won't be here, but I really think that these girls, they have so much heart and they absolutely love each other. You can really see the relationships on the floor between both on and off the floor. I think even though the score wasn't what we wanted, like the outcome wasn't what we wanted, but just the way we finished so hard for 40 minutes throughout the game, I think that just sets the tone for what's to come, and I'm excited to watch, too.

**Q. Amber, you had a great season. You put up a lot of points, so there is a lot to reflect on. If you take a look back, what do you think you've learned from yourself as a player this season through that campaign?**

AMBER MELGOZA: Well, in the beginning of the year I knew, like she's seen me through high school, so I knew how she was going to play me on the court, which was great. But honestly every game is a new learning experience. I mean, you're going against All-American players, you're going against people that are about to get drafted. So it's awesome to go against that, but I just see it each day, starting now, I just know I get myself better in everything, as in being able to score more and get my teammates more open, to be a better passer, to work my ball handling. There are a lot of things to work on. But I'm excited and I know I'm going to work hard in the off-season.

JODY WYNN: You've got to remember that throughout the course of the Pac-12 season we go to every gym, and Amber would be like, I've never played here before. So it's like she's a freshman. I think it was Washington State, and she said, hey, I think I played ten minutes here. I had my best game.

It's like she was a freshman. So she learned every game that she was able to play. That experience alone is irreplaceable. Now she's ready to tackle on that junior year.