

PAC-12 Women's Basketball Tournament

Saturday, March 3 2018

Kelly Graves
Maite Cazorla
Sabrina Ionescu
Oregon

Oregon - 65, UCLA - 62

KELLY GRAVES: First of all, I want to congratulate Cori and the Bruins. They've had a tremendous season, and they'll continue to represent the Pac-12 well. That's a Final Four caliber team with Final Four caliber athletes and a coaching staff, and for some reason, they bring out the best in us. That's for sure. I don't know if I want to play them again or if I don't want to play them again. Just seems like every time we do, it's one of those great games.

But I'm really proud of our team. I thought down the stretch, especially in the last half of the fourth quarter I thought we were tremendous defensively. Even though they got some second shots here and there late, we made the stops when we needed.

I don't know, it was kind of a blur on the offensive end. I don't know how we got open on a couple of those. I'm just really proud this team continues to inspire me each game and amaze me and continue to make the plays necessary for us to move on.

Q. Sabrina, what were you thinking in the final possessions when you had the steal and at the end when you were trying to stop Jordin from driving to the lane?

SABRINA IONESCU: I wasn't really thinking, to be honest. It came down to playing basketball. We knew we had to get stops and not let Jordin get open driving lanes, because we knew she was going to try to take over that game and get the ball in her hands late. But I think we stuck together throughout the whole game and played really well down the stretch and got stops when we needed to.

Q. Sabrina, what's it been like going against Jordin Canada these last couple years and what was tonight like, she clearly wanted the game badly.

SABRINA IONESCU: She did. She's always been a mentor and a great leader. We played together in AAU and throughout high school and now in college. So



we're great friends. We played this summer on the USA team together, and she's definitely a warrior. She's going to fight until the buzzer sounds, and she did tonight. So she's a great example to all players. Not necessarily just point guards.

Q. Kelly, can you talk about the swings in this game? A lot of runs where somebody got behind. 13-2 for them, 13-2 for you, you finished on 10-0. Just what those swings were like, and did you know they were coming?

KELLY GRAVES: Anytime you play UCLA, you know they're going to make runs because that's the kind of team they are, and they feed off turnovers, long rebounds, those kind of things. We're fortunate we made the last one. But I thought maybe a 13-2 run late in the second quarter, I thought was the key to the game in a lot of ways, just because it gave us a little bit of momentum going in. I thought the first half we were as poor offensively as we've been. But we at least got a little bit of life.

Lexi hit one of those big threes. I thought that was big for us. It seems like every time she makes a three it almost counts four or five, because it seems to give us a lift. She hit a couple in the second half that were huge too.

Yeah, I think that two really good offensive teams, and runs are just part of the game. Bri could tell you that.

Q. How much did the crowd energize you? Sabrina, you were urging them on at the end. Was that energizing for you on the court?

SABRINA IONESCU: Oh, for sure. It almost seemed like the whole arena was filled with Oregon fans, and it was really nice and inspiring to actually see. Yeah, I was firing them up. They stood with us throughout the whole game. We were down 13, and they were still pumping us up and cheering us on. That's really nice to see. So we hope they come out tomorrow and continue to help us get this win.

Q. Oregon's never been in the championship game of this tournament before, and it's going to be three games in three days. This was a lot of energy you guys spent tonight. So where do you get the energy to play for a title tomorrow?

SABRINA IONESCU: We'll just get the normal eight

hours of sleep, be ready to play tomorrow. It's not going to be too bad. Coach let us rest in that first game against Colorado, so I'm ready to go right now. I'm excited and I want to play the winner of this game going on right now. I think that we're just going to come out and play as hard as we can and try to take a championship home.

MAITE CAZORLA: Like she said. Everyone's going to be tired, so we just have to play hard and just do it.

Q. Sabrina, obviously March is the best time of year. I think so, anyways. What do you do to make sure that your team continues to bring it to a new level?

SABRINA IONESCU: I think it's a mindset. I know our offense and defense, we've been practicing on that all year, and things like that aren't going to change. Scout's going to change. But I think we have to focus on what we can control. That's energy, that's being dialled in, and that's what we preach every day.

As long as we go out and give it a hundred percent on the floor and leave nothing out there, I think everything will take care of itself.

Q. Even though you won all three games against UCLA, did you sense it is kind of building into a rivalry with the level of play, and your thoughts on those three games with UCLA?

KELLY GRAVES: I don't know about a rivalry, certainly, long-term, but it certainly was this year because I think each one of the games were a little bit epic. They all came down to the last possession or two, and a couple were in front of a national TV audience. It's just really good players on both teams. It's high level. There are a lot of stars and I think that that plays well on TV.

I don't know. I'm just glad we won this game. I haven't looked long-term in terms of any kind of rivalry, but they sure brought the best out of us. There is no question about that. That's a really good team.

Jordin Canada and Monique Billings, Kelli Hayes, those three seniors have been just phenomenal for them. It's been, as an opposing coach, it's been a pleasure to watch them. It's been a pleasure to coach against them for four years.

Q. Can you give me an update on Satou's status?

KELLY GRAVES: Don't know. Don't know. She's not feeling so good, but hopefully is going to be okay. If she's not, we'll just make sure that somebody has to step up and take her spot. But she sure means a lot to us, that's for sure, and I thought she had a pretty good game. Didn't shoot so well, but I thought she had a good game tonight.

Q. How was that game to Coach? Was it bottling up all game, because at the end I think I saw you jump as high as I've seen you jumped?

KELLY GRAVES: Kind of a Phil Mickelson vertical, inch and a half? I was a set shooter.

Yeah, I don't typically get that emotional, but that was a heck of a game. We didn't show many signs that we were going to win that game until late. Didn't appear at times to be our day, and these guys just gutted it out, I thought, defensively.

Late in that game we ran four possessions of man-to-man against them in our first two games combined, and we went man-to-man most of the night tonight, and I thought our kids did a really good job and held a high-scoring team down. So that's going to bring that kind of emotion out. Don't get used to it. No need for slow-mo either on that.

Q. Sabrina, Maite, this game got so physical, how do you guys manage that sort of chippiness, that aggression, going up to the line but never crossing it too much?

SABRINA IONESCU: That's just the game of basketball. We knew it was going to be a physical game. They didn't want to lose, and we didn't want to lose. The game got a little bit chippy, and the refs let us play, which was nice to see. So they came at us and we came at them. We stood our ground pretty well, especially being a young team. I don't think we're used to people trying to bully us physically like that. But I think we took it well, and it definitely played to our advantage. I think it fired us up a little bit and got us a little angry.

Q. Your team has not been in the position to fight back from a double-digit deficit in a long time. When you got down 13 in the first half and 6 in the final last half of the fourth quarter. Were you curious to see what your team's response would be in a long time?

KELLY GRAVES: I don't know if I was really curious, but I was looking forward to seeing what we were going to do. They've kind of done this all year, they've just kind of battled and grinded. It was not always the prettiest, but they just get it done, and that's one more thing we can use as this season goes on.

We get into further postseason play, hey, we've been down deficits like this before. Execute one possession at a time and get this thing back. So we'll use that at some point later on in the season.

Q. I guess Stanford is the one Pac-12 team you haven't beaten this year. Would you like another

shot at them? Do you have a preference in terms of who you face tomorrow?

SABRINA IONESCU: Preference, no. I don't think so. But I know we would definitely like another shot at them. I don't think we played our best game. So that was kind of a hard pill to swallow to lose to them. But regardless who wins, I think we're going to be ready and focus on ourselves and continue to get better.

But Stanford would be a good game for us. I think we're going to grow and take it to them.

Q. Obviously tomorrow's championship game. Tonight was basically like a home game for you guys. There were a lot of Oregon fans, that type of thing. What do you think the atmosphere is going to be like tomorrow? And do you have a preference on what color should I wear tomorrow because I went neutral today?

MAITE CAZORLA: Definitely either yellow or green tomorrow. That will be good. I think hopefully we have a lot of Oregon fans, but we'll see. I'm excited to play tomorrow whoever wins, and we can't wait.

Q. Kelly, first off, first Pac-12 Championship game for your school. How much pride do you take in that as a coach? And the momentum you built from tonight's comeback, how much do you think that will carry over into tomorrow's game?

KELLY GRAVES: I sure hope it carries over. As far as the first championship game, we've had so many firsts in the last year and a half that they kind of come fast and furious now. So I don't think that's as big a deal as maybe it would be.

But from the longest run in the NCAA Tournament last year to our first semifinal, I think, last year, and now the most wins in program history and on and on and on. So we've had a lot of firsts. I would love, and I know we're going to work hard and be ready for the first tournament championship tomorrow. That's what's next up, and I sure hope that we have enough to get one more.

Q. When you have three-point shooters like that and you're down by 13, for many teams that's a six-, seven-possession game. You guys are down by 6, it's not three possessions, it's two a lot of times. How much of a factor is that when you're running your offense knowing that you've got three-point shooters like that, especially when you're behind?

KELLY GRAVES: Yeah, well, it's a luxury, that's for sure. It's not just one or two. We can put four three-point shooters out there. We didn't all have great shooting nights, but we had enough of them.

So, yeah, definite luxury, no doubt.