

# PAC-12 Women's Basketball Tournament

Friday, March 8 2019

**Adia Barnes**

**Lucia Alonso**

**Aari McDonald**

Arizona

Oregon - 77, Arizona - 63

COACH BARNES: I'm really proud of our team's heart, our team's effort, and we played 40 minutes as hard as we could. Was it perfect, no. We knew today we had to play 40 minutes of perfect basketball to win this game, and we didn't, but we had chances to. We hung in there, and I'm really proud of these ladies. They put so much hard work in, and they believe we can play with anybody.

We realize we're not there yet. They're No. 2 team in the country. I think they're ranked 6 right now, but they're a very, very talented basketball team.

But we gave them a fight. We didn't lay down and die. We took some punches, we tried to punch back, and that's all I ask of our kids is that we play hard, they never give up. And they never gave up. So if you give a hundred percent, and you walk away holding your head high, so that's what I expect from all of them.

**Q. Talk about Aari's game. She kept you guys in it with shot after shot. You've seen it all year. But what she brought tonight to give you a chance to win this game?**

COACH BARNES: She brought everything. She's very, very difficult to guard. I don't know anybody in the country that can guard her one-on-one, so usually they guard her four-on-one. I thought she did a great job finding her teammates, and she made some very tough shots.

Just so you know, I ask a lot of her. She's played 40 minutes today. I ask her to guard one of her best guards. I ask her to play 40 minutes. I ask her to run the offense. That's a lot. As we get better, it won't be so much.

And Lucia wasn't healthy, so she's playing point guard all the time. I prefer to put her in a situation where playing off the ball and on the ball. I think she played great. She made some shots, and I was like how in the



heck did she make that.

But you can't teach quickness, and you can't teach size, and she has that. She's special. She's one of the best guards in the country, and she continues to make noise. I'm proud. The good thing is she's only a sophomore. She's going to be around two more years. It's going to be some long years for other people, and I'm happy about that.

I'm just proud. I think her teammates also did a great job of finding her. When she's hot, they open lanes for her, they find her. So I'm just proud of her fight. I mean, she played a great game. I don't know if I could ask her to play any better. She could have scored 20 more points and scored 60 points and we would have won, you know.

**Q. Aari, what is it like going against a 3-2 after the time, and they're all following you around? And just summarize your game today. What did you think?**

AARI MCDONALD: It's a little difficult because Oregon is a tall team. They have length, they have long arms. So it was difficult. But I was used to it. This is the third time we've played against them. They played that the whole game. I was definitely finding their weakness in the zone. And my teammates did a good job finding me, and they also were doing good creating their shots as well.

Just today, my game -- my mentality was like I'm not going to let my team lose. But I felt like we fought hard against the top team in the country, and I couldn't be more proud of my team. There is a lot of basketball left. But on the bright side, we're improving every game, and we're making noise.

**Q. We all know that Aari is fearless, but it seemed to reverberate through the rest of the team. Could you talk about that and how that progressed over the season?**

COACH BARNES: Yeah, so Aari's fearless, Tee Tee's fearless, Sam Thomas is fearless, Cate's fearless. That's our identity and who we are. We're not scared with anybody. We may not be the most talented, but we play with a tremendous heart. That's just our character and who we are and what we do.

I think we wouldn't have been as successful this year without Sam Thomas. Sam Thomas is one of our best defenders. She's one of the most underrated players in this league. She can play the two, three, four. She always locks down the person she's guarding. She hits threes. She plays a lot of minutes.

I think that she just never gives up, and she's consistent. So I know what I'm getting from her every game. Last year she played the four. If you remember, she was battling against players like Anigwe. She's like 40 pounds thinner, so she battles. If I said go guard Ruthy, go guard Sabrina, she would do it and she's fearless.

Tee Tee, wasn't her best game tonight, but one of the reasons we're here today is how Tee Tee played yesterday. She's fearless. She's a competitor.

All these players have grit. That's the kind of players I want to coach. If you don't have those things, you probably don't fit in our program. So they play with heart. They don't give up. They give it their all, and that's all that I can ask, and that's every single one of us. It may not be perfect all the time, and that's okay. I love their imperfections. We're not perfect. But we do our best, and we did that today.

Could I have done a better job of getting there off the floor, getting Sam off the floor? Yeah, but it's really hard. It's hard. Against a team like Oregon, them off the floor is a big run.

So I think that they've continued to get better. If you looked at us in October, and you look at us now, we are a much improved team. That's the thing that I'm proud about is we are getting better as a team. That's just cohesiveness. That's individual talent. All those things they're improving. It's not because of me. It's because of their hard work. I told them today, we have more basketball to play, so we don't hang our head and we go out and we're trying to win something else. That's just our mentality.

You can be disappointed, but you've got to move on.

**Q. Coach, there is more basketball to be played. Do you want to make a case for why you should be in the NCAA Tournament?**

COACH BARNES: I think we've given ourselves some chances. There's been some opportunities. I think that we are someone that the NCAA Tournament would consider. I think there are some key games we lost that hurt our chances to be in the tournament.

Now, if we did, I'd be very happy about that, of course. But I think if we had a couple key wins, like a triple overtime against UCLA, would have been big. Us

going down to Cal and Stanford, that game we lost at Cal I think kind of hurt our chances. Then we needed to probably sweep the Washingtons, and when we split at Washington, Washington State, we split Washington State. So I think that kind of hurts us, and I don't know what the committee said.

But my main thing is we've changed so much. This wasn't even a conversation last year. We won two games in the Pac-12, and six overall. So I'm proud that we've come a long way in a year. It's because of these two talented young women beside me. And whatever happens, happens, whether it's the NCAA Tournament, or the NIT, we're going to try to go win it.

I remember me as a player at Arizona, the pivotal point in our program was going to the NIT and winning it, and that changed everything. That started the avalanche, and we got better. Then we made the NCAAs. So regardless of our course, what will happen will happen, and it's going to be meant to be that way. We're just going to fight and go beat someone we're not supposed to, and that's what I expect from them. So we're just going to have fun and do what we can to make a difference.

But on the flip side, we're playing in the best league in the country. It is hard. We've battled every single game. There wasn't one game this year where I was like, oh, we can win that easily. It was hard. I'm just proud of all that they accomplished this year, regardless what's in front of us. They've done a great job, and this is a tough league, and I just hope Oregon's a great team, and I think they're one of the best offenses in the country. I think they have a chance to go to the Final Four and a chance to win the championship. So does Oregon State. I think UCLA could surprise some people.

I'm just proud of our league and the parity in it and the chances that our league has to win a championship.

**Q. I just wanted to ask you, back on the game, they present so many problems, and one of them is their physical play inside. Was that a hard thing to play with?**

COACH BARNES: They present a lot of problems. They present five players and present five problems on the court, and that's why they're so good. Most teams you can help off of someone. You can double off of someone. That's what makes Oregon so difficult to guard. Yes, Ruthy Hebard is a problem inside. She was a big problem today. It just poses a difficult situation defensively because normally you can double off of someone, but in Oregon, who are you going to double off? You can't double off Bole, you can't double off Maite, you can't double off Sabrina. So you've got to play one-on-one, and Cate is a freshman, Ruthy's

more experienced and stronger inside, but Cate fought and tried her best. I think that's one of the things that makes Oregon so special because you have to pick your poison. It's really hard when their three-point shooters shoot over 40%.

So Ruthy inside, shooters outside, I think we could have probably done a better job. We were supposed to be in more of a front, but we had a really tough time getting in front of her. So she did a good job of just making some tough baskets down the stretch, and that really hurt us with the momentum of the game.