

March 21, 2014



An Interview With:

**COACH KARL SMESKO
SARAH HANSEN
WHITNEY KNIGHT
JENNA COBB**

KARL SMESKO: We're really excited to be here. Our goal all season long was to make it to the NCAA Tournament, and we had to win a couple last-second games or overtime games to put us in this position. But we're excited about the opportunity and we're trying to be as prepared as we can to be competitive and give our best opportunity to win.

Q. Who gets the challenge of guarding Tiffany Bias tomorrow?

SARAH HANSEN: Probably one of our guards. I mean, we have a guard rotation where when somebody gets tired they can sub out and put somebody else on her. It's mainly just going to be whichever guard happens to be the one that picks her up in conversion, I guess.

Q. She never comes off the floor. Is that kind of how you have to approach it, that we're going to have to go with multiple players and hope that we can kind of wear her down a little bit as the game goes on?

JENNA COBB: Yeah, definitely. It's just going to be a group effort all around tomorrow, but definitely with our group rotation, obviously she's an amazing player, so we're all just going to have to work together to stop her, or do what we can.

Q. Coach, Oklahoma State talked about your unique offense as everybody does and shooting the threes, five girls that can hit threes, but does that put a lot of pressure on your shooting? What happens if you guys aren't hitting those threes? Does that put pressure on you to make those?

WHITNEY KNIGHT: I don't think there's any pressure. We're just trying to make sure we do what we're supposed to do, what we've been doing all year, working on what we're supposed to do in our offense, screening and cutting and those type of things. I don't think there's any pressure on making shots. We know we can knock down shots when we need to.

Q. Can you talk a little bit about rebounding? Oklahoma State has come out of the Big 12, which is kind of a meat grinder, with a plus average against their opponents in rebounding. How important do you think that will be to kind of negate that?

SARAH HANSEN: We know that second shots are a big deal. Whoever has the most opportunities to score is obviously going to have the greatest opportunity of scoring the most points. We just know we have to be able to keep them off the boards. We want to try to take them out of what they are going to do. And if they happen to miss a shot, we have to be able to take it from them. We have to be able to get their rebounds so they can't get second shots. Put-backs are about the easiest shot to make. You're right at the basket, there's not very many people in front of you. We just know we need to try and eliminate that. And then offensively obviously we want to be able to try to get as many second shots as possible.

Q. Jenna, you played here in Indiana. Are you and the two Indiana natives on your roster sort of serving as tour guides here for the weekend?

JENNA COBB: Well, one of the weird things, I've actually never been to West Lafayette or Purdue. I've been to IU, Butler, obviously, and a few other Indiana schools, so this is kind of a new Indiana experience for me. But we were all pretty excited coming back here to Indiana since we have so many Midwest girls, and three of us have been pretty familiar with the Indiana area.

Q. Sarah, I was wondering if you could tell me about your five-year career here at FGCU. I'm not sure you knew about the school originally, and now you're in the Hall of Fame. Can you just kind of take us through what the last five years has been like?

SARAH HANSEN: It's definitely been something special. When Coach called me up and he brought me down here, I couldn't have asked for a better experience on that trip and I knew it was where I wanted to be. My first year was a little bit rough, but then it got better and obviously I couldn't be more happy with the decision I made. FGCU has been so good to me, the people, from the students to the community to everybody involved with the administration. It's just been an amazing experience, so I couldn't be more happy with the decision I made.

Q. Sarah, can you talk about the second time around being in the NCAA Tournament and how does this feel the same and how is it different?

SARAH HANSEN: I mean, it's the same because it's where we wanted to be and we know it's where we wanted to be and we know that we belong here. We're excited to be here and excited to make some noise and play to the best of our abilities, get our team out. But it's a little bit different because we have such a different group of girls. Before we were playing with a group who knew each other so well and played together for so many years, and now it's more of we have played together and we've built that team chemistry that we've been working on all season, but it's a little bit -- we have a little bit more athleticism than we did, whereas in the past we were athletic but we were smaller, we weren't as quick, and we had to rely a lot on intelligence, and now we're still trying to play a smart game of basketball, but we have a little more athleticism and a little more quickness.

Q. Whitney, first of all, you sent out a couple of Tweets a couple of days ago in regards to your health. How are you feeling?

WHITNEY KNIGHT: I feel fine. I'm great.

Q. Did that come from Coach?

WHITNEY KNIGHT: No. No.

Q. Sarah and Whitney, after watching the men do what they did last year, how much when that was going on did that motivate you for this season, and now that you're in the

tournament do you look to them for inspiration?

SARAH HANSEN: We just knew that we wanted to get back, and seeing them be able to make the runs they made and upset teams that they upset just showed us that you can do it. I mean, it's absolutely possible. You've seen it with the games already in the men's tournament yesterday and everything. There's been upsets and everything. So that just goes to show you that just because we have a lower seed or we're not the highest seed where we're at, we're in a good situation and we're in a position where we can if we play to the best of our abilities make some noise.

WHITNEY KNIGHT: Yeah, I mean, I agree with Sarah. Anything can happen. We're coming in prepared. We're focused and we're ready to play our game. We think if we play together as a team and have fun out there then we can compete with any other teams -- well, Oklahoma State.

Q. Jen and Whitney, one of coach's concerns has been about their speed and just the level of that play. Is there anything you've tried to do to approximate that speed in practice?

JENNA COBB: I mean, not really because you can't really make anybody, like, as fast as them, if we don't have somebody who's as fast as them in practice. I think the biggest thing is just helping each other out with that speed, going one-on-one is kind of difficult at times, so just making sure our defense we're playing together and helping out and stuff like that.

Q. Sarah and Whitney, the best part of playing in this offense is what?

SARAH HANSEN: Probably that we can score in so many different ways that it's not just -- we rely on one person for isolations or we rely on somebody getting the ball and blocking and posting out big. Everybody can contribute and everybody can contribute in so many different ways.

WHITNEY KNIGHT: There's a lot of different opportunities for different things, like we can screen, we can cut, we can drive, we can shoot the three. There's a lot of different things we can do. We're not just sticking to one particular thing all the time.



visit our archives at asapsports.com

Q. You guys have had two common opponents, particularly TCU. Have you been able to glean anything off of that that may help you tomorrow?

JENNA COBB: I mean, that was pretty early in the year, and I would say the biggest thing we ran against with TCU was boxing out. I mean, we struggled with their height a little bit. They played a pretty good zone and everything. I don't know if that would be the same as Oklahoma State so much. But I think we can learn from that. They have quick guards, they have a quick point guard who could shoot the ball, who could drive, and that's pretty much the same situation with Oklahoma State.

I think the biggest thing is that we can take from that is just rebounding, getting on the boards, everybody in there, five people working together.

Q. Whitney, do you like being known as a three-point shooting team, or as you mentioned, do you have different areas that you can attack teams with besides the three-point?

WHITNEY KNIGHT: I wouldn't say necessarily we like being known, but it's definitely good that we are able to shoot the three because it makes the defense stretch out, which allows us to do other things in our offense like attack or create space for other people to drive and things like that. I think it's definitely a great asset to our team.

Q. Coach, about Tiffany, their point guard, she seems to be kind of a special player. When you watch her on film, what's priority No. 1 as far as trying to slow her down? I don't know that you necessarily, completely shut her down, but how do you slow her down a little bit?

KARL SMESKO: Well, that is priority No. 1 is you have to get back and you have to get the ball under control. She gets it out, and she's about as fast as anybody we've seen in the open floor. You have to give yourself a pretty good head start and get yourself organized defensively, and you can't rely on one person to stop the ball.

Q. Can you talk about what it's like for you to come back to Indiana? Did you ever try and get Purdue on the schedule when you were at IPFW?

KARL SMESKO: When I was at IPFW we were just moving to Division I. I scheduled the first

year of Division I and to be honest I don't remember if Purdue was on the schedule or if we contacted them to schedule or not. But when we've been at Florida Gulf Coast we've been close to playing Purdue a couple times. We were supposed to play them one trip in Cancún and they had an unfortunate incident with one of their players and they couldn't make it, and then we were in the same tournament with them this year in México, and we didn't match up with one another. It was set up so we didn't play each other. We're familiar with Purdue and how good they are and how good they've been.

Q. Can you give us an update on your team's health, particularly with Bethany and Anthi?

KARL SMESKO: Well, Bethany and Anthi aren't playing. They won't be dressing. They're still out with their injuries. Everybody else is healthy and ready to go.

Q. Why shoot all these three-pointers, not just this year but throughout your career?

KARL SMESKO: Well, we want to be efficient offensively, so we try to take the most-efficient shot we can get. We try to stretch people out with shooters, have a lot of movement. We think it opens things up for cuts to the basket and drives to the basket.

When we take a shot, we're trying to get the highest return for that shot that we can possibly get, and a lot of times through a possession that's shooting a three-point shot.

Q. You mentioned priorities. Could a second or third priority be boxing out, because I read somewhere that one of your big concerns was them being able to chase down misses.

KARL SMESKO: Well, yeah, they're a big team. They're an athletic team. They're a very physical team. That's one of the reasons why they are so good. We have to have our players -- I mean, we don't match up in terms of size or athleticism. We have to be willing to be physical, and we've basically got to scrap out some rebounds. I'm not saying we need to win rebounds because that would be a lofty expectation, but we have to be competitive on the boards so we're not giving up a lot of put-backs that are just two feet from the basket, make them have to at least get

long rebounds and work to get another shot rather than just get a miss and put it right back in.

Q. I was wondering if -- I understand that one of your recruits, Taylor Goodall just was named all-state Indiana. If you could just talk a little bit about her and if this is going to be an area that you'll continue to recruit in?

KARL SMESKO: We've recruited the Midwest pretty heavily since I've been at Florida Gulf Coast. There's a lot of Midwest kids that enjoy coming to Florida, so you have to find out early whether there's somebody who's willing to go away from home or if there's somebody that if they tell you they're wanting to stay close to home, you've got to move on and go with the people that the idea of Florida sounds good to them.

We're proud of what Taylor was able to accomplish this year. We're excited about having her next year. She's a point guard that can shoot, but she's a very smart player, and then she's a very physically tough player. I mean, she's going to add to the toughness of our team. She doesn't mind throwing her body around.

Q. Does that give you any advantage, so many Midwest girls, probably bringing a little bit of fan support? Do you feel that's any advantage?

KARL SMESKO: Well, I think the fact that they are excited about -- one, it's hard to be more excited than being in an NCAA Tournament, but if there is a way to be more excited, it was to come back to the Midwest where their family is going to see them, and not just their family, their families probably would have traveled anywhere, but their friends and coaches, and there's going to be a lot of people that normally don't get to see them play in a college game. It does add a little bit of extra excitement to our players, if that's really even possible.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports