

'Grand' Moment

Stanford Coach VanDerveer Reaches 1,000 Career Wins

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STANFORD, Calif. — Watching warmups just like usual from one corner of the court near Stanford's bench, Tara VanDerveer shared a little something.

"I told our team, 'I'd be lying if it was just any other game, but we will play bigger games than this.'"

She repeated that again as her players made confetti angels spread on the floor Friday night celebrating yet another remarkable moment in their coach's Hall of Fame career — win No. 1,000.

Standing side by side with Jennifer Azzi, VanDerveer held a bouquet of red roses in one hand and a commemorative trophy from the Pac-12 in the other as tributes played on the big screen. As far as special moments go, this will rank right up there among her great achievements.

VanDerveer, a 2010 Chautauqua Sports Hall of Fame inductee who owns a summer home at Chautauqua Institution, became just the second NCAA women's coach to reach 1,000 career victories when No. 8 Stanford beat USC 58-42 to give the Hall of Famer a major milestone to share with the home crowd at Maples Pavilion.

She joined the late Pat Summitt, a dear friend who died last summer from early-onset Alzheimer's disease with 1,098 wins to her name, as the only other women's coach in the elite club. Duke's Mike Krzyzewski is the only Division I men's coach with 1,000. VanDerveer is 1000-228 in her career.

After the game ended, her players dumped confetti on their coach before moving to midcourt to hold up cutout numbers to form 1,000. The team presented her with a framed jersey with the number 1,000 on it.

"Our team won't believe this but I am really speechless," an emotional VanDerveer said, greeted by chants of "Tara! Tara!"

In her 38th season as a head coach and 31st on The Farm after previous stops at Idaho and Ohio State, VanDerveer had former stars like Azzi, one of her first marquee recruits, among the 4,490 fans in attendance and perhaps the biggest of all in 89-year-old mother, Rita.

VanDerveer almost didn't accept the Stanford job all those years ago, unsure she could turn the Cardinal program into a perennial powerhouse. Instead, she has groomed so many future WNBA stars while doing so with class and humility. She has adapted by changing offenses multiple times to best fit her roster.

"Words cannot accurately describe how many lives she has actually touched," USC coach Cynthia Cooper-Dyke said. "... 1,000 wins is unimaginable."

More than anything, she loves her players — and you bet she still loves winning and all the work and preparation it takes to do so.

Karlie Samuelson made three second-half 3-pointers on the way to 21 points while Erica McCall added 18 points in Stanford's seventh straight victory, an unbeaten run that included last Sunday's win at Washington. Brittany McPhee contributed 10 points for the Cardinal (20-3, 10-1 Pac-12).

"I have more than 1,000 memories of coaching," VanDerveer said. "It's a special evening, and I'm moving on to 1,001 Monday night."

Kristen Simon led cold-shooting USC (12-10, 3-8) with 11 points.

With a pair of NCAA titles in 1990 and '92, an Olympic gold medal at the 1996 Atlanta Games and 11 Final Four berths — including five straight from 2008-2012 — VanDerveer has meant so much to women's basketball on the court and far beyond it as a positive influence and mentor to so many.

The 63-year-old VanDerveer did this one in front of the home fans at Maples Pavilion, after winning No. 800 against Azzi at the University of San Francisco in December 2010 and her 900th in November 2013 at a Thanksgiving tournament in Mexico. Former Stanford star Ros Gold-Onwude, the Golden State Warriors' sideline reporter, called Friday's game for TV.

"On behalf of the Pac-12, I would like to congratulate Coach VanDerveer on the amazing and rare accomplishment of 1,000 wins," Commissioner Larry Scott said. "In a career full of astounding successes, this feat is a true testament to her steadfast commitment to excellence at Stanford and her lasting legacy on the entire sport of basketball."

And, she certainly plans for many more wins — in fact, some of her former players believe she could take a crack at 2,000.

"She very well could," athletic director Bernard Muir said Friday, "it wouldn't shock me."

CONGRATS POUR IN

Former Stanford star Nicole Powell now coaches on the Oregon staff, so she still sees VanDerveer occasionally from the other bench.

"It's incredible what Tara has accomplished — the consistency of winning year in and year out over the course of her career is truly special," Powell wrote in an email. "She's stayed true to herself, leading in her own unique way and all while evolving in her approach to the game, yet never getting away from her core values. It's hard to capture what she means to women's basketball. I've encountered so many people that seem to have a favorite 'Tara' or 'Stanford Women's basketball' moment that runs the gamut from the '90s up until now. I think that speaks volumes."