

Board work crucial for Lady Vols

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CLEVELAND — Nicky Anosike repeated Tennessee coach Pat Summitt's mantra in the postgame news conference following the Lady Vols' 59-46 win over Rutgers in the national championship game.

"Offense sells tickets, defense wins games, rebounding wins championships," Anosike said.

Rebounding certainly won this championship.

Rutgers shot 40.8 percent from the floor and Tennessee made only 34.5 percent of its attempts. But the Lady Vols cruised to their seventh title because of rebounding, particularly on the offensive end.

Tennessee grabbed 24 offensive rebounds and scored 22 second-chance points. Anosike finished with 16 rebounds, including 10 on the offensive end.

"Rebounding is not all about the height or who can jump the highest," Tennessee's Alexis Hornbuckle said. "It's about the heart and hustle and who wants the ball the most."

A typical exchange quieted the Scarlet Knights' final run late in the game, when they cut Tennessee's lead to 50-42 with two minutes remaining on a Matee Ajavon 3-pointer. Candace Parker missed, Hornbuckle rebounded and missed, but Parker grabbed another board and drew a foul. She made both free throws to extend the lead back to 10 points with 1:45 left.

"We did a horrible job on the boards," Rutgers' Essence Carson said. "By the time we thought about rebounding, it was all over. It was too late. It was the rebounding that really did us in."

Tennessee finished with 42 rebounds, eight more than Rutgers. Parker and Hornbuckle each had seven rebounds, and Alberta Auguste grabbed four of her five on the offensive end.

"Tennessee was big and all those other things, but they



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Candace Parker had seven rebounds in the Lady Vols' 59-46 win Tuesday night.

(It's still about effort)

killed us on the boards," Rutgers coach C. Vivian Stringer said. "And it was a matter of blocking out. We have played against other big people. Blocking out is an effort thing that anybody and everybody can do. When you have a team as big as that, you have to do it. And we just

didn't."

Fittingly, Rutgers stopped fouling and the game ended when Parker grabbed a rebound and flashed a smile. The ball eventually got to senior Dominique Redding so she could throw the ball into the air.

And no one cared who got

that last rebound. Tennessee was celebrating as confetti fell from the roof.

"Rebounding wins championships," Summitt said, taking her turn to state her philosophy. "We saw the effort on the boards was significant in this win."