

Southeastern Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Thursday, March 3, 2022

Nashville, Tennessee, USA

Bridgestone Arena

Florida Gators

Kelly Rae Finley

Zippy Broughton

Nina Rickards

Postgame Press Conference



NINA RICKARDS: Like Zippy said, it was very emotional, but I think we did a good job looking each other in the eye, believing in ourselves, and knowing that Kiki believes in us. So we just buckled down and gave it all we had, and we played for Ki.

Q. Zippy, can you talk about the elation when you won the game when you won, the clock hit zero.

ZIPPY BROUGHTON: It was a lot of excitement just because we won, but I think the emotional part took over. I don't think we've had a chance to celebrate the win yet, and I honestly don't know if that will come, but it was more so emotional than anything.

THE MODERATOR: Same question for you, Nina.

NINA RICKARDS: Who doesn't get excited over a W, but like Zippy said, I don't think I'm going to get to enjoy that win. As of now, I'm more concerned with my teammate and her health and safety. So I'm just going to be praying for Ki, and we'll enjoy the win whenever we get a chance to.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Zippy and Nina. You're all set. Questions for Coach?

Q. Can you just talk about the final play and how that unfolded and your reactions?

KELLY RAE FINLEY: I mean, it was fitting that it was on defense, right? I feel like we're a tremendous defensive team, and to make the defensive stop like that to win the game was really characteristic of who we are and how we do things in a gritty performance I thought.

Q. Can you talk about the turning point in the game?

KELLY RAE FINLEY: I thought we started to get creative, run and jump a little bit before Kiki went out, and our guards really started. They had a different look in their eye, and we talked about that. Just a different look in their face, which means a different belief in their heart, and they were going to take the game into their own hands, which is what they did. And those three, Kiki, Zippy, and Nina, are

Florida 53, Vanderbilt 52

KELLY RAE FINLEY: Hi, everybody. First of all, thank you for coming. Thank you for supporting us. Thank you for watching today. We have a really special team, as you can see that loves and cares about each other a lot. That was a really hard finish. My tears are not because of disappointment. It's just your heartaches a little bit when you care so much about each other, right?

I was really, really proud of our effort. I was proud of how we finished. I thought we had a tremendous resiliency that we've seen all season, and I wouldn't expect anything less.

To finish the way that we did in the fashion that we did isn't surprising because it's who we are. I'm incredibly proud and eager to play again tomorrow.

Q. For both of you, how hard was it to continue on after losing a teammate like that, and I guess have you been able to speak with her at all? Did you feel like you were playing the end of the game for her?

THE MODERATOR: Zippy, if you would go first, please.

ZIPPY BROUGHTON: It was emotional, yes, but it wasn't difficult at all. The way Kiki influences us on and off the court, and we know she always has our back, so we had -- we had to contribute that to her, so we just responded in the best way we could, and that was just giving our all. No matter if we came out with the win or loss, we had to give our all for Kiki.

THE MODERATOR: Nina?



a tremendous trio. I'd put them up against anybody in the country. I think they're incredibly talented, but they're also very selfless.

And when Kiki went out, I think we all -- you know, she doesn't react like that. She's not -- she's tough. She's really tough, and so you know it's probably serious if she's going to be taken out of the game at that juncture of the game, and so we looked at each other in the eye, like Nina said, and we focused on what's next, and that game was the resiliency that she's led us with all season long.

Q. It was an emotional reaction at the end of the game. Seen some tears from Coach, that was about your first official win as a head coach, overcoming another adversity getting a big win with losing Kiki down the stretch.

KELLY RAE FINLEY: I'm going to be honest with you guys, I don't know any other way to be. Kiki and I have spent a lot of time together in the gym. A lot. And so I know I would have the same reaction for any of our student-athletes, but she sacrificed a lot in coming back this year to help us write the story of how the Gators became great, and for that, she didn't have to do that. Sorry. She didn't have to do that, but she did because it's who she is.

She's really selfless, and I told them tonight before the game, excuse me, today, I asked her, actually, in front of the team, did she remember what she said in our first team meeting, and she, of course, didn't remember, in true Kiki fashion. But she said, I have a deep belief in this team. I don't know why, but I think we can do some really special things.

I remember it like yesterday. It was in the film room, and she was right, and as a coach to see her sacrifice, you can't help but have a heavy heart when things don't go your way down the stretch.

Q. Can you talk about how it was able to conquer Vandy's zone defense?

KELLY RAE FINLEY: Say that again.

Q. Vandy's zone defense.

KELLY RAE FINLEY: Yeah, their defense is tremendous. Their zone is extremely active. They build a wall to keep you out of the paint. They have two or three on every drive. You know, we're explosive. We can get to the rim. We did a much better job defensively in this game, that allowed us to get out and run in transition.

And then you saw the speed and the playmaking ability of our guards and our forwards. Our forwards do a tremendous job of moving off of our guards. I think we play really well together, so when we can get out in the open court, it is definitely to our advantage.

Q. Now talking about your defense. Question about the shot-clock violation you forced with eight minutes left to go. The defense just picked up after that. Can you talk a little more on that, whenever you're ready?

KELLY RAE FINLEY: I think it was just -- I don't know. Nina and Zip can probably attest to it more than I can. I don't know. I thought it was a look in their eye and just the desire, like hold up, we got to get up. We can be back and unnerved, but we have to speed these guys up a little bit.

Thank you, guys.

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