

Southeastern Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Sunday, March 6, 2022
Nashville, Tennessee, USA
Bridgestone Arena

South Carolina Gamecocks Dawn Staley

Postgame Press Conference

Kentucky 64, South Carolina 62

Q. What was the switch going to be like on that final play? What was it designed to do and what went wrong?

DAWN STALEY: We wanted to foul. We had three fouls to give, and we executed the first one, and then coming out of the time-out we wanted to, certainly if they were dribbling the basketball, to foul. We couldn't quite get to it.

Q. In the time that you have between now and the start of the NCAA Tournament, what is going to be the focus, especially when you look at what's happened the past two games in the fourth quarter?

DAWN STALEY: I mean, we've got to go back to the drawing board. We're not a bad basketball team, we just played two bad quarters at the worst time. We've got to work on just executing, executing on both sides of the basketball. We gave up -- not the fact that we don't score, it's the fact that we gave up 21 points in the fourth quarter.

We've got to go back and see where our defense is failing us.

But hats off to Kentucky. They're hot. They're streaking. We've been on both sides, this side and the other side, and super happy for Kyra and her program and their ability to weather some storms early on and find themselves as our SEC Tournament champions.

Q. There's no question that you guys have been battle tested all year, so maybe when you're using the word pressure, it's like you guys have been in a lot of situations where you understand pressure. What is it with these last two games in particular, outside of the execution? Is it just maybe tensing up in the moment,



just trying to maybe do too much? I know it's tough right now without seeing the film, but going back to yesterday, as well.

DAWN STALEY: I mean, we took our foot off the gas. It didn't feel like it as we were going through it, but as I can remember, we got shots at the basket. We got opportunities. We just didn't put the ball in the hole.

I don't know what the free-throw situation was in the fourth quarter, but I know we missed two at the end, and they sprinkled in a couple of them throughout the fourth quarter.

2 for 4 for the fourth quarter? Yeah, I don't quite remember.

Q. You've been around a lot of basketball and sometimes crazy things happen in conference tournaments. Can this be a line in the sand for this team to say, hey, you've got a chance to reset so make sure you don't miss this next one?

DAWN STALEY: I mean, it is. We've put ourselves in a really good position. Going into the NCAA Tournament it doesn't feel good, but we've got a lot of feel-goods throughout the season that we'll draw on.

Obviously this was one of our goals of the season. It wasn't the ultimate goal. The ultimate goal is still very much in front of us, and we'll buckle down and try not to be the sad faces that are in the locker room today in the next couple of weeks.

Q. I know the ladies are disappointed; I guess you and the rest of your staff, how do you allow them to feel this in the moment and then compartmentalize it into hopefully a run in the NCAA Tournament?

DAWN STALEY: I mean, you just face it. You can't hide from it. It happened. You deal with it. You face it head on. We'll watch the film. We'll look at what went wrong. We'll look at what things are going right for us, and we'll continue to work.

Q. On a positive, Aliyah really had what I thought was

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**a career-defining game. She played exceptionally well.
What can you say about her play today on a big stage?**

DAWN STALEY: That's what Aliyah does. She put us on her back. She gave it all she got. Fell short. I know she'll come in here and she'll talk to you guys about it. She'll say the job didn't get done because we didn't win the basketball game. That's what true champions -- that's what they do. They face the music, no matter what's playing. We'll bounce back.

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